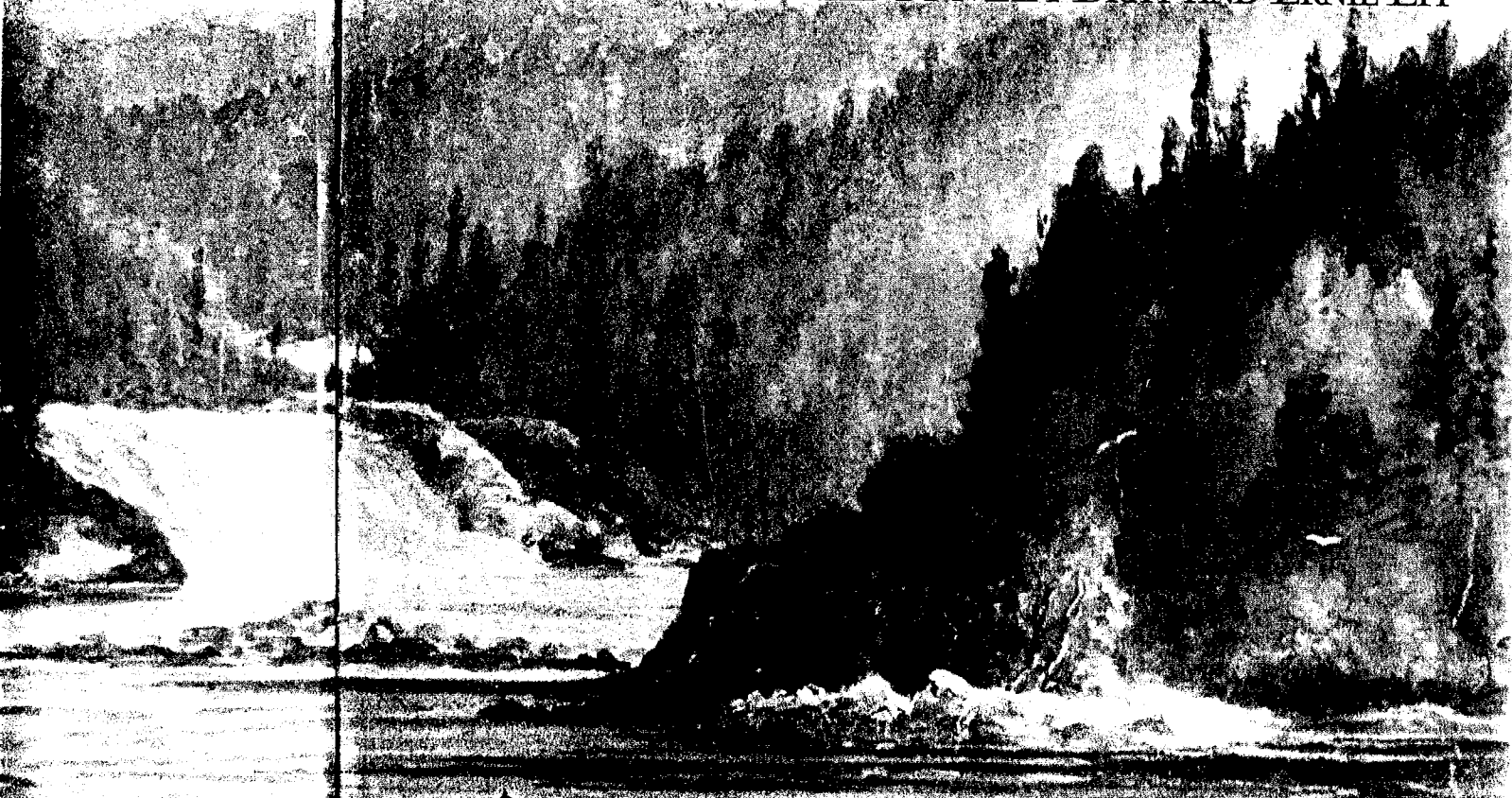


A Vast
and

Magnificent Land

An Illustrated History of Northern Ontario

EDITED BY MATT BRAY AND ERNIE EPP



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

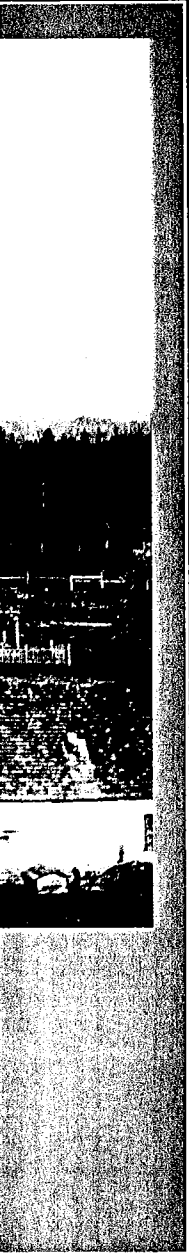


LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY



A Bicentennial Project of the

ONTARIO MINISTRY OF NORTHERN AFFAIRS



EUROPEAN EXPLORATION of the area we now call Northern Ontario began in the early 17th century. In 1615 Huron canoes carried Samuel de Champlain, and perhaps Etienne Brûlé, up the Mattawa River, across Lake Nipissing, and down the French River to Georgian Bay. This was probably the first time white explorers had set eyes on the territory. Later this waterway became part of the great Canadian canoe route to the west.

The early French and English explorers of the north searched for a shorter trade route to the Pacific Ocean and Asia. By mid-century it had become clear that no easy route to Asia existed, but there was some compensation: the land was rich in furs. Northern Ontario was a treasure trove of beaver, marten, fox, wolf, and "musquash" or muskrat. The intruders left the dream of Cathay behind and focused on the treasures at hand.

The Indians were the first to harvest the furs. They had hunted and trapped animals for food, clothing, and utensils for thousands of years before European traders appeared on the scene. The Europeans arrived at a time of increasing demand for furs in Europe, especially for the beaver pelts needed by hatmakers. The beaver(felt) hat remained fashionable until the silk hat began to replace it in the 1840s.

While furs were in demand in Europe the Indian tribes in turn provided a market for European manufactured goods—guns and ammunition; knives, axes, needles, and awls; copper and iron kettles; and cloth of all kinds. These useful articles reduced the daily drudgery of a subsistence way of life. A superior technology was eagerly welcomed; as one Indian said, "The beaver does everything well. It makes kettles, hatchets, swords, knives, bread. In short it makes everything. . . . The English have no sense. They give us twenty knives for one beaver skin." But the trade had its negative side too. It brought an increasing dependency on trade goods, as the Indians lost their traditional skills and way of life. Worse than this, it brought the ravages of liquor and disease.

