

(R)

ANTHROPOLOGY 100 TERM PAPER

"A HOME OUT OF WILDERNESS"

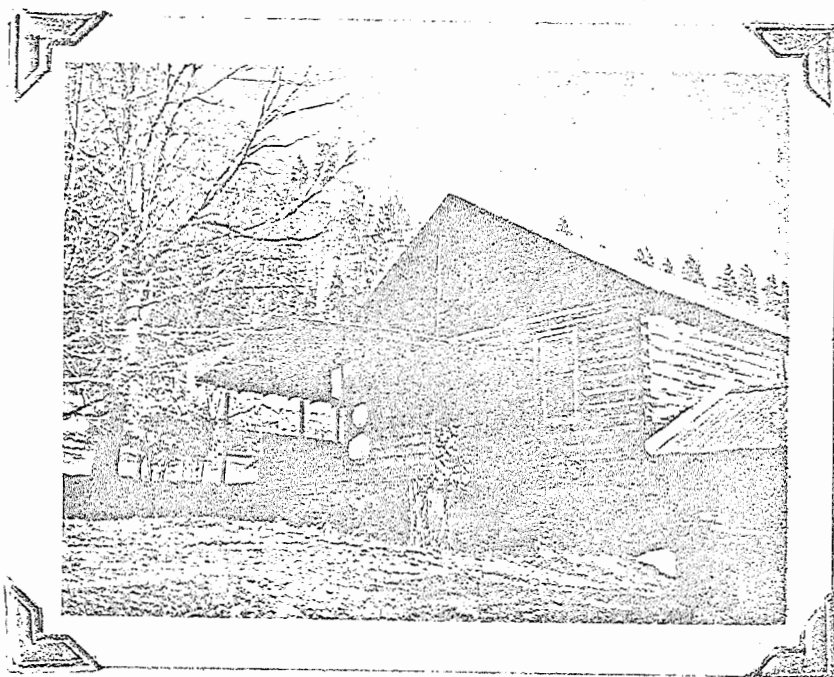
by

Cyril Ozeroff

For: Dr. Mark Mealing

December, 1976

"A HOME OUT OF WILDERNESS"



My Grandparents' Home, Pass Creek, B.C.



INTRODUCTION

Shelter is one of man's basic needs. Whether it's made of grass, earth, logs, or refined lumber, it's purposes are the same. Shelter provides protection against the elements, personal space for the family institution, privacy for the inhabitants -- a place of rest and refuge. A shelter can be very personal for those who construct it, for it reflects the tastes and life style of those who are it's builders.

This paper is the history of my grandparent's house which is in Pass Creek, the result of their dream of owning their own farm and providing a home for their children. The ~~parents~~ were of Russian origin, and immigrated to Canada as young adults, entering a country of which they had no previous detailed knowledge. They sacrificed land, family, and country, migrating to escape persecution, being devout followers of the religious principles of the Doukhobor sect. They were married in Saskatchewan, where they resided for ten years, but again, governmental attitude and pressure influenced them in leaving the prairies. The new destination was British Columbia. The family lived communally in the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood in Ootischania and Grand Forks. In the late 1920's the family moved to Robson and rented a small farm, and later, an orchard. Although the family left the communal way of life, they remained members of the Christian Community and its successor, the Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ.

After their many moves, the family developed a strong desire to set down roots in a permanent location. A house and farm were carved out of wilderness land in Pass Creek. The house, which was created and constructed by the family, is the focus of this paper. The house was constructed of materials from the land on which it stands; therefore I titled my paper " A Home Out of Wilderness. "

My grandparents passed away in 1975, therefore my father, who was seventeen years of age during the construction of the house, was my major source of information for this paper. Land clearing began in the summer of 1930, logs for the house were prepared during winter, in early spring construction of the house began, and in the summer of 1931 the family moved into their new home.

This paper illustrates the results of a family whose parents left their homeland and faced the difficult task of establishing themselves in a new country. It shows the desire of a family to carve out of the wilderness a home and a farm; a place which was their own.

