

Build a Log Cabin and Homestead by Alexander J. and Nancy J. Boome

Chapter 1 Deciding to Leave

Leave the city in one minute and fall in love with the back-to-the-land movement the next. You will learn to throw caution to the wind when you take a vacation; you can live better there, and find out what you really want. Meet people that will instantly change your life and guide you to what you really want, and meet a man who fell seven stories and lived. How we buy 160 acres for \$3,000 and seal the deal with a handshake.

Be healthy and strong: you will decide if you “would you rather chop-wood or pay PG&E?” Thrilling and clear is the way to live life: like Thoreau and other Masters of life. And you will find out how to keep the love growing within your family. Independent wealth is yours for the taking – you will see how to get more than enough money to live in the woods – by renting-out your house. Finally in this chapter you will understand International money movement across the border. Are you ready to leave?

Log Cabin

“Well . . . let’s build a log cabin, and see what that’s all about; chop down some trees, and peel off the bark – instead of just sitting around, or doing nothing for ourselves, and only doing things for somebody else,” I said.

A half-hour ride on the dusty-frosted-heaved Boucher Lake Road, such as it was this time of the year brought us to Sig Paul’s land; it was exciting, wild and foreign, with varied green trees, and animals every so often. That May day, we pulled into an oasis of poplar trees which were next to a field, on Sig’s land. We got out and walked around.

“This is everything we want,” I said.

Too Much Waste

Wasting my time, was my reoccurring thought: either, on my daily rotten-train-ride to San Francisco, clattering along, half asleep, or, if not on the train, then stuck in an hour each way of awful freeway commute. I couldn’t even begin thinking of a better idea about how to live: daily existence was such a rut.

Home at night, and then for a brief time I got to see Nancy, Alex Jr, and Gretchen, and they got to see me. *I am stuck in drudgery; how did I get there?* did you ever think such a thought?



Image 1-1 **Boucher Lake Road**
High summer



Image 1-4 **Our Red Potatoes**
last year

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A better question would have been, “How can I have a better and happier life?”

Freedom and self-reliant idea's like Thoreau's kept bugging me: *I wanted more from this life - don't you?*

Do more, give more, and get more life, and love it; I knew I could, you can too. Commuting to an office was so regular and such a waste. At work I was giving my employer a great gift of my time; I wanted to work with and for my self and family: and let us reap the benefits. All of life is waiting, for me and you. *Why give so much of ourselves away for a salary: why?*

Back-to-the-land: the promise of freedom and simple life

Self-reliant ideas in the 1960s and 1970s promised us all the best of times, and the most fun. Peace, joy, happiness, and expansive ideas were all the rage, as they still are. We thought we needed to find out more about Spirit in Nature; then it would be much easier for us to feel peace and joy.

Plant a carrot and watch it grow, and a lot of other ideas like that where what the culture and we thought were the answer; because of those ideas we taught ourselves how to live on the land skills and how to get food from our garden; even though we were city people. We got our own food from our garden; until now we knew nothing about growing it. We wanted our life to be centered on meditation, and living on the land, while at the same time to be together as family.

Live in harmony, and be at peace with Nature: that was our basic idea. Fun and excitement – more than we had ever had before – is what we started to have and feel, more and more. The extra work we had to do to reach our goal was nothing but exciting: it moved us; it wasn't hard; it was easy and thrilling.

A vacation

New experiences are what we wanted when started our vacation. Getting away from my regular and nasty commute was just right for me. We planned an escape, in our blue station wagon, Alex Jr, Gretchen, Nancy and me: What could be better?

A fun time for us, we decided, was to go further than any Californian had ever gone before: the end of the world is at the State border to most Californians, not born there of course. Going to Canada meant leaving



Image 4-5 Summer picking and eating, last year



Image 1-6 Gretchen Hoeing, She loved those potatoes.

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the safety of the State of California.

“Is there anything on the other side of the California border,” I said almost not jokingly?

“*At Home in the Woods*”¹

“Leave the city and go to the wilderness”, the book said.

“I found a ‘fun’ book in the Banff bookstore,” Nancy said.