The Indian was important to the European trader not only as a supplier of furs and consumer of goods, but also as an active participant in the daily routine of the trade. Indians were the traders' guides and interpreters. They made the canoes, toboggans, and snowshoes that were the essential means of transport at the time. The marriages of Indian women with the white traders were perhaps the most obvious symbols of the new alliance.

The Huron of the Georgian Bay area were the early middlemen in the trade between the French and the northern tribes. As early as the 1640s the upper Great Lakes began to fall into the orbit of the fur trade of New France. The destruction of the Huron Nation by the Iroquois in the late 1640s changed the fur-trade patterns: furs were now moved eastward along both shores of Lake Superior, with a number of Algonkian-speaking tribes, including the Ojibwa, acting as middlemen. Many of the Ojibwa at this time lived near the southeastern shores of Lake

Superior and the north shore of Lake Huron. They were soon to be replaced as the middlemen of the trade by the French traders themselves.

Pierre Esprit Radisson and Médard Chouart, Sieur des Groseilliers are the first white traders known to have reached the western end of Lake Superior. They wintered at Chequamegon Bay during 1659-60 and crossed the lake in the spring to a point possibly near the Pigeon River, where they met some Crees and Assiniboines. Radisson later claimed that he had reached the northern sea (Hudson Bay), although this claim has been disputed by most historians. More likely he was told by the Indians of a water connection with the bay and realized that the rich fur grounds of the north might be more easily reached by ocean vessel than by canoe.

When Radisson and Groseilliers returned to New France with a rich cargo of furs, they were roughly handled by the authorities. They eventually decided to go to London with their proposal and found a receptive audience there. A trading venture by the *Nonsuch* to James Bay in 1668-69, with Groseilliers aboard, was very successful, and in 1670 the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) was given a royal charter and a trading monopoly in the Hudson Bay watershed. This vast area included most of what is now Northern Ontario.