A HOME OUT OF WILDERNESS

Fred Ivanovich Ozeroff was born in 1881 in Russia, into a family of seven. His father was a farmer who lived in the Caucasus Mountain region. In 1899 the large Doukhobor migration to Canada took place, and it is with this group that my grandfather came, being eighteen years of age at that time. He settled in Saskatchewan in the area of Verigin, and it was here that he met and married my grandmother, Irene Ivanovna Samarodin; both were at the age of twenty. They were married in 1901 in a simple way. My grandfather, accompanied by his brother and cousin went by wagon to the bride's home, had supper, and took the bride and some belongings home. In Saskatchewan, my grandfather's major occupation was farming, and he also worked on the railroad, road construction, and in a brick factory. In earlier conversations with them, my grandparents recalled their early life in Canada where for a short time they lived in earthen huts, later building better homes of logs and rough lumber with grass covered roofs. On the prairies, they gave birth to two daughters, Anastasia and Polly.

After ten years of marriage my grandparents moved to British Columbia. The year was 1911. Their major reason for the move was the withdrawal of Doukhobor lands following the Homestead controversy of 1906-1907. They had also heard

that B.C. was a nicer place to live and much more climatically suited for fruit and vegetable farming. They first settled in Ootischenia where the family lived communally for eight years. My grandfather was one of the workers on the Doukhobor Brilliant Bridge, where he worked on the tower construction and other various jobs. He also worked on the railroads. In Ootischenia, my father William was born in 1913.

In 1919 the family moved to Grand Forks where they lived in a Village in the district of Christovoye. In Grand Forks, my grandfather worked as a baker in the brick factory and logging camps.

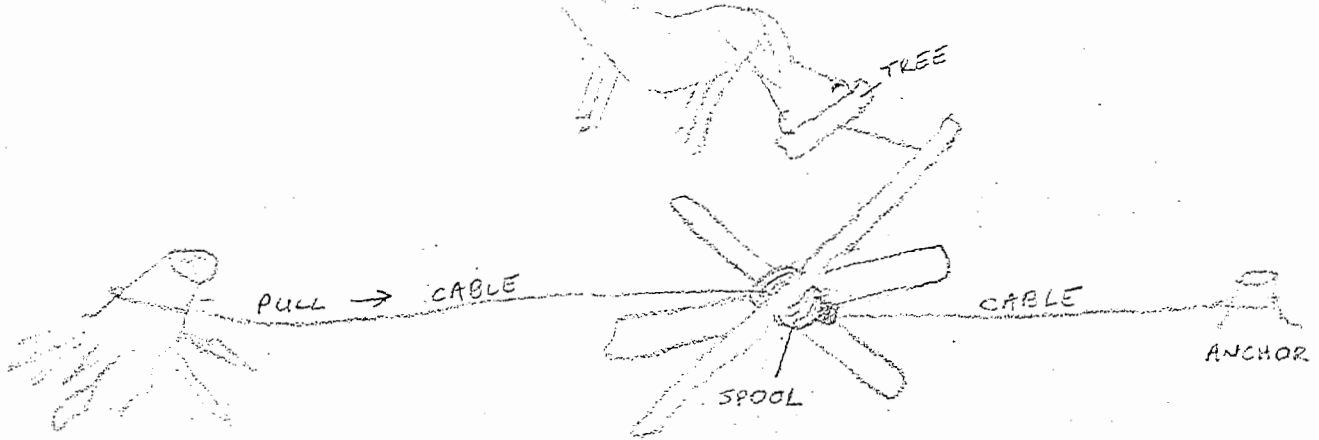
In 1927 the family moved to West Robson where they rented a small house. Here, Grandfather for some time was employed by William Waldie and Sons Sawmill Limited and later worked on building construction in Trail. At this time, the family rented an orchard in East Robson.

While living in rented accomodation, the family had a strong desire to have their own farm. After making a few inquiries about purchasing land, they were informed of a certain piece of land at Pass Creek which was in tax arrears. They took the opportunity to obtain 124 acres; which, after the legal procedures cost \$125.00 : one dollar per acre. The land was adjacent to Raspberry Village on the north boundary and stretched about one mile up Pass Creek road. The road at that time was winding and narrow; in some places one-way, and during the spring thaw the road was so

muddy it was impassable for motor vehicles. In spite of this, the road had a certain beauty about it, being lined on both sides by young forest growth.

