

TWENTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT

1916

BY DR. R. B. ORR

BEING PART OF

APPENDIX TO THE REPORT OF THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, ONTARIO

Printed by order of

THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO.

TRADE ROUTE OF HURONS AND ALGONQUINS

Before entering upon a historical sketch of the Algonquin tribe, known to us as Ottawas, a brief description of the trade route and rivers leading to the St. Lawrence Rivers from Georgian Bay, which were followed by the Algonquin and Huron traders, may be instructive and interesting. Long before Champlain's visit to Huronia (1615), and long before the ruthless conquest of the Hurons by the Iroquois (1649), a large and profitable trade had been established in tanned and untanned skins, in rugs, flint arrow and spear tips, hemp, mats, tobacco and fresh-water shells, by the Hurons and the Algonquins east of Lake Superior with their kinsmen of the lower Ottawa and the St. Lawrence River.

FRENCH RIVER

Down this picturesque river from Lake Nipissing came in early days Canadian and French dauntless explorers and devout missionaries, who explored the land, visited the tribes of half a continent, penetrated the region of the Great Lakes and carried the Cross and the fleur-de-lis from the Atlantic to the Mississippi. Among these heroic men were the Franciscan priest, Joseph Le Caron, first of the white men and first of missionaries to penetrate the Huron wilderness; Samuel de Champlain; Etienne Brule', Champlain's interpreter and daring ush-ranger; Gabriel Sagard, the historian of early Canada and companion of Le Caron; Jean de Brebeuf, the saintly missionary and martyr; Jean Nicolet, the explorer and first of civilized men to enter Lake Michigan and penetrate the Wisconsin forests; Piere Esprit Radisson and Medard Chouart des Groseillers, traders and fearless explorers; Joliet and Marquette, the discoverers of the Mississppi; and the brave and saintly missionaries Lalemant, Jogues, Garniers Daniel and Cheumonot, so intimately identified with the earliest annals of our country.

In those early days French River flowed through a boundless wilderness, through luxuriant and towering maple, beech and hickory, growing side with dwarfed pine and hemlock, with fir, birch and spruce. Flowing west from Lake Nipissing the river is fifty-five miles in length, and for beauty and variety of scenery is unsurpassed by any stream in Western Ontario. Its many rushing currents and numerous rapids offer serious opposition to an ascent from its outlet on Georgian Bay.

It was here the great trade-route of the Algonquins, Ottawas and Hurons of the north and north-western regions began where the traders entered French River at one of its seven outlets into Georgian Bay. Fifty miles, chiefly of rushing rapids and tumbling falls, must be overcome before they reached the wide waters of Lake Nipissing. With a flotilla of canoes, heavily laden with wares, they paddled or poled their devious way, sometimes under bold rock-bound walls on both sides; stemming or portaging rapids, climbing cliff and crag to avoid falls and rapids; on through long river stretches, threading their course through a maze of islands, past inlets that looked like Norwegian fjords; and usually by noon of the fifth day they glided out into the pleasant shallows of Lake Nipissing. Eighteen-Mile Island, which they passed near the head waters of the French Rivers, with its wild and rugged shores, has given birth to a legend.

"Half-way down the reach on the north side is a great obelisk-like rock, that much resembles a huge owl, and, in the river, are three small rock islands. Their existence is thus accounted for: Once, long ago, a great hunter of fabulous skill gave chase to a huge owl and three owlets. These he pursued night and day till, in desperation, her little ones becoming exhausted, he threw them into the water, where they instantly became rock peaks, while the mother perched on the bank and turned to stone, still guarding her brood."

Writing of this water-way as it was in his day, 1686, La Hontan says: "In going up this river (French River) there are five cataracts, which oblige us to turn out and carry all our baggage for thirty, fifty and one hundred paces. Having passed the river, we entered the Lake of the Nepeceerinis, from which we are forced to transport our canoes and baggage two leagues overland to another river (Mattawa) which has six or seven waterfalls that we shoot."

