MILTON IN THE 1860's

(Told by an old man at White Point in November 1953)

I used to hear my father talk about the great times in Liverpool and Milton just before Confederation. Milton had a dozen sawmills going, turning out ship timber and pine lumber, and Liverpool down the river was building square-riggers and loading them with pine and sending them off to sea. There was no railroad then, and the road up-river from Liverpool was just a dirt road that got pretty bad in the spring and fall, because most of the lumber from the sawmills was hauled by horses and wagons to the Liverpool wharves.

Everyone seemed to be prosperous then, and even in a little place like Milton the women dressed pretty XXXXXXXX stylish. The packet-brigs used to run back and forth to Boston from Liverpool, and there wasn't a gal above the age of sixteen that hadn't been to Boston to see the sights and buy some fancy clothes. The men didn't dress so fancy. I suppose they were too busy earning money for the women xxx to spend. Anyhow they were great workers, and even the sawmill owners weren't afraid to pitch in with their own hands.

Well, sir, one fine spring day in the 60's the packet comes in from Boston and off steps a Yankee passenger that had come up for the trip. He walked about Liverpool for a bit, looking at the shipyards. He wanted to stretch his legs after the voyage and someone told him to walk up the river to Milton. It was five miles altogether, there and back, and mighty pretty scenery along the river. So the Yankee set off.

The scenery was pretty, alright, but the road was terrible. The winter's frost had only come out of it a week or two before, and what with the rains and the lumber-wagons the whole thing was xxxx just a string of mud-holes. Whenever one of the holes got so you couldn't haul a wagon through it, they'd haul down a load or two of sawdust from the mills, or maybe a load of slabs, and dump that in. And after you'd hauled a few wagons through that, why, you'd be down to your axles again in a kind of porridge of mud and sawdust and rotten slabs.

Well, it so happened there was three or four big barks in Liverpool loading pine lumber for the West Indies, and every horse and wagon in Milton, and every man and boy that could drive a team, was on the road. Mostly the boys drove the teams, and the men struggled alongside, heaving and pushing on the wagon wheels to help the horses out. Being smart, the Yankee didn't try to walk the road, he took to the river bank with those long legs of his, and after a time he came to Milton. Milton was a pretty nice village then, with wooden sidewalks, and good big houses, because lumber was cheap and so was paint, and there was three churches and a school.

Well, as I say, it was a fine sunny afternoon, and there was a tea-fight of some kind in the basement of the Baptist church, and all the Milton women and gals were flocking along those plank sidewalks, dressed up to the nines, Boston style. The Yankee was surprised. He hadn't expected anything like that up in the Nova Scotia woods. Big hoop skirts and jackets and frills and hats and little parasols, as if a mite of sunshine would spoil their complexions, just as good as Tremont Street. There was a x notice up outside the church inviting everybody to the tea-fight, so the Yankee paid his fifteen cents and went in and sat down. The ladies bustled about and served him tea, and buns and butter, and offered him seventeen kinds of cake and cookies, and the whole thing served on fancy china that the women had brought from their homes. Oh they were swell up there in XXXin Milton, those times, no mistake.

When the Yankee started back to Liverpool he took the road down the other side of the river, thinking it might be a little better. But it wasn't. The muck was deeper there than on the other side, if anything, though there wasn't much choice; and there was the same procession of lumber-wagons, loaded heavy, and

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the boys sitting high on the lumber cracking the whips, and the horses struggling, and the men wading up to their knees in the mud alongside, heaving and cussing and sweating.

There hadn't been a man at the tea-fight except the parson and the Yankee and one or two clerks from the stores, and now the Yankee could see why. The men were all here, on the road, working to get that lumber down to the ships. Anyhow the Yankee took to the roadside, like before, walking along the river. When he got back to the ship somebody asked him what he thought of Milton. He scratched his jaw.

"Waal," he said. "I cal'late I can tell you that in mighty few words. Milton seems to be heaven for women and gals, but it sure is hell for men and horses."