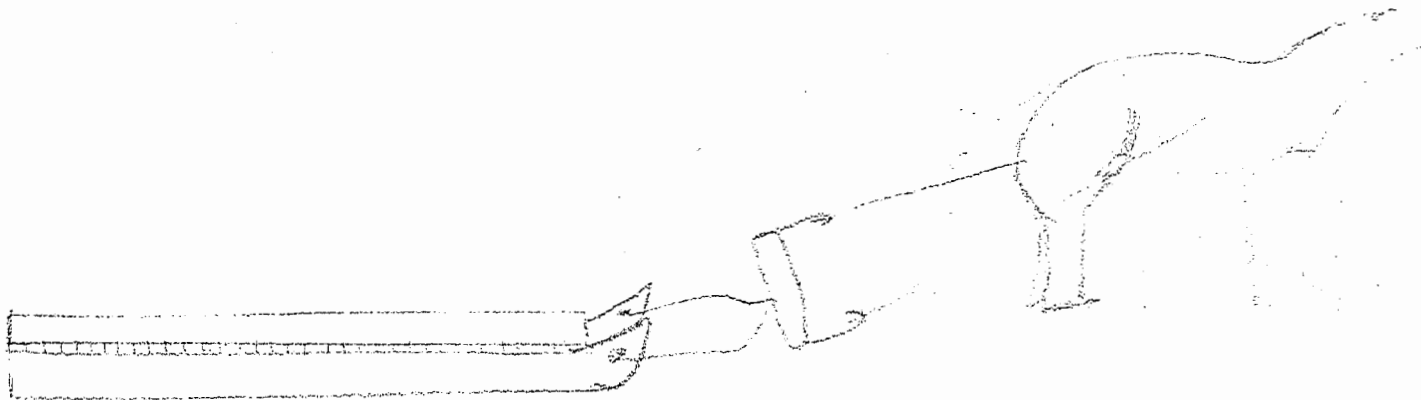
In 1930 land clearing on the newly-purchased land was begun. The vegetation was underbrush with small timber. Much useful large timber was harvested earlier for lumber and smaller timber was also collected earlier for fire-wood. The whole family, with the exception of the older daughter who had married earlier, took part in the task of clearing the land. There were no power tools, therefore axes and cross-cut saws were used. Small stumps; those four inches or so in diameter were pulled out by a work horse. Larger stumps; those up to about a foot in diameter were removed by using a "stump puller." This machine consisted of the following. Two timbers were laid crossing each other. At the place where the timbers crossed was fixed a revolving iron spool for cable. The machine was anchored to a stump by a cable. A third log which was pulled by a horse was attached to the spool. A cable ran from the spool to the stump which was to be removed. The horse would walk in a circle, winding the cable, creating pull on the stump until the stump was removed. A diagram of this machine is on the next page. Dynamite was used to split stumps a foot or more in diameter, after which, the parts of the stump were removed by the stump-pulling machine.

Diagram of the Stump-Pulling Machine Used



After the land was cleared and stumps were pulled, surface rocks were collected by hand, being loaded onto a stone-boat which was drawn by a horse. These rocks were put in piles for future use. The stone-boat was a wooden structure resembling a sled and was about three feet wide and four feet long. The runners were made of five-inch or six-inch timbers. The flooring was of two-inch lumber and small sides were built up.