She started reading to us while driving. A couple that did all of the living, and had all of the life and adventures that we knew were right for us; were telling us what and how to do, what we wanted to do; reasons for leaving our “humdrum lives in the city” were all laid out for us on those pages.



Bradford and Vena Angier’s ideas were exciting, and right along the lines we were thinking about. We wanted to know more about them, and about their life. Everything Nancy was reading was thrilling for us.

“Let’s go see Bradford Angier in Hudsons Hope,” I said.

Six-hundred miles further north from where we were. It already was everything the Angiers had been talking about, Bears, Moose, and other wild animals were around every other corner.

Hooked on trees, open space and clear skies, we charged ahead. Even though we decided to visit Bradford and Vena near Hudsons Hope we were running out of time – we got only as far as Moberly Lake, British Columbia, Canada. Moberly Lake is bigger and more beautiful than Walden Pond that Thoreau loved.

Leave Boston and their jobs in the city is what the Angiers wanted to do. We had a pattern to follow – Bradford Angier’s wonderful descriptions of how to live on the land and build our own log house. If you long for the type of life Thoreau and the Angiers idealized, then it won’t be an idealization for you: it will be your plan.

Meeting

By-accident, or was it one of those times meant to be: how could this have happened? We turned down a small road by the Lake; Sig Paul was sitting on his tractor, in a small five-acre field.

¹Vena and Bradford Angier, “*At Home in the Woods, Living the Life of Thoreau Today*,” 1951, 1972, Sheridan House, New York

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Thumping away, like so many other diesel tractors thump, we found out later, his tractor was no exception.

Sig Paul's tractor seemed so big and mechanical. Other than his thumping tractor, it was a quiet setting right on the lake, with a humble house, power lines – a peaceful spot. He was foreign; though you couldn't really tell he was; his smile was so big it obliterated his face. Though Sig Paul wasn't really what I would describe as happy, or overflowing with happiness, pleasant though, and straightforward; he was a little stiff when he walked.

"I fell seven stories from a building in Vancouver I was working on," he told us later.

We approached in a slow respectful way, and took it all in. Farming, fields or planting in a field we of course had absolutely no idea, at this point, about anything connected with all that: we were city-slicks. Whatever it was he was doing in his field, was a mystery to us; and looked mechanical and complicated; he seemed happy.

The Lake

Refreshed is the feeling Moberly Lake gave us. In an afternoon, they say, more than enough fish can be caught here. With a small house and a little land, this would be a perfect northern setting; the Rockies were right across the lake, and were full of snow tops, even in June; poplar and pine swaying in the breeze with a simple rustle.

Though, a few too many other houses were all around Sig's house; the older people, over thirty-years-old, all seemed active and happy in their gardens and small fields. It was a pretty summer spot.

Land for Sale

"Moberly Lake land is for sale," Sig Paul said

.

"No, that's not what we're looking for," I said, according to the book.

Sig Paul's Moberly lake land has power, a road, and a house already built right at the lake – with people all around: that's not what we wanted.

"Do you know of any other land for sale . . . more remote . . . away from neighbors," I asked?

"Well . . . yes . . . I do have some land on a road you can't always get in on . . . and there is no power . . . no water . . . and only four or five people live on the Boucher Lake Road, four miles past the reservation," he said.

"Perfect, how much is it," I said without being too excited?

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“I’d sell it for \$3,000 . . . only it’s illegal for me to sell it to you . . . and I don’t really own it yet.”

We were stunned.

“A non Citizen cannot lease government land,” Sig said.

He was leasing the land from the crown for \$44 per year: he was homesteading it! He had to prove-up about sixty-four-acres and build a house, then he could buy it for \$8 per acre.

“How many acres do you want to sell,” I asked?

“It is a Quarter”

“What’s a Quarter?”

“One-hundred-sixty acres.”

“Well let’s go look at it,” I said.

It sounded great: one-hundred-sixty acres, no power, \$3,000!

A handshake to Buy

Simple and easy, and a handshake was how we sealed the deal. With a handshake, we promised to be back in one year. A handshake to buy one-hundred-sixty acres, when a handshake meant something, when it was your word; then there would be no question of buying or making any deal, but in these days of lawyers and lawsuits was this possible?

