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Mary Ann Beaton Makes Country Cheese Mary Ann Beaton of Mabott Coal Mines They don't make so much of it now as they used to\* Years ago pretty near every family made so much cheese\* There was some sale for it but the price then was very small. But it would help to buy their groceries, I guess\* And butter too. They could sell the butter\* Cheese just keeps\* The older it gets the better it is. Just keep it in a cool place\* It'll stand six months. Around November they'd make their cheese for the winter. It was my mother-in-law taught me. My mother made so much but my mother-in-law used to make quite a bit of it. She lived here with us for twelve years or so after we were married\* Her name was Sarah Beaton. I try to have six or seven cakes put away for the winter • we call it cakes • just a round block of cheese\* We used to have quite a few cows • used to have ten. Years ago they'd have as high as twelve. Right now we have six\* My husband and the boys milk them\* Then you have to separate the milk • separate the cream from the milk\* You make butter with the cream and then you have the skim milk. And you take the skim milk and you put it to one side in a plastic pail or whatever you have large enough to put it in to save it for your cheese\* The way it is, you save your cream\* Every day you get half a gallon in the mornii' and another half gallon in the evenii' • and you save your cream until you have six or seven gallons and then you make your churn. And you save your skim milk\* There's quite a bit of skim milk • perhaps in two days you have enough to make a cheese. It takes about fourteen gallons of skim milk to make an eight-pound cheese\* It doesn't have to be all skim milk\* I put some sweet milk in with it, you know\* Sweet milk is the whole milk that hasn't been separated. (Apparently the milk changes slightly throughout the seasons. Mrs\* Beaton told us that when you're used to it you'll know how much of each to add\* She told us that it never turns out the same, not once\*) You take fourteen gallons of skim milk and you let it get kind of sour\* You let it sit about a day, two days • you let it sit in its container in an outhouse or in a milkhouse if you have a milkhouse\* Not exactly a cool place but on a hot day it gets sour faster\* When it's cold it takes perhaps a couple of days before it'll get sour\* Then you take it in and put it in a tub on the stove and you warm it up • just luke? warm. And you stir it\* (While she stirred, she kept a finger in the milk to test the heat\* When it seemed to be getting too hot she moved the tub over on the stove\* She didn't want to scald the milk or let it boil\* The heat started to separate the curds and the whey\*) Then I always put a little rennet in it\* (Rennet is the inner lining of the fourth stomach of calves and other ruminants. Dried extract of this lining is used to curdle milk\*) I believe years back they used to make their own rennet\* We buy it at the store\* The local co-op has it\* You put about a tablespoon or two in\* Without rennet it doesn't work as good\* I've tried it. Rennet seems to make the whey and more curds and gathers it up better, I find\* When it's warm you put your rennet in and you keep stirring it and that makes your curds and brings it all together\* (She gathered the curds and took them from the tub with a wire strainer, letting the