Diagram of the Stone-Boat

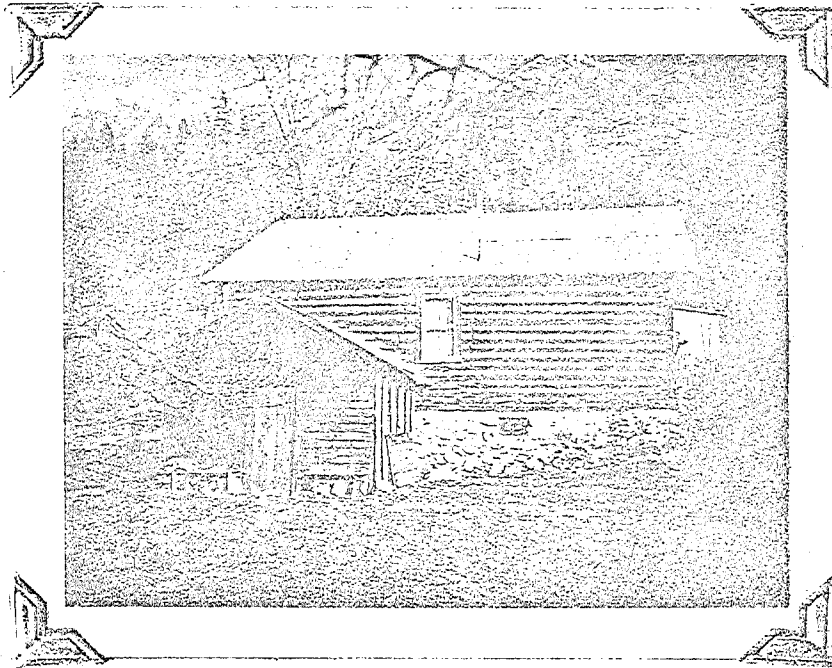


The land which was cleared was split-level and stretched about a half mile along the Pass Creek road. Because of this terrain, roads had to be built to provide a means of access to various areas. These roads were all built by hand through the use of picks and shovels. In some cases the roads had to cross a dip or gully in the land. Rock walls were erected and the gulleys were filled with previously-gathered rock and then covered with soil.

The hard work of clearing and preparing land was accomplished during the hot summer months. To avoid the heat, work was begun at 3:00 a.m. and went until noon. In the afternoon, work began at about 5:00 p.m. and continued until dark.

The land when purchased contained a small two-roomed log cabin belonging to the previous owner who had logged the land. One room contained the living quarters, the other was the stable for the work animals. This cabin was remodelled by my grandparents and family to make it liveable and it is here that the family stayed while building their new home.

A basement was dug which was one-third of the full house basement area. Excavation was done by pick and shovel with the soil and rock being hauled away by wheelbarrow. The basement walls were lined with rock and the remaining foundation for the house was a mixture of rock and lime mortar.

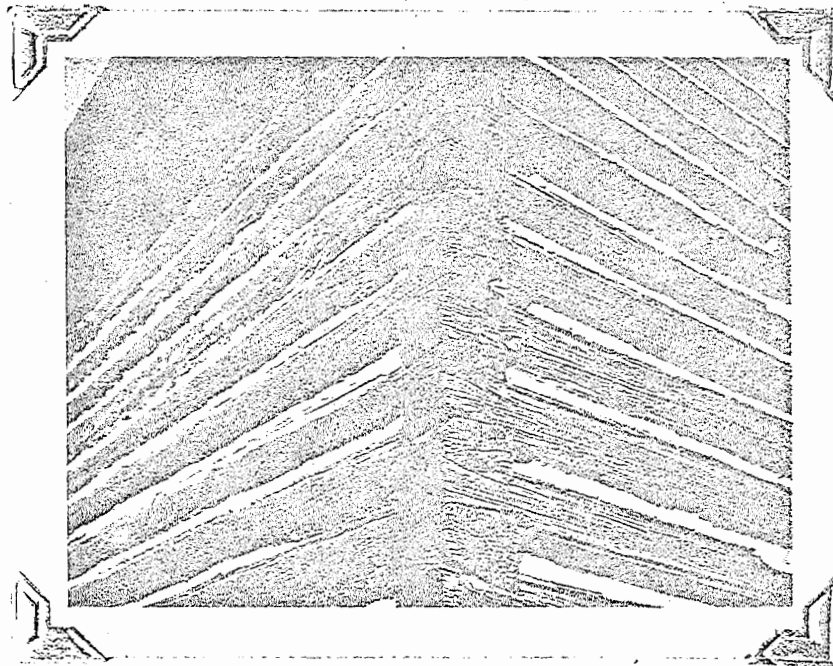


Recent Photograph of the Back of House
Showing entrance into the Basement
Which was Constructed in Later Years.
Notice House Foundation of Rock and
Lime Mortar.

The family made their own plans for their house, which was constructed mostly of logs and measured twenty-four feet wide and thirty feet long. My grandfather and father went into the surrounding forest, chose the right size of trees, fell them, and skidded the logs by horse to the basement are where they were de-barked and prepared to be laid in place. The beams were made of cedar logs with a diameter of eight to ten inches. The floor joists were also of logs of four to six inch diameters. The butt ends of the logs were notched to bring the diameter to the necessary size. Low-grade cedar 1x10" and 1x12" lumber for the floor was purchased

from Waldie's Sawmill at about seven dollars per thousand board feet. After the rough lumber flooring was in, the construction of the walls of the house began.

