

The Bark Covered House by William Nowlin
Excerpt One -- Clearing Land

(We arrived at our land by wagon one morning in the spring of 1834.)

“Father immediately (began) cutting logs for a house. In one week he had them ready, and men came (two miles) from Dearbornville to help him raise them (to form the walls and frame of the house). He then cut black ash trees (and) peeled off the bark to roof (the) house.... After having passed two weeks as (our nearest neighbor) Mr. Pardee’s (guests), we moved into a house of our own, had a farm of our own and owed no one.

“Father brought his axe from (New) York State: it weighed seven pounds; he gave me a smaller one. He (cut down) the trees right and left (around our house) until we could see the sun from ten o’clock in the morning till between one and two in the afternoon, when it mostly disappeared back of Mr. Pardee’s woods.

“Father found it was necessary for him to have a **team**, so he went to Detroit and bought a **yoke** of oxen; also, at the same time, a cow. He paid eighty dollars for the oxen and twenty-five for the cow. These cattle were driven in from Ohio. The cow proved to be a great help toward the support of the family for a number of years. The oxen...helped to clear the logs from the (land) father had cut over, and we planted late corn, potatoes and garden stuff.”

Vocabulary: Team = Two or more animals working together; Yoke = Wooden bar that joins two animals together at the head or neck so they can work together.

Questions to think about and answer:

1. Where did William’s father get the logs for their new house?
2. Where did the family stay while the new house was being built?
3. What was used for the roof of the house?
4. What do you think the family’s land look like when they first arrived?
5. Why couldn’t the family see the sun before 10 a.m. and after 2 p.m.?
6. What was the “team” that father decided he needed?
7. How do you think the cow helped support the family over the years?
8. How much did the family depend on father when they moved to Michigan?
9. List five things father knew or learned how to do to settle his family in Michigan.