

LASKAY STORE

About 1910.



LASKAY STORE

1845 - 1957.



THE MIRACLE OF LIGHT FROM CANDLE TO ELECTRICITY.

by

Gregory Clark - copied from Family Herald magazine - 1958.

Don't forget that in the childhood of all of us over 70 whom you see walking around, we had to scratch a match every time we wanted to turn on a light. For most of us, that meant oil lamps, naturally; though those of us who lived in cities had the modern marvel of illuminating gas, and all we had to do was turn the little tap, put the match to it, and -- presto!

I admit the well-to-do, the the largest cities, were already having their houses wired for a still greater miracle, electric light. But we 70-year-olds were good big boys before that became common, even in cities.

Oil lamps were the thing. And even they were modern. The 70-year-olds whom we saw walking around, when we were children, all recalled the sensation created by the first oil lamps. Our grandfathers travelled miles to see one, when they were first introduced; and usually stood well back, twenty feet or so, for fear of an explosion. Of course, the marvellous, great parlor oil lamps that hung on chains balanced by counterweights and went creaking to the ceiling to be out of the way during the daylight hours, were true scientific marvels. They added mechanical engineering to chemical science, and every youngster who came to the house would watch for an opportunity, when no one was looking, to see for himself how easily they moved up and down on their chains. But those were almost of a new age.

Matches? Why, matches were not invented until 1827, and were only for the upper crust until well into the 1840s. The way you lit a candle on rising in the morning was to light a spill at the embers of the fire. If the fire had gone out, you had to go over to the neighbor's, with a stove shovel, and borrow a scoop of red coals. If your neighbor was too far for that, you had to get out the tinder box and flint and steel which, in my grandfather's time, was a far commoner kitchen gadget than a box of matches is in the modern kitchen, and huff up a spark to get the kindling lit, and then the candle.

Look you; this fabulous modern world we live in today is a sudden thing. We 70-year-olds still tottering around started our lives in a world not very much different from the world of Julius Caesar.

STEAMER DAYS



Taken at Lot 33, Con. 6 on farm of Adam Cairns -- Vaughan Twp.
 Adam Cairns, Thomas Cairns, Jack Mullen, Andy McCluskey.



Wm. Ham, Laskay, threshing on farm of Frank Smelser, Lot 1, Con. 5.

STEAMER DAYS

One old-time thresherman used to start his rounds among fifty or so customers about the middle of August, and he didn't quit till the last mow was empty of sheaves, and sometimes it was after New Year's before we were through. Many Sundays saw work done keeping the outfit in repair.

Mows and stacks of grain - and bundle wagons - have become obsolete in most sections of the country, and so have the various jobs at which men once prided themselves on their skill -- engine man, separator man, spike pitcher and weed and water hauler, whose job was to quench the roaring monster's insatiable hunger and thirst. Threshing time was something special in those days.

Forty years ago the first few weeks were a flurry of activity. Farmers would come begging for a half day's threshing to clear out a mow of wheat, so they could get some seed wheat to sow, or so they could get all their grain in. Then we would return a second time to thresh out the barn. They really kept the thresher hopping.

Busy preparations were the order of the day. Grandfather was occupied cleaning the threshing floor and making sure it was braced to hold the heavy separator. Bins had to be cleaned out to receive the flow of new grain. If he traded work with a lot of neighbours and expected 12 to 20 men, he might have to slaughter a calf, a sheep or several dozen chickens. All this would have to be done between days spent helping neighbours to thresh.

In the meantime, Grandmother and the girls would be feverishly busy for days, making mounds of pies, buns, bread, cakes and a host of other good things. A woman's reputation was based on her meals at threshing time. It would be the subject of gossip for the next year if she failed to provide enough to satisfy everyone. Threshing crews were always famished. Why, some men could eat a whole pie at a sitting -- on top of several helpings of meat and vegetables!

Steamer Days (Continued)

What got the women's goats was the filth of some of the men. The three or two threshers that went with the machine, always stayed at nights where they were threshing; so the towels and bedsheets used to get black.

A typical bill of fare at the noon meal would be hot roast meat or chicken, potatoes, a couple of other vegetables, three kinds of pickles, bread, butter, apple butter, maple syrup, apple sauce, pudding and at least four different kinds of pie -- and any young fellow who couldn't eat three or four pieces of pie was razzed about it all afternoon.

For the young fry on the farm, threshing day was almost as exciting as the yearly junket to the Fall Fair. The children could hardly await the arrival of the big black engine and its equally black crew. The clatter of the pipes and straw carriers atop the machine made a distinctive sound that could be heard a long way off down the rutted mud road. There was always a chance that it would get stuck in a mud-hole, and maybe two or three teams would have to be hooked on in front before it would budge. The best part was watching the big separator being hauled up the barn ramp and placed on the threshing floor, the steamer jockeyed into place and the big belt slung around the pulleys.

One farmer was quoted saying -- "I would not like to go back to farming 40 years ago and more. It might be all right for a day now and again, just to show the younger people what we did, but the back breaking work from 7 A.M. till dark for \$1.00 a day outweighed the pleasure of the sumptuous meals. The dust and dirt would be harder to take than the comparative cleanliness of to-day's field threshing and combining."

Mrs. Lydia (Ireland) Murdock reminisces: "My grandfather David Archibald, owned the first grain binder in King Township and his oldest son--Charles Archibald ran it, and he told how the fence was lined with people to watch the binder working.

COMPARISONS

Voters in King Township, 1878 -- 1,238

Total Receipts - King Township 1877
15,770.26

Balance from 1876 -- \$330.15

Total Disbursements, 1877 --
\$16,100.44

Auditors -- B. Lloyd F. D. Ramsay

No. of acres cultivated in
King Township, 1803 -- 150 acres

Total no. acres in Township -- 86,480

Average price of farm land, 1885 --
\$70 to \$80

Rented land -- \$2.50 to \$3.00 per
acre.

Voters in King Township, 1957 -- 5,995

Total Receipts - King Township, 1957
\$696,173.65

Total Disbursements, 1957 --
\$695,960.94

Auditors -- S.S. Joscelyn, C.A.
St. Catharines.

No. of acres ¹⁹⁵⁷cleared farm land --
77,485 acres

No. of acres cleared land,
towns, villages, etc. -- 2,103

Average price of farm land, 1957
\$500 to \$700 acre.

Subdivision lots \$2,000 to \$3,000