Meanwhile other French explorers, traders, and missionaries were beginning to put the Great Lakes region on the map. In 1671 the Sieur de St. Luson assembled fourteen tribes in council at Sault Ste. Marie and raised the royal arms of France. No doubt the Indians were more impressed with the ceremony of the occasion than they were with its implications. Shortly afterward, while René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, was exploring the lower Mississippi River, Daniel Greysolon, Sieur de Du Lhut, extended his explorations of its upper waters to the north shore of Lake Superior. He built the first posts on the Kaministikwia (Kam) River and on Lake Nipigon in 1679. Soon French traders were siphoning furs that otherwise would have gone to the HBC's bayshore posts in Cree canoes. From the post on the Kam other explor-

ers ventured west, perhaps as far as the present site of Kenora.

France was at war with England during most of the years between 1686 and 1713, and the French used the occasion to mount a seaward challenge to the bayside posts. One expedition by De Troyes and Le Moynes made a spectacular overland journey along the Ottawa and Abitibi rivers in 1686 to capture Moose Factory. From a position Lake Abitibi the French traders were able to challenge the HBC across the height of land. With the bay under their control for most of these years, there was no need for the French to push north and west of Lake Superior. The posts in that region fell into neglect.

France gave up the captured bay posts in 1713 under the Treaty of Utrecht and once more directed its attention to the Lake Superior and Mississippi River regions. A second post was built on the Kam in 1717, and other Lake Superior posts were established (or re-established) under the label of *Les Postes du Nord*. French officers once again began to report the activities of the "interloping" *coureurs de bois*.

Among the French post commanders in the 1720s, Pierre La Vérendrye deserves the most attention. While posted at Nipigon, he was given a rough map drawn by an Indian named Ochagach. It showed a water connection with the west and hinted at a western sea. Part of the route west of Lake Superior had already been explored, and the Grande Portage of the Pigeon River was known to French traders by that time. It soon became a viable alternative to the longer and more difficult Kam route.

By 1731 La Vérendrye was ready to enter the western interior. Fort Michilimackinac and Fort Kam were the main dispatch posts, but others were established—Fort St. Pierre (now Fort Frances) and Fort St. Charles (near today's Kenora). For the next five years the activities of La Vérendrye and his sons focused on these posts. Since the costs of their exploration were paid by the profits of the trade, it was important for them to be on friendly terms with the neighbouring Crees and Monsoni. In doing so, the La Vérendryes took their side against the Sioux. Although La Vérendrye preferred to have all the tribes at

by the Albany = Fort St. A. and

Position des Signes marqués sur la Carte Sauvage Ochagach.

CARTE PHYSIQUE des Terres les plus élevées de la Partie Occidentale du CANADA :

Où l'on voit les Nouveaux Découvertes des Officiers François à l'Ouest du Lac Supérieur; avec les Rivières et les Lacs dont M. Jernio a parlé dans la Relation de la Baye de Hudson. Dressée par Philippe Bauche.

