



PUTTING DOWN ROOTS

Imagine living in 1796. How different would your life be? There would be no computers, televisions, microwaves, or telephones. You would not even have running water. A young boy named John Simpson survived the winter of 1796 near Presqu'île with only oxen for company. Could you?

1796

Ship's Log: 1796

In February, 1796, Obadiah Simpson and his young son, John, arrived at Presqu'île and built a small cabin on the mainland. Obadiah left John behind to take care of their oxen and new homestead while he returned to Adolphustown. He left in February, travelling on showshoes. He returned with his family when the ice melted in April. At 12 years of age, John Simpson was the first settler to spend a winter in this area. He would not be the last.

Life for early settlers was hard. Settlers cut down trees by hand, and built their homes with the logs. They also needed to clear the land to make space for their animals and crops.

With no stores nearby, hunting was important for food, clothing, and bedding.

Settlers often traded supplies with the local Aboriginal people, who had already been in the area for centuries.

Did you know?

In 1796, Presqu'île's beech and maple forests were much larger than they are now.

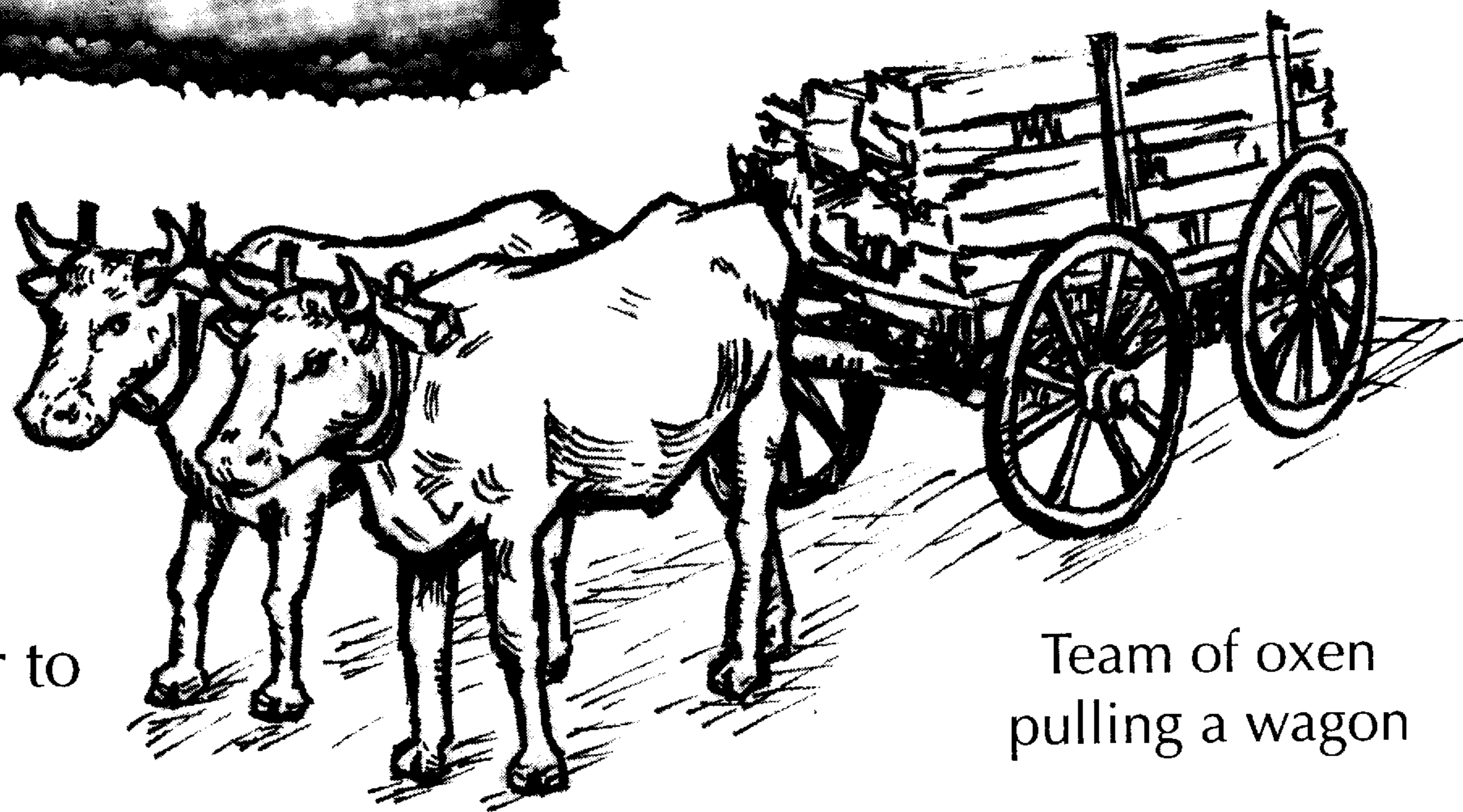
Wolves roamed the area, and bears were often seen enjoying the beech nuts.

The Great Lakes schooner, HMS Speedy, was built in Kingston.