LAKE NIPISSING

One of the most fascinating of our inland lakes is Nipissing, named after the Algonquin tribe dwelling around its shores early in the 17th century. The lake is 658 feet above the level of the sea, is 55 miles long, 20 at its greatest width, and lies midway between Georgian Bay and the Ottawa River. It is sown with many attractive islands and islets, and receives several streams, the largest of which is Sturgeon River. Its shores are, in places, wildly rugged and bold and clothed in a growth of stunted timber. When the Nipissing roamed its forests the lake was rich in trout, mascalonge, Sturgeon and rock bass.

MATTAWA INDIAN TRAIL

In order that I might ascertain, by personal examination, the condition of the old trails and water-routes of Indian and early French trade in what is now Northern, Ontario, and the face of the land as it exists to-day, I started from Toronto, early in October 1916, and in a few days began my explorations.

Arriving at North Bay, I went down North Bay and Trout Lake Road, to the head of Trout Lake, on which is situated the village of Trout Milles, a station on the T.&N. O. railway.

At the head of the lake, a short distance from post office, is a saw-mill, which occupies the site of the original landing-place and terminus of the Indian water route up the lake. Westward, about two and a half miles from this camping ground, stands the C.P.R. station in North Bay. This was one of the route used by the early traders more frequently than any other; a few miles west of North bay were the settlements of the Nipissings, whom Champlain visited on his first trip. On the south shore of Trout Lake we explored another historic spot, mentioned by some as the first landing place of Champlain. It is known as Dugas Bay, and the lake adjacent to it as Brandy Lake. This Bay extends a short distance inland and is protected by lofty precipices from the west winds, and makes one of the finest harbors in the Trout Lake region. On the shores of the lake, the late Mrs. Dugas erected a wooden cross to commemorate the landing-place of Champlain and his Franciscan companion. From this portage the Indians went southward four or five miles to near Cliffe Station on the C. P. R. and thence westward by Rivere des vases into Lake Nipissing, some few miles south of North Bay.

The watershed between the Ottawa and Georgian Bay is between Nipissing and Trout Lakes, and is not ver pronounced; for the North Bay trail is a fairly level one. The waters of Trout Lake are only six feet higher than those of Lake Nipissing. The route from these landing-places of the early tribes extends down the central part of Trout Lake, which is a large, clear, all-shadowing body of water. A great many lesser trails start from its shores, but nearly always towards the south. The north shore is very rocky and inaccessible, with mountains extending as far as the eye can see. The lake itself, with the exception of a few cottages to be found here and there on the southern side, is still the same primitive body of water that reflected the images of Le Caron, Champlain, and the French voyageurs who traversed it in the early part of the 17th century. Here our guide suggested that we send our boats on and that we go into Miles Bay and portage a few yards into Four Miles Bay, a part of Trout Lake where Echo reigns supreme. The atmospheric conditions were favourable and Echo in good humor. A single word, a shout or a musical note, would be repeated eight times distinctly, and a short sentence three or four times if spoken rapidly and in a high key. As we descend these waters and come to the eastern portion of the lake it narrows to a mere channel. Trout is the head-waters of the Mattawa River and, with the chain of lakes southeastward, may be said to be a portion of that river. Passing through the narrow channel at the southern end of the lake, we encounter, running out from its northern shore, a ridge of stones forming what is called the Stepping Stones, which extends almost across the lake. When it is seen in the distance, one would imagine that this formation was built by the hands of a race of race of giants.

A little distance beyond this is the entrance from Trout Lake into Turtle Lake. The narrows here at times have been converted into rapids; but today, though the channel is very narrow, it is deep enough for the passage of canoes, small boats and even gasoline launches. From this the course passes into the northern arm of Turtle Lake for about three and a half miles to its eastern extremity. Here we have to punt Mud River and then cross by a short portage into Pine Lake. Turtle Lake is dotted with islands of picturesque beauty, and its shore-lines are rich with forest vegetation. In the fall of the year the russet, purple, saffron and variegated coloring of the trees is beyond description. From the north

shore of Turtle Lake flows the Mattawa River, which was not used to any great extent as a trade route by the Indians coming up from the St. Lawrence.