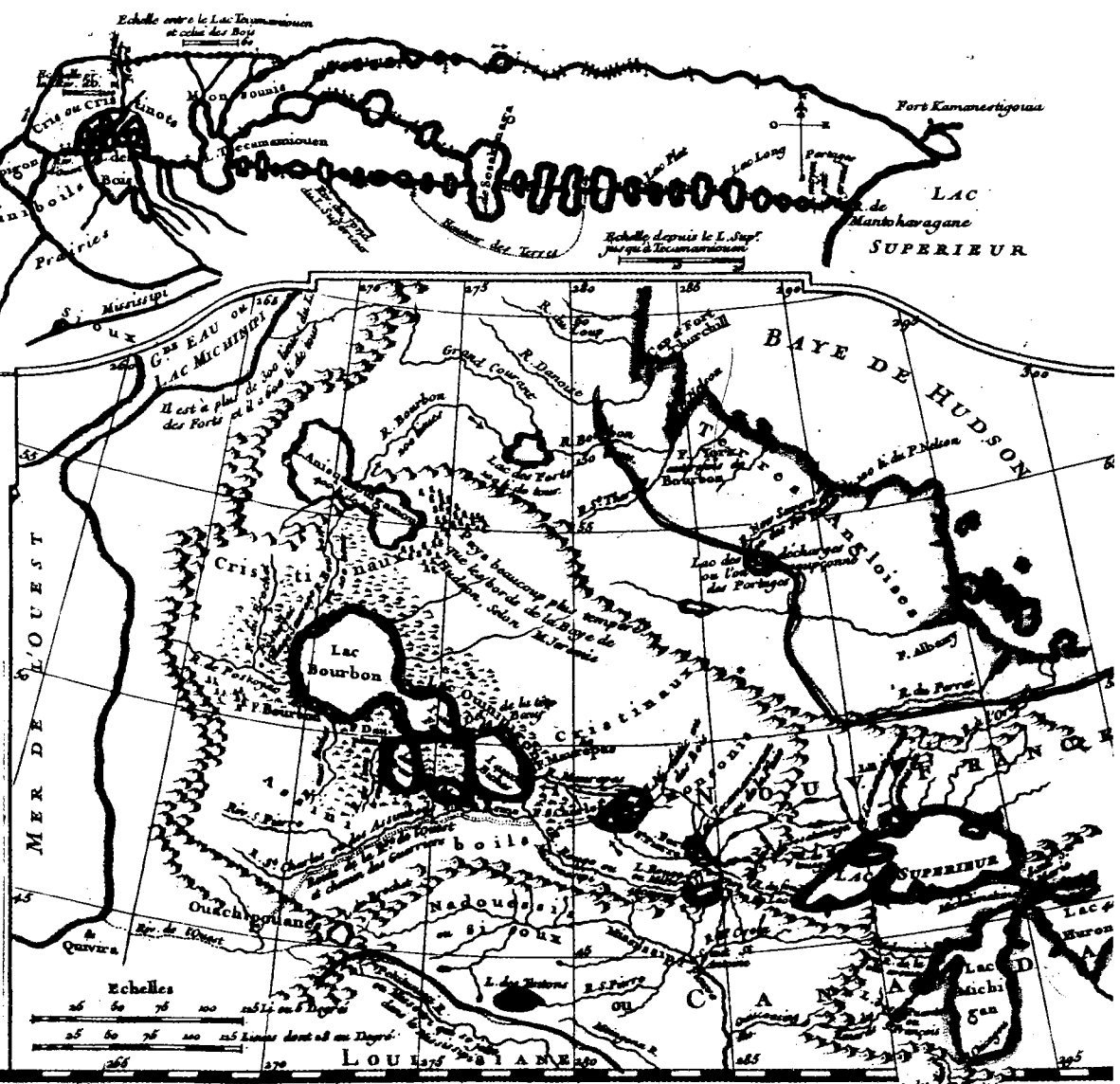
REMARQUES.

On a corrigé les 3 Cartes de nos Officiers François dont il a été parlé dans les Considérations, pp. 39 et suiv. et l'on en a rapproché ce que M. Jernio a dit du Cours de la Rivière de Bourbon. Nos Officiers ont cru que le Fort Camancastigoua est à 47° 31' de latitude. Le Fort S. Charles à 48° 31'. En conséquence de ces observations et du Cours des Rivières qui sont plus à l'ouest qu'on doit raisonnablement que le Cours du Mississipi, qui nous est parvenu au dessus du Saint S. Antoine, est de l'Ouest à l'Est et non Nord Est, comme on la suppose jusqu'à présent.

La Carte du Sauvage Ochagach, les Lacs et Riv. courent à l'O. Supérieur, au lieu que dans les Cartes des Off. François elles ont la direction de l'ONO. Cette diff. semble venir en partie de ce que les Sauvages dans leurs courses ne font pas une assez grande attention à différents points de l'Horizon ou le Soleil se lève et se couche et de l'usage de leurs canots, et ainsi cette considération doit entrer dans l'examen de leurs Descriptions comparées avec celles des Nations plus éclairées.

Les chaînes de Montagnes indiquées par la suite des Sources des rivières partagent cette partie du Canada en trois Bassins Terrestres. Le premier vers le Golfe du Mexique, et où coulent les rivières qui forment le Mississipi, l'autre vers la B. de Hudson où se jette la Riv. de Bourbon. Le troisième des Lacs nouvellement découverts; le 5° vers l'Océan Septentrional, qui se décharge le Pl. S. Laurent, qui sont principalement formés par le Lac Supérieur et autres, à ces Sources, comme on le voit dans la Relation, vers les Lacs de Kamancastigoua et de Camancastigoua, aux environs desquels sont aussi celles de la Rivière de Bourbon.

