

**REBA PEACOCK JONES RECALLS AN EARLIER TIME IN  
MCKEEVER  
10/28/97**

Reba Peacock Jones is one of the most interesting individuals I have ever had the pleasure to visit with. I thank Ruth Brussel for suggesting I interview her.

Reba was 95 years old in September, and has spent all but 10 of those years in the area. The family came to McKeever when she was a toddler to live her mother's parents.

Grandfather Frank Smith operated a hotel just out of McKeever on the Moose River Road. A carpenter by trade, her father helped his father-in-law with the hotel.

Reba attended school in McKeever along with 20 to 30 other children, Mildred Putney was one of the teachers she recalled. The school was across the tracks from the station tucked away in the woods along side a small stream. The lure of the stream caused her to receive her first spanking. She lingered long after school to play in it. Swimming in the river brought on her second and last spanking.

She walked to school, of course, and helped her grandfather in the process. He sent all of his orders for goods and sundries with her each day to leave with the Postmaster. On her return she carried the mail, receipts and other business transactions to her grandfather.

McKeever was a hub of activity in those days. There was a large sawmill and a pulp mill as well. There were several houses and outbuildings, as well as a large general store.

The railroad was the center of activity before the bridge over the river and the road to Old Forge was built. Twice a day, two trains would meet and were switched by each other to continue on their way.

Fascination with the bridge building tested Reba's will power and the rule about coming straight home from school. She tarried as long as she dared, watching them connect the steel with hot rivets.

The community was beset with several setbacks during that period. The first was a severe forest fire that threatened to burn everything. The railroad brought several men equipment and a tank car full of water to save the station and town.

She recalled that Ed Felt was the man in charge of the fire fighting. My *History of the New York State Forest Rangers Force* lists him as having been stationed at McKeever as a Patrolman-Ranger from 1909 to 1931.

The sawmill burned shortly after, along with many other buildings. Everyone pitched in to carry as many household goods out of the buildings as they could.

When a large dam by the pulp mill went out, she and her family had just enough time to make it up the hill back of the hotel. When it was over, they had to detour around the logs and other flotsam to get back to the buildings.

All the supplies for the hotel came by train and her father trundled them down with a wheelbarrow. The hotel was called the Moose Head Inn and was a complex consisting of three buildings.

Lodgings were maintained in the main building, the dining room and family quarters were in another, and across the road a saloon with a dance hall upstairs completed the business.

The first building on the left as you travel the Moose River Road is the only building left today. It was the dining room and family quarters and has been changed somewhat from its original structure.

To make a long story short, more next week.