The origin of Pine Lake is a quarter of a mile in length and is easily made. The lake itself is a small body of water extending eastward from this portage and there are numerous islands. On the east side, a millionaire American has built a cottage on the site of the old camping ground of the early Nipissings. The place still shows evidence of its early occupation: pottery, and flint artifacts and other material of Indian manufacture have been found there.

The origin of Pine Lake is of interest. According to an Indian legend there dwelt a great hunter, who had camped with his family near the owl-like rock of Eighteen-Mile Island, in the French river. A monster beaver, as shrewd and wicked as he was powerful stole the hunter's child and retreated to his dam. The infant's piteous cries proclaimed its whereabouts, and the frantic father began an attack that breached the dam, as the slide authenticates, but not before the wily beaver managed to escape with the baby and take up a fresh stand behind a curious rock outcrop some fifteen miles up-rivers, in the Five-mile rapids. Hither the father pursued and again dislodged the beaver, which this time abandoned the child and beat a hasty retreat across Lake Nipissing and through Trout Lake to a rocky hill between Turtle and Talon Lakes. There the beaver was killed with great rejoicing, and the whole tribe gathered to feast upon his carcass, but, cut up and in the boiling pot, the tail still splashed the water into foam, finally upsetting it forming Pine Lake, which sure enough is ten feet above all its neighbours. No squaw to this day lets the beaver meat boil over.

The portage between Pine Lake and Lake Talon is somewhat over a quarter of a mile long and is really a good road. There are many evidences of use by the prehistoric races.

In recent years it has become the route for travelling south to the C. P. R. when the lakes are frozen, and also for the cartage of timber and logs from the neighbouring townships. On the north-east shore of Pine Lake is a beautiful beach, still showing signs of Indian occupation. From this portage on McCool Bay we went directly across Talon Lake to Black Bay in the north-west angle, and visited the old Indian camp-ground site situated on its shore. From this camp-ground, extending north-east in the township of Phelps and into the township of Orlig, we ascended a three-mile-and-a-half portage, rising six or seven hundred feet in height, which brought us to Lake Cahill. Here we found boats, and, after crossing Lake Cahill, we portaged two miles and a half to Lake Perron. On the other shore of Lake Perron we again followed the Indian trail and made a portage to Clear Lake; then across the lake we reached the trail leading to the Antoine and Ottawa Rivers.

This trail also continues southward to the Mattawa River, near Rutherglen, and from its appearance and situation it was evidently the route in the early Indian days for hunting and fishing trips into that northern section. These lakes were, doubtless often visited by the Indians for fishing purposes. In all of them speckled trout are very plentiful, and in Clear Lake they attain, in many cases, a weight of three and a half pounds; consequently, few better speckled trout lakes are to be found in any part of Ontario outside of the Nipigon district. None of them are large bodies of water; Cahill probably covers four

hundred acres; Perron about one hundred and seventy-five, and Clear Lake, one hundred. They are surrounded by a heavy growth of timber, the maple being particularly large. This district is in the maple ridge, which extends from the Quebec boundary to Widdifield township, and is eight or ten miles in width. The undergrowth of the forest is very dense and is entirely of young maple.

Returning to Talon Lake, we went southward and again followed the old route down lake Talon to its southern end, when we came to what is the junction of Lake Kai-bus-kong and Talon Lake. From here the Mattawa River runs a rapid course. Opposite the north side at the junction of the two lakes is an extensive sand-beach, and even to-day arrow-heads and other artifacts were found in this Indian village and camping ground. Here the other Mattawa trail begins; but, instead of going northward from Lake Lai-bus-king, it takes the southern course to Lake Nasbonsing, passing Bonfield station on the C. P. R. It runs westward through Lake Nasbonsing, and the portage road continues west until it reaches the Wistiwasing River. Running south-west through a series of portage rivers and lakes, it strikes South-east Bay, the most easterly point of Lake Nipissing. Champlain states in his "Voyages and Explorations" that "pursuing our route by land, leaving the river of the Algonquins (Ottawa) we pass several lakes, where the savages carry their canoes, until we entered the lake of the Nipissings, in latitude $46\frac{1}{4}$ degrees." Here he refers to his arrival at the cabins of the savages. The nation of the Nipissings was then situated west of where North Bay's C. P. R. station now stands. Thus, from his description he was just as likely to have taken the Trout Lake crossing and to have landed at the most westerly end of Trout Lake, where he would pass a number of lakes and arrive at the shore of Lake Nipissing, a short distance west of where North Bay now stands.