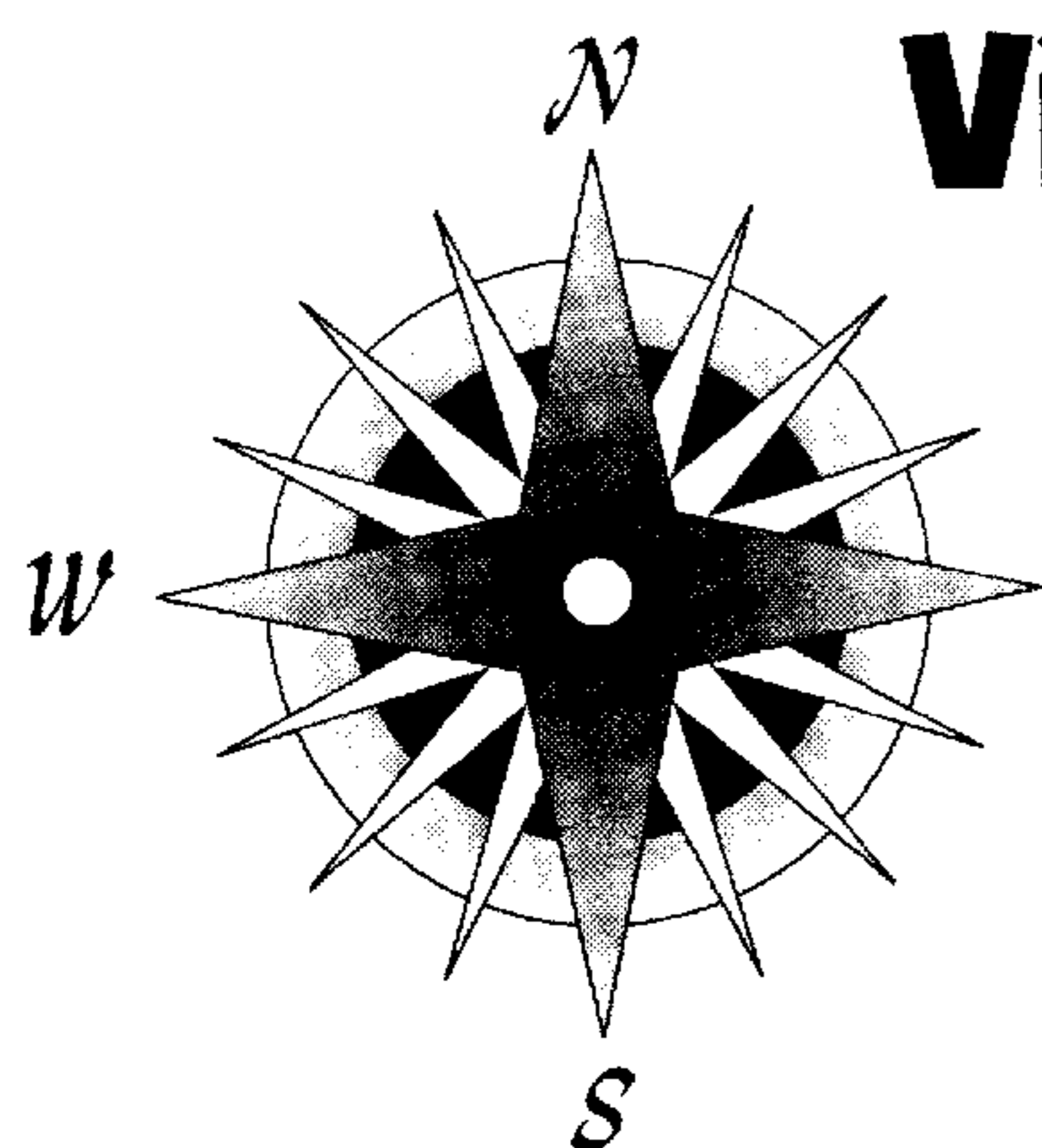
Did you know?

Early settlers raised oxen as work animals. Oxen were very strong and were used for plowing fields and pulling wagons.

Two oxen were often used together to haul heavier loads.



Team of oxen pulling a wagon



Visit It Today

Just outside the entrance to Presqu'île Provincial Park is a rock cairn marking the spot very close to the original Simpson home.

Activity



Go and visit the rock cairn dedicated to this area's first settlers, the Simpsons.

Many people sketch this cairn. Why don't you?

Read this letter sent to John from his father

Activity

Dear John,

Mother is very anxious to see our new home. She is already making plans for when the family is together again.

I have told her about the sheltered harbour, which will be an ideal location for boat repairs.

Your food, firewood, and lamp oil must last all winter.

Be sure to take good care of the oxen, as well. They can be difficult at times.

I will bring the family to our new home in the spring. We will be travelling by boat.

Your loving father,
Obadiah Simpson



Imagine that you are John Simpson in the late winter of 1796.

Write a letter to your family. Tell them how you are spending your time all alone.

Did you know?

Before pens were invented, people wrote by dipping the end of a feather into an inkwell.



How far back can you trace your family history? Ask your family for help.