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Cover image: Two Montreal Transportation Company ships, including the John Gaskin (right), unload rails at Port Arthur’s CPR elevator in 1884. (TBHMS 983.29.55)
One of the features introduced by our previous editors was “In This Issue” a useful guide to the contents of the current publication. This year we have maintained the usual mix of records, articles and papers as well as introducing a section listing the most recently published books about Northwestern Ontario and reports from the district Historical Societies. This year we will feature the Pass Lake Historical Society.

In a memoir, Carl Westerback recalls his experiences as a young boy living in the fishing village of Tee Harbour on Lake Superior during the 1930s before the community moved to Camp Bay near Silver Islet in the early '40s. This account was originally presented at Sleeping Giant Provincial Park when a model of Tee Harbour was installed in the Visitors Centre.

Brent Scollie, our indefatigable records researcher, provides an account from the St. Paul Globe (1884) of a trip taken along the north shore of Lake Superior from Duluth to Peninsula Harbour (now Marathon). Scollie notes that “...in August 1884 Fort William was a negligible factor though in fact at that very moment Fort William was on the cusp of vast change as the CPR laid the foundation of its lake terminus. However, the article captures a moment in time.”

There are two more papers in this issue. An important resource in Northwestern Ontario is the forest industry and the difficulties it faces. Mike Commito examines the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests’ wood salvaging operation after the great Mississagi fire in 1948 which burned over 747,520 acres in Northeastern Ontario in the Chapleau region. The paper discusses the difficulties of the operation and suggests why similar salvaging methods were not applied later in Northwestern Ontario. David Battistel’s “Leeblain: The Metropolis That Never Was,” is being reprinted as a portion of the paper was inadvertently left out of the 2013 issue.

We take over a journal that for the past eight years (2007-2014) has flourished and, under the keen eye of Elle Andra-Warner and Peter Raffo, continued to be a model journal recognized and praised
regionally, nationally, and internationally. During their tenure, Papers & Records has expanded its readership and broadened our understanding of the region’s past through the publication of thirty-one articles and nine records that have made original and significant contributions. Two particular accomplishments, though, stand out: The Centennial Edition (2008), which commemorates the Society’s 100th Anniversary, and their final omnibus issue in 2014 focusing on the First World War. Thanks as well to all those on the Peer Review Committee the past eight years and also to those now on the new Editorial Advisory Committee.

Finally, this issue of Papers & Records would not have been possible without the dedication and diligence of Tory Tronrud. Tory continues to work behind the scenes of every issue ensuring the final product meets the highest quality and standards.

Editors: Michel Beaulieu
Beth Boegh
Contributors

Dave Battistel is a history teacher and instructional leader at St. Patrick High School in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Since 1994 he has been actively researching the history of the Port Arthur, Duluth and Western Railway, as well as its associated ventures (silver and iron mining and logging).

Michael Commito is a Canadian environmental historian. He recently completed his PhD at McMaster University and is currently working as a policy analyst at Northern Policy Institute. His article in the journal *Ontario History* on the rise of the Dubreuil Brothers Ltd., an Ontario timber company, won the Ontario Historical Society’s 2013 Riddell Award.

Brent Scollie, who grew up at the Lakehead, is a retired librarian living in Ottawa. Over a lengthy career, he has contributed articles to the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* and to journals such as the *Papers & Records* and *Ontario History*. His book, *Thunder Bay’s Mayors and Councillors* remains an essential reference tool.

Carl Westerback, CMA, CPP retired following several years service with Ministry of Revenue and Ministry of Government Services of the Province of Ontario. Prior to his working career he lived with his family at Tee Harbour and Camp Bay, Silver Islet.
Duluth Sept 1 [1884]. I have just returned from a trip along the north shore of Lake Superior, and the wonder uppermost in my mind is that so few, comparatively speaking, of the people of Minnesota know anything of the pleasures of such an excursion. If it be true that a prophet is not without honor except in his own country, I think it is equally true that prophets are generally ignorant of or indifferent to the beauties and resources of the country in which they live. People flock to the east and the south and abroad in search of the picturesque and the beautiful, and the further away they go, the more inconvenience and exposure they are subjected to, the more they convince themselves they have a pleasant time, and have seen something. Yet, all a Minnesotian has to do is open his eyes and look about him, in his own state, or near its borders, and he will find that in nature, which few other states in the Union can surpass. The fame of the natural beauties of the North Star state and vicinity has spread all over the country, yet the citizens of the northwest seem to be most indifferent about them. Probably this comes from the disposition manifested everywhere to postpone seeing the interesting places nearby on the theory that they can be seen at any time.

