

Fred Templeton Still Making Canoes At Age Of 76 Years

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Former Guide Recalls Days Of Caribou Moose and Spruce Gum

Snatching a few moments from his canoe-making, Fred Templeton, 76-year-old Greenville man, recalled when wars were so short that a man couldn't get out of the woods in time to join up, when caribou were prevalent and moose roamed the region in droves from a dozen to 50, and when collecting spruce gum was a profitable enterprise (or almost so).

Born in Willimantic in 1876 of Scotch parents who passed a good deal of the salty brogue onto him, Fred came to Moosehead in 1898 and guided at Kineo in the summer from that time up to 1945. He now devotes his time to making canoes, the art of which he knows since the early age of 12 years.

During the winter months, Fred said, the guides would make their living by trapping and collecting spruce gum. The spruce gum was bought by drug firms in Boston for as much as a dollar a pound. He recalls one winter when he and



Old time guides, Roland Marsh, rear, and Fred Templeton, forward, inspect canoe which Templeton is constructing for Marsh. (Polaroid One-Minute Photo by Gazette)

his partner collected a barrel and a half of the gum. There is no market for it now, he said, although spruce gum is still enjoyed by people who know and love the woods. It was an enterprise at which a person could "break even", Fred said, and with a few beaver

pelts on the side, might show a profit.

Fred said that years ago herds of moose from as many as a dozen to 50 could be seen crossing Moosehead Lake on the ice in winters, and recalls the sight of a herd of 12 moose on the Masquacook tributary of the Allagash during spruce gum collecting session.

"On another trip up the Allagash with Judge William K. Townsend of New Haven, Conn., "Fred recalled, "we counted as many as 700 deer and 84 moose. You don't see anything like that today."

Fred is one of the few old-timers who have seen caribou in their native habitat. "The last year that I saw caribou was 1899", he said. "I saw four of them on Pillsbury Pond that year, a pond which empties into Haymock Lake." There

have been rumors of caribou tracks in the Katahdin area, he said, but as far as he knows, no one has seen the animal.

Caribou, he said, are taller than deer, with horns that branch longer and are shaped more flat. They don't weigh more than a buck deer, however.

About this war that they wouldn't let a fellow sign up for because most of the shooting was over, it was the Spanish-American War. Fred went into the woods in October, the war started in February, and he came out of the woods in April. When he tried to sign up they refused to take any more men because the situation was well under control.

"Some time I'll tell you about the time I was guiding a woman who shot a bear from the canoe we were in, who lost her balance and everybody was in the water splashing around, including the bear", Fred said. "Right now, I've got to finish this canoe."