From Kai-bus-kong Channel we pass down into the Mattawa River, a pretty stretch of water, which in a short time brings us to Talon Falls. These falls are 54 feet high and the water boils over enormous boulders. Like all the falls on the Mattawa they are somewhat disfigured by the chutes used for driving logs in the old days of timbering in these waters. Below the falls the stream narrows down and dashes between shores edged with huge Laurentian rocks. The portage at these falls is on the right side, and a very rocky portage it is. There are many indications that it has been used for a great length of time. A short distance below the falls, after passing through a level reach of water which runs between precipitous cliffs, we arrive at Lake Pimisi, a fine sheet of water stretching away southward. We followed its north shore and came to its out-let, where are rapids which we portaged to the right, but we sent our canoes down by our Indian guides. After leaving these rapids we find the river again extending to a width of nearly three quarters of a mile, and we arrive in a short time at a series of portages. These rapids, however, could be run very easily.

The portage made at La Fleur Rapids is on the north side, and, like nearly all the other portages on the Mattawa River, is very easily discerned. Immediately below this are other small rapids hardly worth mentioning. The next rapids is portaged on the north side and has an old camping site near by, evidently used in the days of the early voyageurs, as well as their Indian predecessors. Then we continue to the north-eastern bend in the river and

soon come to the Paresseux Falls, where the river resumes its eastern course. They are very impressive, but somewhat spoiled by the lumbermen's slides. Leaping down thirty-four feet, the river rolls over numerous boulders, churning the waters white. These falls have to be portaged on the left side over very rocky and rough ground. The scenery down the river to the falls is unsurpassed anywhere in our Province, and except for the absence of many of the large trees its wild and majestic beauty is just as it meet the eyes of Champlain on his first trip up this river three hundred years ago. A short distance below the falls, on the left-hand side of the river, is a cave ten or twelve feet above water-level. This cave is twenty-five feet long by twelve feet wide, and probably has been the resting-place or hiding-place of many an Indian brave during war-time days on the Mattawa. As in the days of the early voyageur, the river is still full of sturgeon, bass and cat-fish; and I mention that the cat-fish pass up the river no farther than these falls. For a few miles before coming to Lake Plain Chant, there is a number of rapids, most of which are easily run by canoes. This lake is opposite Eau Claire Station on the C.P. R. It is a beautiful stretch of clear water surrounded by lofty granite mountains. After passing along the river we come to the last falls, a few miles east of the Ottawa River. They furnish the power for the electric plant that supplies the town of Mattawa. This is the last portage; it is on the right side of the river and passes through the grounds belonging to the engineer of the power plant. Here the river again widens out and soon in the distance are seen the houses of Mattawa town. Then the beautiful Catholic cathedral comes into full view, and we arrive at the wide expanse of the rolling waters of the Ottawa River.

These water-ways are all so good that one would expect they would be used more frequently by tourists. On our trip down, with the exception of some parties we met at Rutherglen we saw very few traces of civilization; in fact, from Trout Lake to the Ottawa River it is much the same to-day as it was three hundred years ago. Often we were miles from a settler. At night the imagination was quickened by the howl of a wolf and of the wildcat, or the stealthy tread of some prowling animal. The old Indian trails running north and south are still often to be found and recognized, but many of them have been wiped out by fire and the growth of timber. It is well known that the early coureurs de bois and traders of a later date made use of Indian routes almost entirely. The canoe route from North Bay can be made to be made Mattawa in two days. Leaving North Bay in the morning, one may arrive at the foot of Lake Talon that evening; starting from Rutherglen, at the east end of the Lake Talon early the next morning we reached Mattawa before sundown. The camping grounds and village sites are not very numerous. The traces of them, however, are visible here and there; and reward the searcher after relics with some pottery and arrow-heads, but with very little of much value. The camping site at the south-east end of Trout Lake, known as Dugas Bay, retains its old fire-place.

