

EUNGELLA'S ROAD BUILDING P.E.I. DAYS



John Thomsett and Tom Styles ploughing at River Hill 1935
Courtesy John Thomsett

Our first house on the farm was built of timber slabs for the walls and split palms with the pith cut out for the roof. These were put on with each alternate slab over lapping one inverted the other way.

Later Flora milked cows while Dad worked on the P.E.I. roads and she carted the cream to Lenny Burgess at Eungella on the pommel of the saddle on horseback.

V. & A. THOMSETT
John recalls that they came up to Eungella in October 1931. Quite a few others like Jerry Sullivan, Sid Boon, Doug Mollenhagen, Charlie Eden, Harry Eden, Roy Whiting all up from Waymuran as conditions were bad down there in the bananas.

Wally Swayne had the store at the top then. Herb Burgess had the sawmill and Lenny Burgess was in the guest house.

John worked for the P.E.I. as a "horse pug" at the Bull Paddock camp firstly with horse and dray, later on the upper river road and along in front of Dean Ross's place. Then on the River Camp working on the River Hill on the Crediton side of the river with two horses and scoop and sometimes with Tom Style's two horses as well with a road plough.

*John Thomsett shifting till at Ross's gully
Courtesy John Thomsett*

Jock Howie at his ration tent and run about the Hazelwood turnoff towards Norm Foster's place about 1932. Later Pat Patullo had a store at the Bull Paddock near where the West Crediton School was built later on. This was in 1932 and he sold it in 1933 to Brennan.

Jack Cunningham and Mick Commerford were the only ones dairying at the start up on Eungella.

EDITORS NOTE
John's wife Agnes was reported to me to be the first white woman on the Crediton P.E.I. road camps to be living at Crediton.

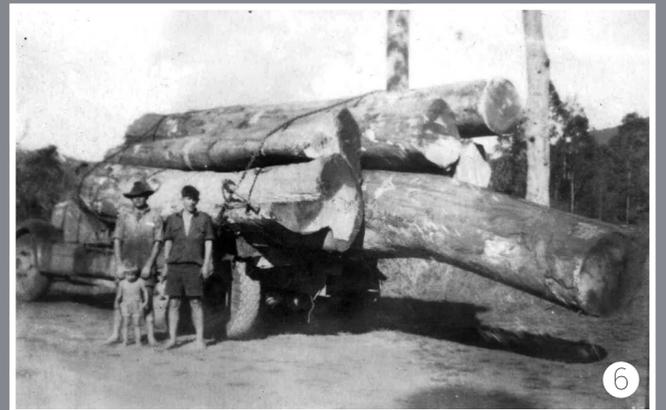


IMAGE DESCRIPTIONS:

1. Eungella PEI tent houses in 1938
- photo from *Dulcie Dearness (nee Wrench)*
2. PEI camp Dalrymple Rd ca 1930s
- photo from *Jim and Daphne Clews*
3. PEI camp - Old's Ranch (mess hut for workers)
run by Mrs Alice Old Dalrymple Rd, ca 1930s
- photo from *Jim and Daphne Clews*
4. John Thomsett photo from "The Rooftop Garden" Page 9
5. Extract from "The Rooftop Garden" Page 45
6. Des, Warren and Melvin Patullo with truck and logs

The men employed by the P.E.I. - Public Estates Improvement - branch of the Lands Department were responsible for creating and upgrading of all the roads in the Eungella area, from approximately 1929 to 1941.

Some local folk referred to the P.E.I as the "Peaceful Engineering Institute" - whilst not the correct name, it portrayed the essence of the work accurately.

Several hundred men were initially camped in Eungella. These workers were given employment during the depression times, towards a worthy cause. Similar work was being carried out in other parts of

Queensland, especially in the ranges further North, opening up the country for logging and farming.

Later on, camps of 200 - 300 men were established at various locations on Dalrymple Road and at Crediton, as roads in those areas progressed.

The original roads around Eungella were built with manual labour using picks, shovels, mattocks, axes and crosscut saws. Horse drawn drays, ploughs and graders were the work vehicles, with trucks being used later on.

"When the PEI came up there and put all the roads in, there were 400 Irishmen who put those roads in by hand. They used two horses, Dandy Dick and Nellie. They pulled a plough and then they had a grader with a little Caterpillar in it, that used to push it along and then they'd pull the logs off the road with the Caterpillar, [just] roll them off."

Des Patullo - Interview with ABC Rural (2006)

Step Back in Time *gathering Eungella's past*

Images were contributed to the "Step Back in Time - Gathering Eungella's past" project by past and present residents.

Visit www.history.eungella.com.au for more information.