Whatever the cause there are fewer tourists along the north shore of Lake Superior from the Northwest than from any other part of the country, and yet it is a trip within reach of the pocket and time of almost every citizen of this section.

I left the Zenith City flashing its innumerable lights on the bay, a little after nine in the evening, on board the handsome propeller Ocean. As we steamed out in
the lake and got a view of Duluth lengthwise, it seemed like one long streak of glimmering light on its main streets and the handsome residences on the hill fairly glittered in the moonlight. Duluth is finely situated both for business purposes and for residences. The tendency of business is towards Rice’s Point, and the west end of town, but before many years have passed the eastern division will contain as many and as handsome homes as can be found anywhere in the state. There is more talk outside of Duluth about the new town—South Duluth—which the Omaha and Northern Pacific roads intend to “boom” than in Zenith City. Duluthians, as far as I have been able to see, express an uneasiness about a possible rival. The proposed town is on the Wisconsin side of St. Louis bay, and will be nothing more nor less than a suburb of the city. The railroads need it for large terminal facilities, stock yards, machine shops, factories and other manufactories, which are never found in the heart of any city, but the money center and the big retail stores and the homes and residences will be in Duluth. The Zenith is too far ahead for a rival to catch up or outstrip it.

As you leave Duluth, the high bluffs open and the country expands into a broad and rolling plantation, with a gradual rise from the lake shore. Four miles below the city is New London, an irregular collection of substantial dwellings, built some years ago, during the first boom days of Duluth, with English capital. The scheme was to establish a suburban residence town, away from the smoke and noise of the “big city,” which was certain to spring up and thrive on wind at the head of the lake. The panic of ’73 pricked the bubble, and all that ever was of New London still exists in the few

Figure 1: Daily Sentinel (Port Arthur), 25 Aug. 1884.
houses, most of them with the marks of ten years’ rough weather and hard usage clinging about them.

We lost sight of the Duluth lighthouse about midnight and the next morning found ourselves steaming among the innumerable islands, great and small, round, square, no shape, every shape, but all rocks and covered with a hardy growth of scrubby pine and evergreens. These islands are very beautiful and picturesque to look at, as they lie like scattered emeralds on the silvery surface of the lake, but of what other use they are, no man has found out. The boat glides in and out among them at each turn revealing new beauties of form and outline, and a sentimental tourist would find ample room for the wildest flight of his fancy in the silent grandeur of the isles of the lake.

But I was not a sentimental tourist. Rather of the Gradgrind type, with an eye to facts, and more intent on seeing man’s work than admiring the handiwork of nature. I would say, however, that for those who relish a bit of Nature’s beauty unadorned, the play of light and shadow on the islands that dot Superior near the border line, the mobility of the waters, now dark in the shadow of an overhanging bluff, again flashing in the sunlight or glimmering in the rays of the moon, the solemn stillness of the rough, but at a distance, not unbeautiful foliage, the various forms and sizes of the islands themselves, all combine to make a picture which the ardent lover of landscape beauty may go in raptures over.

We passed the Grand Marais at dead of night. I was going to add, "The sea with our prow upturning," but that smacks of poetry and plagiarism, so I’ll let it drop. From a fellow passenger I learned that Grand Marais, what there is of it, is in high hopes of emerging from
A fas through the building of the Grand Marais & Vermillion railroad. It is said that $2,000,000 have been raised on a mortgage—I presume the property mortgaged being the proposed road and the iron mines it will run to. I know that such a deed is on record in Duluth, but just what will come of it I have no means of judging.