Pottery has been found there and pieces of French China.

ENCLOSURE 2

NORTH BAY, ONTARIO

EXTRACT NO.1

Inspection Report - Lake Huron District by H.A. Tremayne,

May 22-26, June 23, July 5-9, 1908

Lake Huron District Office - E.O. Taylor in charge

"BUILDINGS.

... It must be pointed out ... that conditions have very materially changed during the last few years, and it is submitted that Mattawa is no longer the central point of the District, nor the one from which it can best be controlled.

The town of North Bay, situated 46 miles West of Mattawa, is the terminus of the Grand Trunk line from Toronto and the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway, and is also an important divisional point on the Canadian Pacific Railway.

At North Bay, mail, telegraphic and other communication with all parts of Canada are constant and convenient, and points such as Biscotasing, Temagami, Elk Lake, the Junction of the Transcontinental and the T. & N.O. Railway, Abitibi, etc., are readily accessible. Whereas, Mattawa is becoming daily more out-of-the-way and deserted. Sixteen out of its former 30 stores are now closed and boarded up ...

In order to keep down the investment of Capital, it is necessary to call for frequent Requisitions from such Posts as Temagami, Elk Lake, and the Post which it will be necessary to establish (in order to protect the James Bay Fur Trade) at the Junction of the Transcontinental and T. & N.O. Railways, and to deal promptly with these Requisitions: and, in order to obtain favourable transportation rates to the different Interior Posts, it is necessary to meet any likely Contractors at a central point such as North Bay.

It is, therefore, strongly recommended that a building suitable for Offices and Warehouse be rented at this Point and that the District Headquarters be transferred to same...”.

(H. B. C. Arch. Fur Trade Box No.16, Folder No.322/1)

EXTRACT NO.2

Report on Fur Trade for the year ending the year ending 31st May, 1909

Lake Huron District - S. A. King in charge

“... The increase in the District Inventory is chiefly consequent on the opening of the new Post at Cochrane and development of the business at Elk Lake, while the increased expenses are in some measure due to charges incidental to the change of District Office to North Bay...”.

(H.B.C. Arch. - Fur Trade Reports)

Extract No. 3

Fur Trade Commissioner R.H. Hall to F.C. Ingrams, Secretary, dated Winnipeg, March 25, 1912. (No. F.T. 713)

“ The headquarters of Lake Huron District has for several years past been at North Bay, a town of growing importance, and advantageously situated on the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway, besides having direct communication with Toronto by the

Northward by the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway to Cochrane, the point of departure by canoe for Moose Factory.

The Company has occupied an old and unsuitable rented building, of which we cannot secure a permanent lease, as the land may at any time be sold, owing to the growth of the town and the increase of land values.

The Officer in charge, Mr. N.M.W.J. McKenzie has frequently urged that the Company should have its own building to provide suitable office accommodation and storage for goods assembled there for shipment to the various posts of the District, but the subject has not been dealt with and each year's delay will add to the cost of a suitable site.

Extract No. 3 (Contd.)

A lot, 50 feet x 132 feet on the main street is recommended as suitable for the Company's purpose and it could now be purchased for \$7,000.00. In respect to the price, Mr. McKenzie writes as follows:- "The price may look large, but there is every probability that real estate in this town will at least double in a very short time with the three transcontinental Railways and their branch lines running in here".

If we were turned out of the premises now occupied at North Bay there is not a single building which could be rented, and we would be compelled to move the District headquarters to some other unsuitable point, or purchase a building at an inflated price, probably much in excess of what the importance of the Company's business would justify."

(H.B.C. Arch. Fur Trade Box No.18, Folder No.328/1)