

reality. Life was hard back then and the Nova Scotia Museum, its restorer, resisted the temptation to pretty it up. The furniture is worn and rough, the stair going up to the sparse bedrooms steep and narrow. The tiny and cluttered kitchen centres around a fireplace with a variety of pot hooks and a built-in bread oven that any right-thinking baker would hate to use. The fields outside are plowed by oxen, and it takes thirty hands to plant and reap, build and repair. The farm workers are friendly and informative and speak slowly in the gentle, earnest Nova Scotian lilt. You can watch the oxen plowing, ride in a horse-drawn wagon and eat a slice of bread baked in the fireplace and spread with home-churned butter.

The Valley is rimmed and drained by the Atlantic, the Bay of Fundy and a great many rivers, and the people have always taken their livelihood from the water as well as the land. The Cornwallis River has been cleaned of pollution and is teeming with brown trout and striped bass. An occasional salmon is taken with a trout fly and flounder can be caught off the wharf.

The Gaspereau River has spawning smelt in April and May, and when they're gone the fish with the same name as the river arrive. The fish, also known as alewife, is not for gourmets. Its main virtue is that when it is properly cured it remains edible for a long time and can be shipped a long way. The fishermen are licensed (some licenses have been in the same family for four or five generations) and each has his designated spot

on the shore. When the gaspereaux are running he lowers a long pole with a net into the water, balancing it on a fulcrum. When the net is full he jumps on the end, lifting it up and closing the net. The fish are salted, 100 pounds of salt to 200 pounds of fish, for fourteen days, then repacked in 100 per cent brine. Most are shipped to feed poor people in the West Indies, though lately some have been filleted and sent to Europe in six-pound blocks as a substitute for herring.

The river has other attractions. The students of Acadia University skim down its swift waters on inner tubes in the spring. They are joined by hordes of other youngsters, many from afar, greatly irritating the fishermen.

The South Coast

Move south to the rocky coast and the terrain and accents change. Nova Scotia has at least three accents, the Acadian, the Scottish and the Lunenburg. Lunenburgers end a great many words in an "er" sound, which may or may not have something to do with the fact that the town was first settled by German farmers in 1753.

Since the countryside has more rock than soil, the farmers became fishermen and, eventually, boat builders. They launched some 20,000 sailing vessels over the years, and one of the last and most remarkable was the *Bluenose*, a two-masted, gaff-rigged schooner built in 1921, which won four international races and wound up with her likeness engraved on the Canadian dime. When her



Ross Farm.