

Grade 5 Pre Visit Activity

How do we know?

How do we know what happened at Ross Farm in the early 1800s? We find **evidence** about those days by looking at the written records. These included the land grant, letters written by Governor Dalhousie and the diaries of Edward Ross. Here is a how Governor Dalhousie described what he found when he visited Sherbrooke.

The road to Ross's hut is scarcely passable for horses, about 12 miles—to Lance's 3 miles, very good, but we then struck into the woods & what with rocks & bogs & rotten trees I never could have hoped to accomplish the end without broken legs or arms. However, we did reach Rosebank, as he calls his place, in about 4 1/2 hours. He had prepared a very good dinner for us, & invited his neighbour Mr. Wells, an officer of the Navy, whose distressed circumstances have led him to fix there as a schoolmaster for the sake of getting land and rations.

Mrs. Wells, a remarkably pretty woman, very cheerful manners & very ladylike—she is a niece of Mr. Prescott's of Cornwallis. I expressed my surprize that she could have dared the hardships of such a situation, but she said that necessity had driven them, and she was quite happy in seeing their hardships disappear very rapidly. In another year she hoped to have forgot it all, but as yet they were frightful to look back upon. She had been obliged to go out there in May, the snow then so deep that she got into a wretched log house prepared for them by the window, & during the first month kept themselves warm by the thickness of the smoke in the hut. Now she has her little garden, her poultry yard, a pianoforte & two sweet little children, she says, that occupy her whole time from morning till night.

Marjorie Whitelaw, ed. *The Dalhousie Journals* (Halifax: Oberon Press, 1978) p.91-2.

You be the historian! What can you learn about life in a rural society? Look at what Governor Dalhousie wrote in the notes above. What did you learn about:

- a) his way of travel?
- b) the conditions under which he travelled?
- c) the time it took to get to what is now Ross Farm?
- d) the weather one May?
- e) Mrs. Wells' activities?

We're looking forward to seeing you soon at Ross Farm Museum.