

The Old Camboose and Bake Oven

TWO CONTRIVANCES FOR THE COOKING OF FORMER DAYS.

THE accompanying illustration shows the old bake-oven which was the immediate predecessor of our modern cook-stove. They were principally used for the baking of bread, although also for drying apples and berries, and sometimes even cooking roasts.

The bake-oven was built of brick, usually with an outer covering of rough stone plastered with grey clay and lime, most frequently erected in the yard or an outer shed but occasionally built in the house beside the fire-place. A wood fire was built inside until the oven was properly heated. Then the fire was removed and the bricks swept clean with a broom, frequently made of cedar boughs tied tightly to a stick. The dough was placed on the hot bricks and the heat retained in these ovens was sufficient to bake more than one batch of bread. Sometimes it was necessary to allow the oven to cool a little before it was the right temperature for baking.

In those early pioneer days when there was no baker it was necessary to cook considerable quantities of bread; so many of these ovens had a capacity of twenty or thirty loaves. Many of these old bake-ovens can still be seen standing by some of the old residences in the province of Quebec, and perhaps in some of the back settlements an occasional one is still used.

The Camboose was used principally in the lumber camps and was the most economic form of cooking, heating and lighting that could be devised. It was a large square arrangement made of logs and filled with stones and sand on which a wood fire was kept burning.

It was built right in the centre of the log shanty and a hole was cut in the roof directly above it to allow the smoke to escape. Usually some kind of crude, box-shaped chimney was built around the opening on the top of the shanty; sometimes a large pork barrel with the ends knocked out was used for this purpose. From the corner posts of the Camboose large cranes swung, on which the pots hung for boiling purposes.

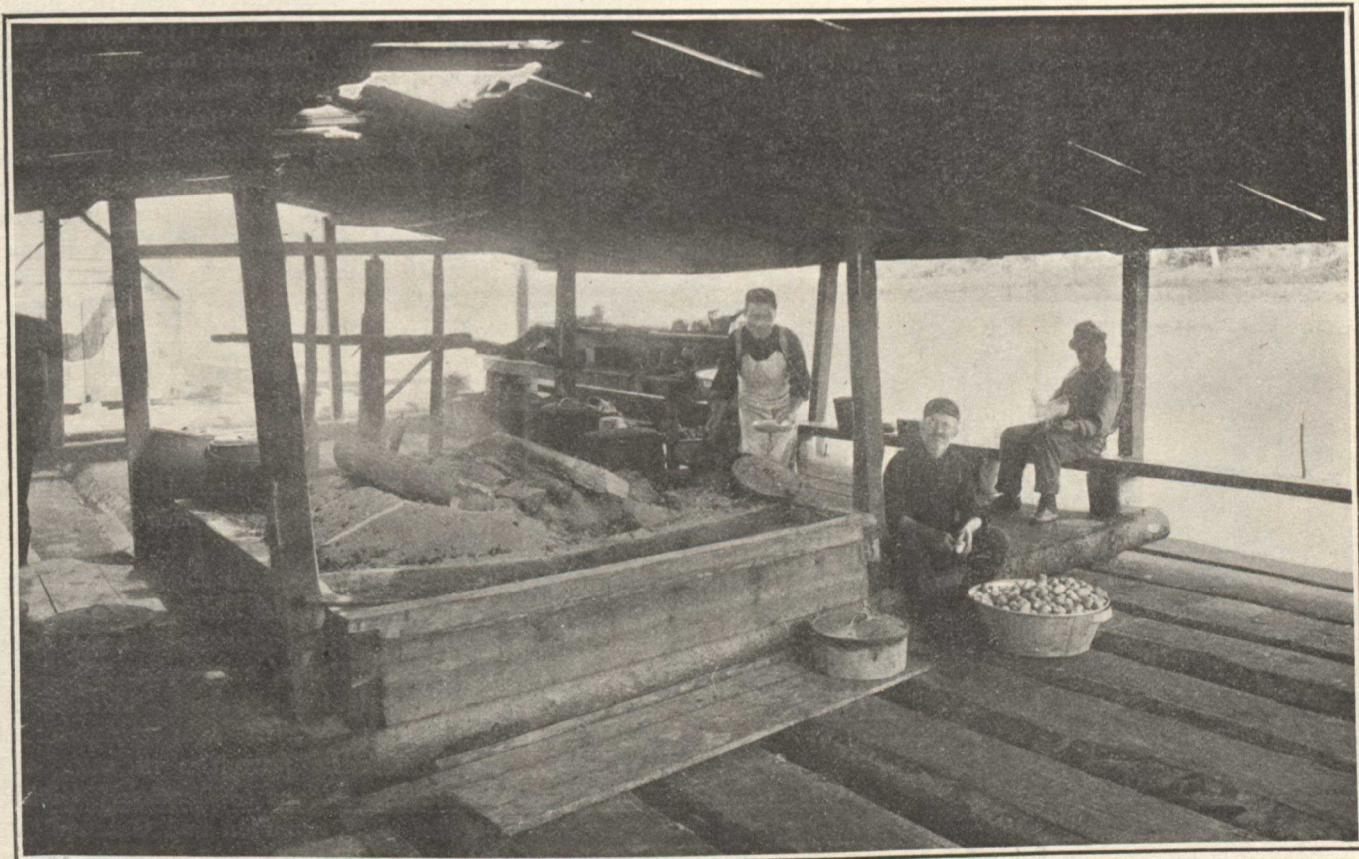
At one end of the Camboose a section was portioned off large enough for a row of big black iron bake-kettles. This section was sometimes called the bean-hole. Here the cook could bake his bread and pork and beans, with his bake-kettles buried in the hot sand and the men could build a roaring fire in the Camboose without interfering with the baking.

The large bon-fire in the camboose of the camp served to do the cooking, light and heat the shanty and dry out the damp clothes of the lumbermen. Lumbermen have told me that the smoke never bothered them. This, however, does not necessarily mean that the Camboose never smoked badly. The baking done in these cambooses was certainly very popular. A loaf of bread rolled out of one of the big iron kettles resembled in colour and shape a large Canadian cheese, although it was usually a little browner and had a thick crust.

The illustration of a camboose shows it on a raft accompanying logs down the Ottawa river. The Camboose is still used in some of the outpost lumber camps in Northern Quebec.



Ye Ancient Bake Oven.



A Camboose on an Ottawa River Raft.