Les Officiers ont marqué par des Signes sur les Cartes les Nouveaux Découvertes, les Hauts de Terres et le cours des Rivières, ils ont aussi rapporté, comme les Sauvages, de ces Communications de Rivières dont le cours est opposé, et dans lesquelles on ne trouve que par des Portages, ainsi qu'on en trouve plusieurs en France dans les Considérations, pp. 143 et suiv. Mais pour exprimer le relief naturel du Terrain, on lui a employé des Signes, on a représenté les chaînes de Montagnes entre les Sources des Rivières voisines de l'Ouest du Lac Supérieur, dont les unes se déchargent, d'autres coulent à l'Ouest ou au Sud.



social and commercial
 were men like
 shared in the
 North West Co. in 1779
 senior partner. He

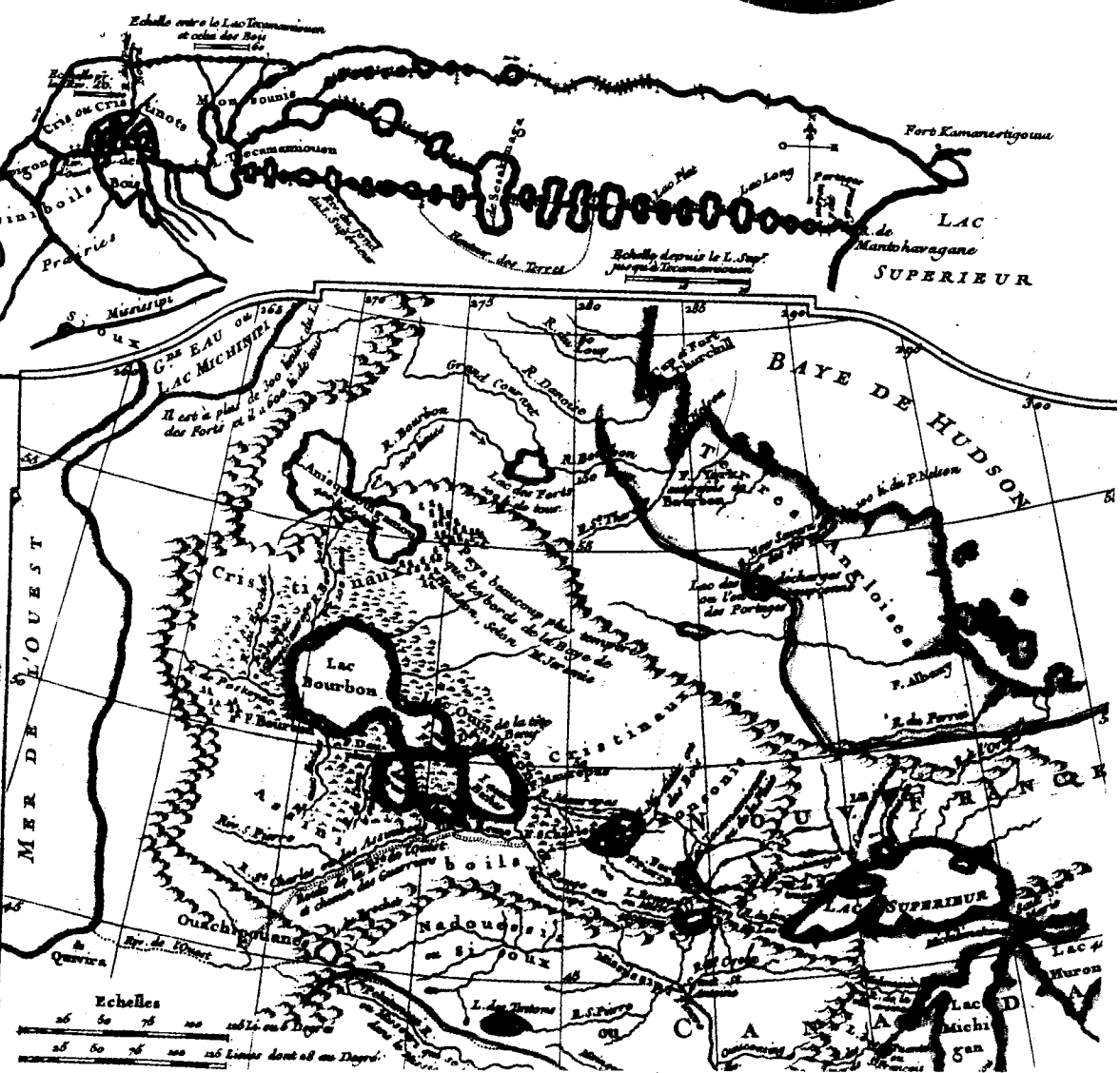
2-9 This French illustration of 1754 contains
 two maps. The map at the bottom shows
 Terres Angloises bordering on Baye de
 Hudson, while Nouvelle France
 occupies almost all of the rest of the northern