Homesteading was our plan: Go away and then come back one year later and start. Prove up thirty-four more acres, thirty acres were already in hay, then we could buy from Sig, after he bought from the Crown. The process was set-out by the Canadian Government for homesteading.

Would You Rather Chop Wood or Pay PG&E?

Alicia Bay-Laurel said, “Would you rather, chop wood, or, pay PG&E [the local San Francisco Bay Area natural gas and electric utility company]?”²

“Chop wood.” was our resounding answer.

²Alicia Bay Laurel, “*Living on the Earth*,” March 1971, ISBN 0394710568, Random House, Incorporated

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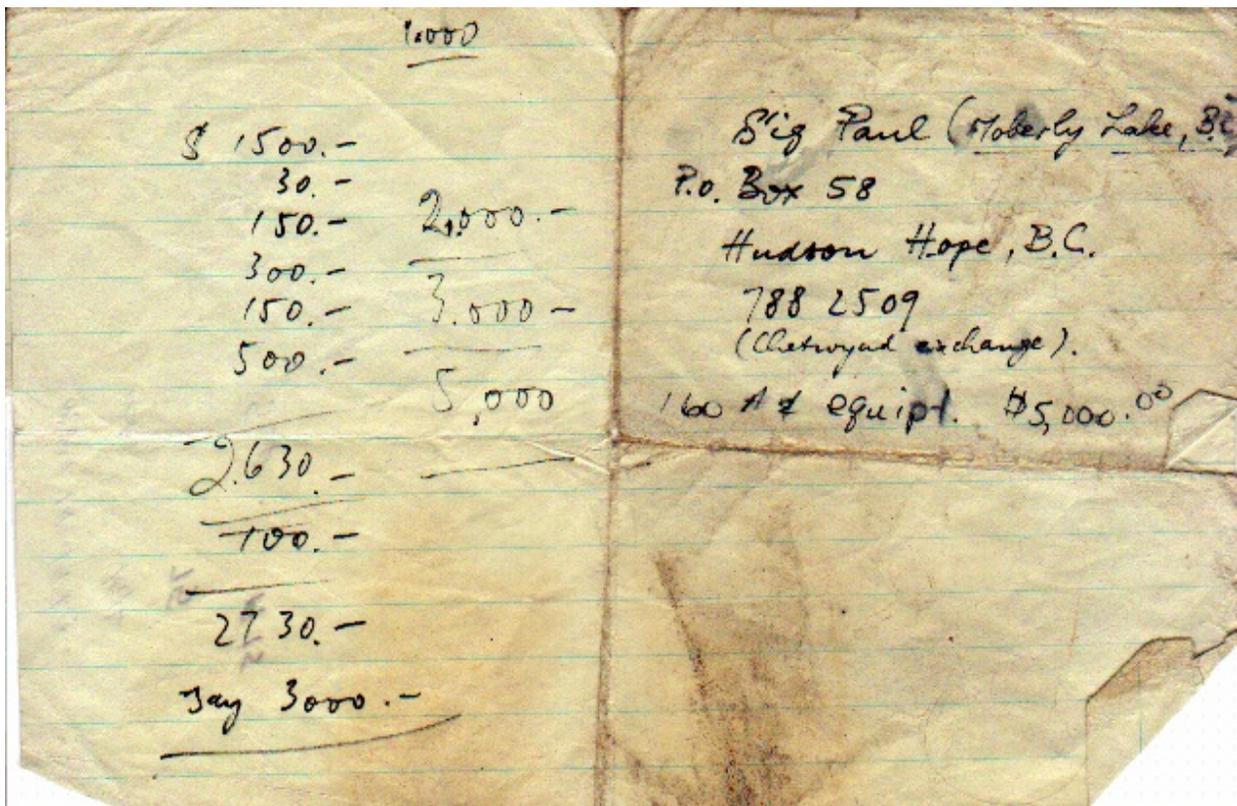


Image 1-2 **Sig Paul's Figuring** Sig Paul figured on this paper what he would sell us the 160 acres homestead on the Boucher Lake Road. The agreed amount was the lower left \$3,000. He gave us this paper and shook my hand, that was it. We told him we will be back in a year. He said, "OK." We didn't buy the equipment. We didn't know what it was.