The eight foot high walls were made of logs six to eight inches in diameter. The larger ends of the logs were shaved to bring their size down to the uniform six inches. The ends of the logs were Lock-Notched. This method makes the corners of the house neat and attractive and eliminates any possibility of the logs spreading or slipping out of place. The log joints were filled with lime mortar.



Photograph of the Outside Corners of the House
Which Shows the Lock-Notch Method of Log
Cornering

The ceiling joists were constructed similarly to the floor joists. After the ceiling joists were in, work on the roof was begun. The rafters were of 2x4" and were boarded with low grade cedar 1x10" and 1x12" lumber. The roofing was of sawmill-cut cedar shingles.

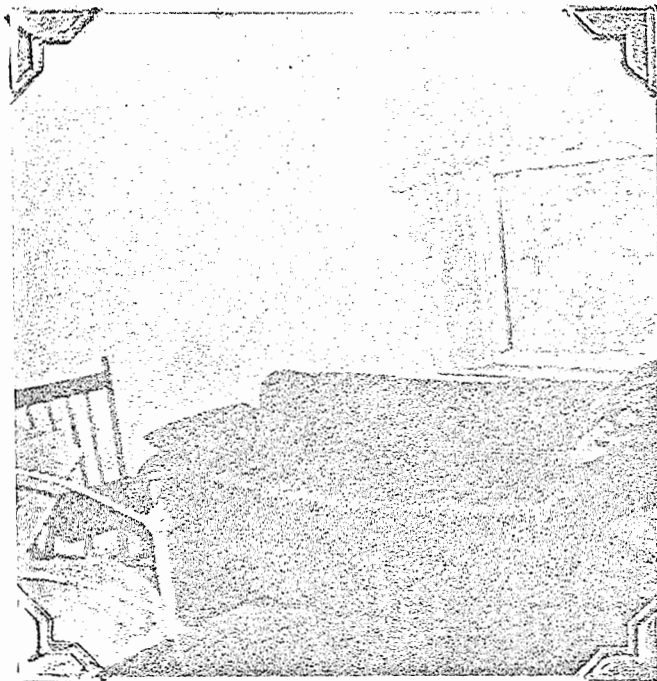
A red-clay brick and lime mortar chimney was placed in the wall area between the kitchen and living room. An opening in the kitchen served the wood-burning cook stove and an opening in the living room served the wood-burning heating stove.

Onto the front of the house was constructed a porch which was six feet wide and ran the full length of the house and part of one end of the house where the kitchen was located.

After outside walls, roof, porch and chimney were in place, interior finishing began. The ceiling was finished with 1x4" V-joint lumber. To prepare the inside walls for plastering, 1/2x2 inch by four foot long wooden laths were purchased at a sawmill and nailed about one-half inches apart diagonally to the shaved logs.

For this house, an old country-type plaster was used. This plaster consists of a mixture of a large part of dirt-clay, a portion of fine-cut straw, and for plasticity, a good portion of cow manure was mixed into the mixture. In those days, this sort of plaster was not mixed in a machine. A level, hard-packed, circular piece of

ground, fifteen to twenty feet in diameter was prepared, and all the components of the plaster were distributed evenly on this surface. The mixture was wetted with water and was now ready for mixing. A horse was bridled and ridden circularly in the plaster mixture. After going in one direction for a time, the direction was changed to prevent the horse from becoming dizzy. This process lasts for about three hours. When the plaster is adequately mixed by the horse's hooves, it was carried in containers to the house and applied to the walls with hands and wooden trowels. The plaster is of a grey colour when dry, and for brightness in the rooms, it was white-washed with lime, to which a small portion of blueing was added.