hope that it would eventually lead La
 Verendrye to manes de pierres
 brillantes ("mountains of shining stones")
 in the west.



2-8

ins sur la Carte
PHYSIQUE
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NADA :
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NORTHERN ONTARIO'S CULTURE is not limited to those people who frequent opera houses and art galleries. It includes the life of everyone, the ethnic groups and associations, who make up the population of Northern Ontario. The story of this land is one of architecture, religion, and education. When the basics of life have been achieved, people have turned to the enjoyment of music, dancing, theatre, the visual arts, and more recently, their own literature. Artistic expression in Northern Ontario has been dramatically affected by the close relationship artists feel to the land itself, and the experience of living in the north has inspired its residents to express its qualities in various media.

Two hundred years ago the culture of Northern Ontario was vastly different from what it is today. The area was inhabited by Cree and Ojibwa Indians and European traders and missionaries. Native men trapped, fished, hunted, and bartered with white traders to obtain the necessities of life, and the women spent much of their time looking after the needs of their husbands and children. However, they found time for beadwork, basketry, and jewelry making, and functional objects were often made beautiful through their skills. They also shared in smoking ceremonial tobacco, telling tales of the Thunderbird or the Windigo, and singing songs and dancing.

The fur traders at Michilimackinac, Sault Ste. Marie, Fort William, and Fort Frances enjoyed the music of the fiddle and the flute. Between 1803 and 1821, when Fort William was the main midsummer meeting place of the North West Company traders, the *Rendezvous* was a time of much singing, dancing, and drinking to distract the mind after months of work and hours of business meetings. Both the Great Hall frequented by the gentlemen and the *voyageurs'* encampment outside the palisade came to life during these days. After the union of the North West and the Hudson's Bay companies in 1821, this lively period came to an end.

Not until the 1880s and '90s did the north's culture change much. Then, with the discovery of new resources came new transportation systems and service centres. Towns sprang up, and their buildings showed almost as many architectural influences and styles as there were builders. Houses in the towns ranged from log cabins to pretentious homes built in the Georgian style. Entire communities were built of logs, as the bush camp reconstructed at Thunder Bay's Centennial Park demonstrates. In sharp contrast, the buildings at Dryden early in this century included only one log dwelling, the rest consisting of two-storey frame buildings erected in the space of a few weeks.

Although the Gothic Revival style might be seen in features such as the front windows, the houses generally lacked any distinctive style. Basically, architectural styles depended on the roles that particular buildings played. Banks and office buildings were often constructed in the Neoclassical style, and churches in the Gothic style made popular by early 19th-century romanticism.

