

[Page 67 - From Visits with John A. MacIsaac](#)ISSUE : [Issue 54](#)

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But everybody was happy. My mother there was jumping with joy. The new house going up. Even, I--there was a (part of the) barn, (no) door onto it--24 by 8. And I was going to close it in. But my mother said, "No. Leave it open. It's such a lovely place to hang clothes." Have lines going back and forth. She wouldn't have to go out in the snow. So, it was left that way. Left that way till here, a few years ago--oh, probably 8 or 10 year ago--I closed it up. (Your mother had died by then.) Yeah. She died in '37. The two boys stayed with me, and (my sis? ter) stayed, and Papa, poor Papa. Papa died in '42. He'd be 78 that October. And my mother was about that age, but she died quite a few years before. She was, I think, 78 that May. That would be in '37 (And you built the house for your family. You were telling me once that you didn't marry because you were so poor?) Oh yeah, yes, yeah. Then, like that itself, was our own family. And we were all together in those years, the 7 of us. We only had a lit? tle one-room house. And how would it be if I took in a woman? Either that, or leave the whole thing to them. I was the one that they were depending on, and I knew that. And to get a wife--that was the easiest thing in the world for me to get. I could get a wom? an, and nice women too. I could have got a schoolteacher, I could have got a nurse, and I could have got a nice farm girl. But like that itself, we were so poor that we had to look after ourselves first, to get some place for ourselves. (So you never married.) No, I never married, no.... (It's a fair question, John A., to ask. When we talk--you came home to build a home for your parents.) Yeah. (You came home to take care of your parents.) Yeah. (You came home because your younger broth? er came home.) Yeah. (You never rebelled.) No. Never did. (Were there things you would have rather have done?) Then, there might have been. There might have been. (But you came home.) But I came home. And, like that itself, I'm just as well off as any of them that left home. (I'm) alive, there's not too many of them. There's not too many. And I'm just as well off today as they are. I've got no home. That's one thing, but.... A rough but welcome photo of the house that John A. built. All others were lost in the fire. (How did you lose your home? How did it happen?) Oh, fire. Grass fire. I went out to burn a little strip of grass down around the driveway, from the highway up. It jumped across and got across here. From that it went. We were fighting it up around the barn and around the garage. So. When the fire went there, it just went up onto the shingles, it never.... I went down twice around the house, after the fire went down. No, not a sign. Not a sign of a fire. Till there in the gable end.... The fire went right up onto the shingles, between the shingles and the boards. It didn't burn anything outside. No. So there's where it broke out. (Way up high.) Up in the gable end. Nothing I could do. I left here. I couldn't see it--I couldn't watch it, no. Every God blessed thing I left behind. They didn't even put shoes there--they didn't even--to try to save a thing from it. Oh, God help me. (And that was the house you built.... Well that's a very tough blow, but I can tell from talking to you, you're not finished. Leather Works by John C. Roberts Historic Reproductions Creative Handcrafts * MORE THAN LEATHER * INDIAN BROOK Op?n Daily 9 - 5 CAPE BRETON ISLAND BOC 1 HO July "" October



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