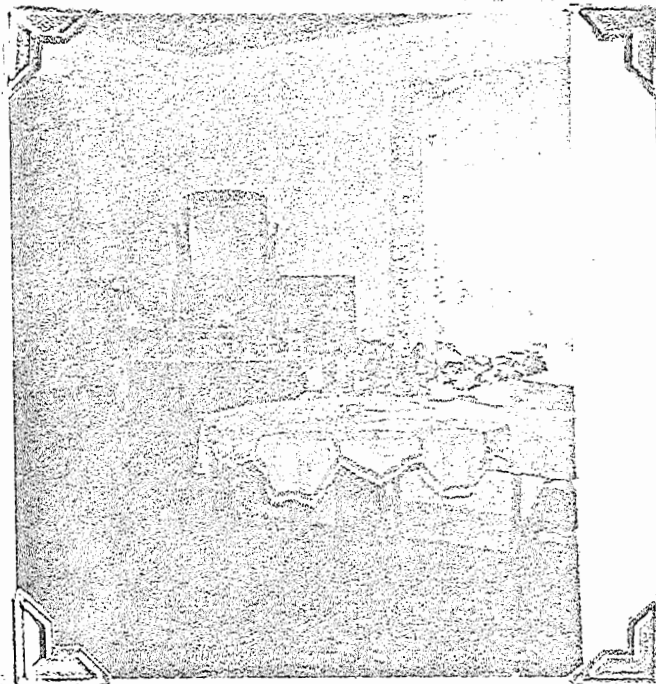


Photograph Inside one of the
Bedrooms, Showing the White-
Washed Plastered Walls

The house contained a kitchen, living room, and three bedrooms. There was no indoor toilet at that time, an outhouse was used.

Inside the house, the finished flooring was of 1"x4" grooved boards of larch, fir and hemlock. Casings around the doors and windows were of 1"x5" common boards. Baseboards were of 1"x8" common board.

For insulation in the attic, laths were nailed onto the ceiling joists and were plastered with the same plaster as the interior walls.



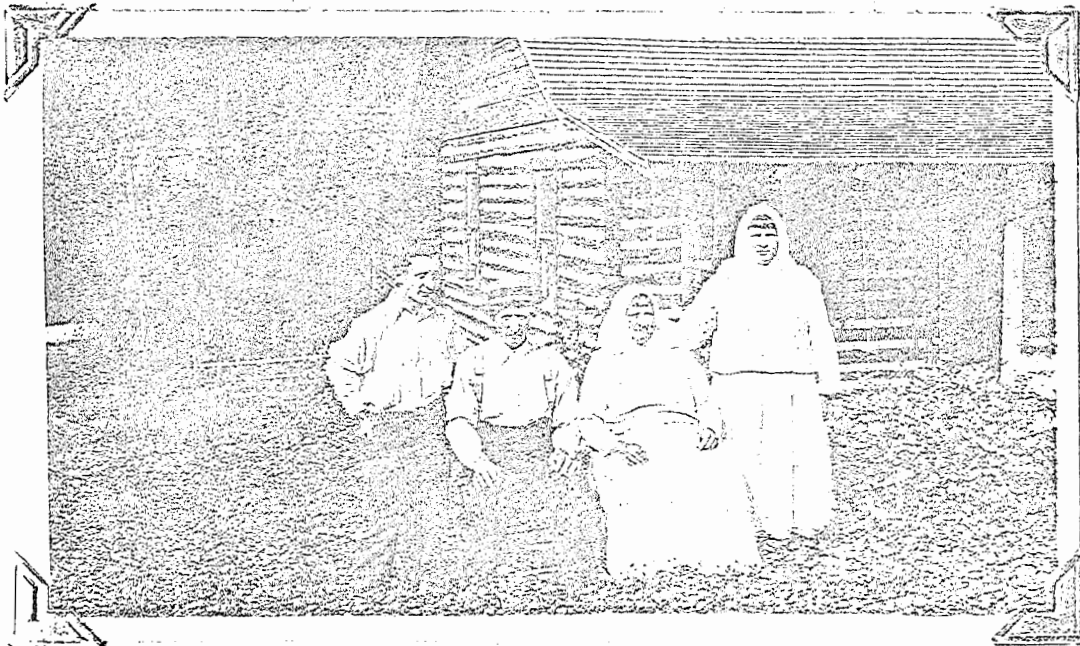
Photograph of the Living-Room

Outside, a steam bath-house was built. Inside the bath-house was a square concrete enclosure with walls a foot and a half high, which contained a wood-burning stove converted from an oil barrel. In the corner stood a wooden barrel

for holding water. From this barrel ran a two-inch pipe to the inside of the stove where it was attached to the inside ceiling of the stove. After the pipe made the U-bend inside the stove it led back to the barrel. The fire heated the pipe and consequently the water circulating in the pipe was heated and stored in the barrel. Rocks were placed around the stove and were heated adequately enough so that when water was sprinkled on them, steam was produced.