Lumbering, Pulp and Paper, and Forestry

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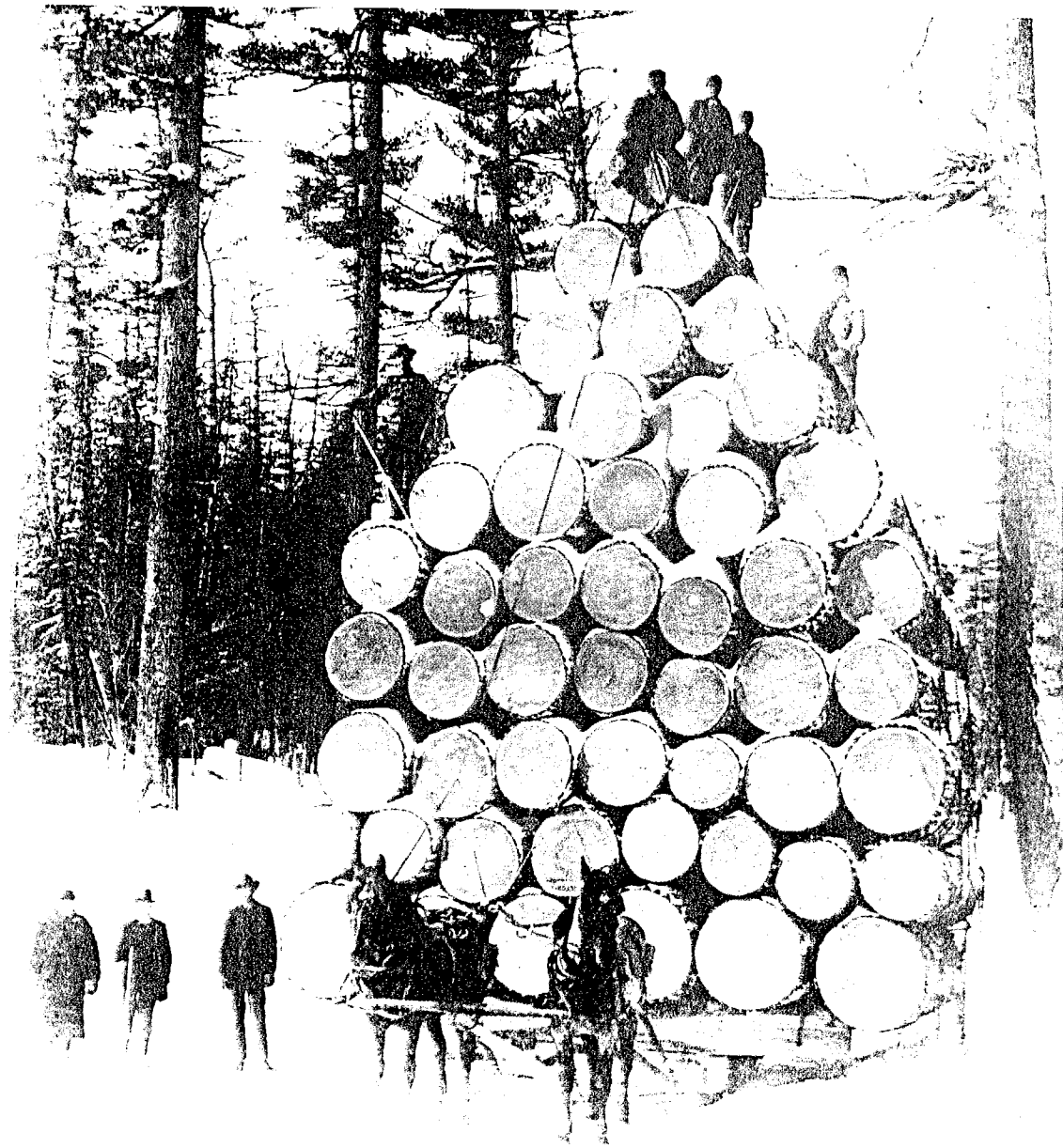


Log trains were a form of entertainment for the men who worked in the woods. The men would stand on the logs and sing and tell jokes to the men on the ground. (© The Log Train)

Log trains were a form of entertainment for the men who worked in the woods. The men would stand on the logs and sing and tell jokes to the men on the ground. (© The Log Train)

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4-1 *Brag loads were a form of entertainment, rather than serious logging activity. Camps would challenge each other to see who could stack the most logs. Under the right conditions (about 0°C) this load could be*

pulled by two horses. The snow under the runners would melt, and the sleigh would run on a thin film of water. Lake Matinenda, around 1930.

9-8 From 1803 to 1821 Fort William was the main midsummer meeting place for the North West Co. traders. Today, at the reconstructed Old Fort William, the re-enactment of history has become an art form and a tourist attraction.

The earliest forms of entertainment in these new towns involved activities within the family and neighbourhood circles. Leisure time was enriched by singing, playing instruments, dancing, and story-telling. Quilting bees were an opportunity for women to get together, and barn raisings became occasions for the whole community to work and socialize. Social life in the early years was encouraged by the establishment of Mechanics' Institutes, Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations, and Women's Institutes. Fraternal organizations such as the Masons and Knights of Columbus and various service clubs gave men occasion to meet. These associations organized clinics and libraries, as well as social events such as dances and movie or skit nights.