For us there was no question about our answer; this was the all-around best question we had been asked in years. We wanted out, or in – depending on your point of view. We wanted to feel, and be connected with our life. We wanted to be more self-reliant for our food and heat supply.

Either, we could pay the price for fitness classes, or, we could breathe a breath of fresh air and wield an ax, stack wood, and grow our food. Our theory was that we could do all these things for ourselves. Day by day we were getting closer to that goal. Every step of the way was more fun than the next. Creating our own idea, about a new life in the wild for our family, is what we did. Our plan was more than empowering: It made us race to our next homemade task.

"We want to do the same thing," our friends said.

Then they said: "The time is not right; there is not enough money; we don't know how to build a house, or chop down trees; we can't grow enough to eat . . ."

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We didn't think of those things. We couldn't think of everything. But everything we thought of was so sweet, and brought us new strength and power that we never knew we had: we completed things we only planned and dreamed about before we got going.

Self-reliant

“Thoreau went home to mama for dinner,” they say, so what, a home cooked meal by mama is nice. Thoreau was great. You can be even better than Thoreau, if you listen to him, and we did. “Quiet desperation . . . ,” he says, in *Walden Pond*, is the way most men and women live.

We found out it's true: We don't have to live in quiet desperation. We thought, every task we do, we should do for ourselves and our family: Eventually, that is exactly what we made happen. We wanted to become self-reliant in a new northern life.

Togetherness

Missing-out was what I was doing, when you go all day long, and don't come home until late at night, when the kids are in bed,

- Do you really know much about them?
- Do you teach them anything – how can you do that if you spend only minutes a week with them,
- Or learn from them, and see their experiences?

Each second is the time-of-my-life, I thought. If we all worked together, and helped each other, and learned together, then we will know each other;

- And can tell each other all the things we need to:
- And we can love at least each other.

Work and play leading up to the day of leaving were the best of times; thinking and planning about the same idea and goal brought us close. Live in the Canadian wilderness, and build our own log cabin: just like the Angiers did, that is what we were going to do.

Independent Wealth

Income we got from our small, four-units, rental business which we had set-up was all we needed.

We bought our 206 Redwood Avenue in Redwood City, California duplex first,

- One (1) one-bedroom-unit,
- One (1) studio-unit, first – seven years before we left.

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We saved,

- Sold our house trailer, which we were living in,
- And borrowed enough to get \$2,100 for the down payment on 240 Glenwood Ave in Woodside California – two years after we bought the duplex.
- Then we changed the garage which was a part of 240 Glenwood Avenue into a one-bedroom-unit.

After we paid all the loans and expenses every month, then we had \$300 income left over to spend.

“We will buy the land from Sig Paul with our cash and then plant a big garden and have \$300 a month to do who knows what with,” I said.

- Low expenses were a part of the key:
- We only needed a little money for gas for the car, and for fuel for the coal-oil lamps, and the kerosene Aladdin lamps, and for a few other non food items.
- Grow our food and get from the land what we needed
- And our log cabin was paid for from our grubstake money and rental income,
- We had set ourselves up to be independent of the need for either of us to have to work, other than extremely hard and happily, on our new homestead.

That is another key and important idea: have a steady stream of income set up before you go. Eventually, but not right away, we got **more** money **from our hay and cows** than we got from all our California real estate rental properties.

International Money Movement

International money movement between California and Canada is as easy as opening a bank account at a bank which has a branch in each place. Lengthy waiting times for check clearing were not a problem for us. Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce in San Francisco has a branch of the same bank in Chetwynd BC.

- Smooth, accurate, and documented cash transfer,
- And no interruption in our necessary flow of funds from rental units to living expenses during our critical start up months,
- There was never any difficulty.

At any time the bank will be happy to take care of all exchanges, no problem, because they always make money on international transactions.

We were ready to go; we just had to make a deal with each other. How to make that deal and

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decide to go is in the next chapter.



Image 1-3 **Early morning Barley field** This is the first year crop on our 55 acre Barley field, next year it will be to Oats and hay, then for 7 years it will give us a hay crop. The is a part of our 160 acre Quarter Section on the Boucher Lake Road