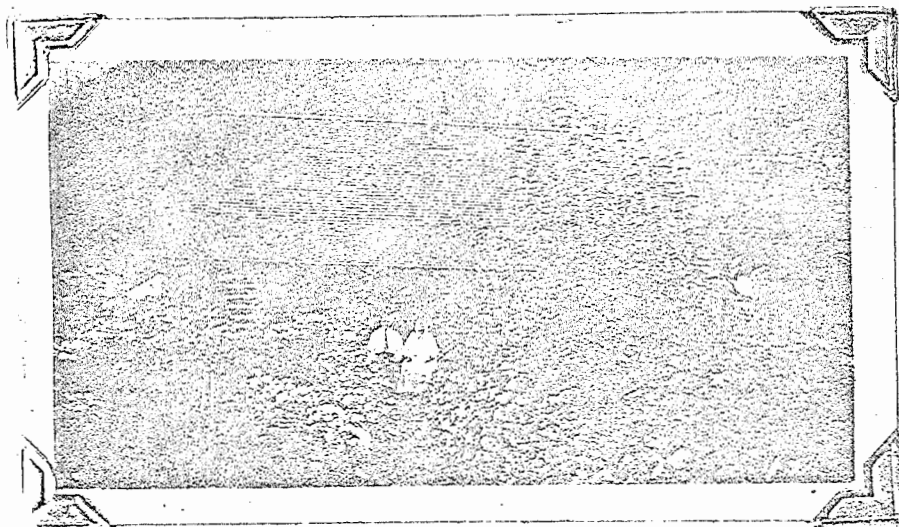
Domestic and irrigation water was supplied by an underground mountain spring. A concrete intake and reservoir tank measuring four feet high, six feet wide and eight feet long were constructed to store the water. The main water line was of two-inch wood-stave pipes and the branch lines were of steel.

The family moved into their new home in the summer of 1931.



The Family Posing in Front of Their Newly-Constructed Home
From left to right: My father, William ; Grandfather, Fred
Grandmother Irene ; Aunt Polly

Soon after the house was built, flower beds and orchards were planted around the house. In the years that followed, the rest of the farm buildings, orchards and gardens were added. When the flowers and vines in front of the house were in full bloom, the house was given a very beautiful appearance, as the following photograph illustrates.



Grandfather and Grandmother in Front of Their Home in the Early 1940's.

Electricity did not come to Pass Creek until 1954. In the late 1930's, my father became interested in the possibility of generating electricity by means of using the spring water pressure. After reading many books and pamphlets on the subject, my father constructed a small generating system to serve the grandparent's home.


He ordered a slow speed six-volt generator and constructed a waterwheel and shaft which was contained in a narrow box-like enclosure. The water supply for power came from two springs and was directed at the waterwheel at a certain angle by two nozzles which were attached to the two supply pipes. The waterwheel turned the generator, the generator supplied electricity to the six-volt storage battery. From the batteries, lines were drawn to the house. The house was wired simply, the "Knob and Tube" wiring method was used. The electricity produced was enough for one twenty-five watt bulb to burn steady, and one or two fifteen watt bulbs were installed in every room and closet which were used only when necessary.






Recent Photograph of the House
From the Pass Creek Road

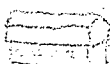

Photograph of the Entire Farm: late 1930's




 Steam Bath-house

Small Chicken Coop 

 House
 Orchard

 Barn
 Storage Shed

Large Chicken Coop 

Garden

Strawberry Fields

CONCLUSION

This paper told the story of a family who strongly desired to establish a permanent home in this country and succeeded in their efforts. Out of wilderness land, a house and farm were created.

I had always been interested in learning the history of my grandparents' farm and especially their log house. I began this paper with the hypothesis that such a project would prove very informative, interesting, and historically valuable. The results have shown me that this indeed was an educational, interesting project.

My grandparents had a long and happy marriage of seventy-four years. They spent their last forty-four years of life together on their farm at Pass Creek. To them and the family, the house was indeed a home.

Today the house is inhabited by my Aunt Polly. Although the house has undergone some modernization in recent years, it nevertheless remains very significant historically to members of the family. The house is a very fine reminder and symbol of toil, dedication, and family unity.