In time, cultural activities developed that involved the entire community. Schools played an important part in organizing elaborate Christmas concerts and huge picnics, especially in the spring. The whole community turned out to enjoy these events, especially the Christmas concerts, where children recited poetry, performed in plays, and sang carols. Churches were also important in the development of social and cultural activity, as persons of various denominations began to meet to share their beliefs.

Religion had long played an important part in the life of Northern Ontario. As new settlers arrived, homes, tents, and even barns served as the first locations for worship services, prayer meetings, and church socials. One of the earliest community activities in some cases was the erection of an appropriate church building. Christian services were at first organized by missionaries and ministers of the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Wesleyan Methodist, and Presbyterian "conservative" churches. Soon "revivalist" churches such as the Episcopal Methodists and Baptists began to appear. The ministers of both types of churches were often required to travel long distances on horseback or along the railway lines to minister to the faithful.

Education has always been a significant service in Northern Ontario. During the fur-trade era, many fathers sent their Métis children to Glengarry County in

Upper Canada or even to Europe for a "European" education. In the settlement era, local efforts were again called for, as Ontario administrators were slow in providing for these needs. Initially children met in homes and churches, sometimes even in tents, to be taught. Eventually local school boards were created to meet these needs, and the first one- or two-room wooden school houses were built.

The success of these early educational efforts depended as much on enthusiasm as on training. The teachers rarely had much training, and salaries were too low to attract more than a few women to the profession. In spite of this the female teachers were quite successful in teaching the three R's and in encouraging children to enjoy music, art, drama, and creative writing.

The development of the educational system came to be largely in the hands of school inspectors such as W.J. Judd of Thunder Bay. An earlier inspector, J.E. MacDougall of North Bay, wrote *Building the North* in 1919, one of the first books on education in Northern Ontario. Children dreaded the recitations that the inspectors would require of them, and teachers dreaded the visits of these men even more, because their success in teaching their pupils was being rigorously tested.

Educating children in isolated communities required unique solutions in Northern Ontario. One solution was the use of school cars, adaptations of the most modern railway coaches of the time and well equipped as schools. The first cars set out in 1926, and eventually seven school cars operated along three different routes, the CPR main line, the CNR lines, and the T & NO railway line. They brought education to the families of railway workers, loggers, miners, trappers, fishermen, and hunters, both native and white, and from many ethnic backgrounds. These people welcomed the three- or four-day visits of the school cars. The cars represented a Canadianizing influence on the European settlers and ensured their allegiance to the Canadian government.

School cars provided cultural experience for the parents as well as education for the children. Part of the car had fifteen desks, even though there were often far more

9-9 Northern Ontario's turn-of-the-century settlers came from almost everywhere, and the buildings they constructed showed almost as many influences as there were builders. This is the Belair homestead on the Wolf River, Dorion, around 1919. The original building on the homestead was the saltbox, on the left. The new home on the right shows diverse influences.

9-10 A successful farmer in the Rainy River valley and one of its pioneer homesteaders, Jimmy McOuat abandoned his agricultural lifestyle in 1898 to live on the Canadian Shield. He settled on the shore of the crystalline White Otter Lake, between Ignace and Atikokan. There he singlehandedly built the unusual log structure known as White Otter Castle and occupied it until his death in 1918. 9-10 shows the castle as it appeared during Jimmy's lifetime,

with its four-storey tower and flower-filled front yard. In 9-11 Jimmy poses for a portrait to send to a prospective mail-order bride in 1887.

9-12 The Prairie school of architecture was represented at Kirkland Lake by the chateau that Sir Harry Oakes built there in 1919. The chateau was enlarged after a fire in 1929, and the interior has been renovated to house the Museum of Northern History.



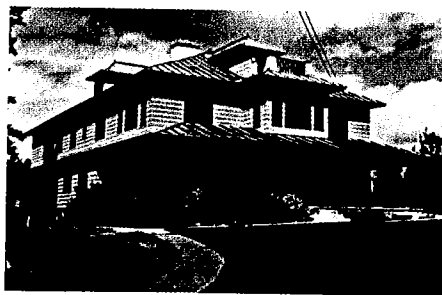
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