**Port Arthur**

After eighteen hours from Duluth, we slowly hauled up alongside one of the docks at Port Arthur, the present eastern terminus of the Canadian Pacific railway. The town is built on a slope that rises very gradually from the lake and ends in a high hill some miles back. It consists of a lot of wooden buildings, some of them good ones, others, the largest proportion, mere

shells. They look as if they were put up, as the Arab spreads his tent, only to be taken down again in a short time and transplanted somewhere else. In fact, the first impression made on a stranger is that nothing and nobody in Port Arthur is there to stay. There is a ceaseless ebb and flow in the floating population. I was going to say from morning till night, but I can truthfully say from morning till morning, that indicates a determination to leave as soon as possible. The town is lively, but with the same sort of liveliness that made Brainerd, Fargo and Bismarck in their early days lively, as pandemonium let loose. The streets are thronged with men, sober, half sober, maudlin, stupid, staggering, swaggering, noisy, quarrelsome and disorderly. These constitute the "floating" population, and they certainly float, visibly, anywhere about town, gastronomically, in strong whisky and ale. The permanent and genuine citizens of Port Arthur are active, energetic, vigorous men of business, many of them, men of culture. There are a few of them who believe that Port Arthur is going to be a great shipping port, while others think

Figure 3: George Graham (1857-1927), owner of the propeller Ocean, as a young man. He would serve as mayor of Fort William in 1912-13. TBHMS 972.5.12
that with the completion of the Canadian Pacific railroad all its glory will have departed, and it will be left high and dry within sound of the melancholy waves. There is certainly nothing at or near Port Arthur upon which a city could be supported. The country is barren and unfit for farming purposes. There is no timber worth much within easy reach, no manufacturing facilities, and nothing to manufacture if there were. It will not be for the interest of the railroad company, after the road is finished, to encourage shipping more than is absolutely necessary to or from the place. When it is remembered that for nearly a thousand miles east of Port Arthur the road runs through a country that can never furnish a pound of local freight and that the company must depend exclusively upon its through trade for business, it will be seen that they cannot afford to be over anxious for the growth of Port Arthur. At present because of the road, there is plenty of money in the town, but it is money that is not going to be of any permanent benefit. Some men are making their "piles," with which, when the collapse come, they will hie themselves to pastures new; but very little of it is going into substantial improvement. There are a few planing mills, an elevator with a capacity of 200,000 bushels, a house for immigrants, a brick church (Catholic) and a convent, several other churches, a jail (with insufficient capacity), no first class hotel since the Queen's was burned, several private residences of good appearance, some handsome stores or shops, as you
occasionally hear on that side of the border, and the rest is of the floating order like the bulk of the population. The best thing around Port Arthur are the docks, which are well and substantially built.

**Immigration**

Through the courtesy of the Canadian immigration agent, J.M. McGovern, Esq., I learned that while the emigration to Manitoba through Port Arthur is not as large as in former years, the emigrants are of a higher and more substantial class. He says they are mostly people with some capital and experience as farmers, accustomed to business and able to take care of themselves. The facilities furnished by the Canadian Pacific Railroad company for the transportation of immigrants from the east direct to Manitoba, could scarcely be improved upon. The syndicate has built three magnificent iron steamers to connect with the trains at Port Arthur. These steamers are fitted up with all the improvements suggested by modern taste and invention, are lighted by the electric light, furnished handsomely and substantially, and are made as safe and reliable as is possible to science and skill. The immigration quarters, on the lower deck, while necessarily crowded, are perfectly clean and comfortable, and apparently everything has been done to lessen the
troubles and vexations attendant upon emigration. Immigrants are rarely subjected to delay at Port Arthur, but for their accommodation house, the government has built a large and commodious reception house.9

The Town Plot

A few miles below Port Arthur is the town plot or old Fort William. It is situated about seven miles above the mouth of the Kaministiquia river, with a broad and level plateau back of it, and a precipitous bluff frowning down in front.10 There was a time when the inhabitants of the town plot thought that the Canadian Pacific railroad would make their village its lake terminus, and there are some who still entertain the hope. So far as site is concerned, it has advantages which no other place on the Canadian border of the lake can boast. On both sides of the river, from the mouth to the town site, the country stretches out level as a prairie, the soil is fertile, and, I was told, for the raising of garden truck could not be surpassed. Both sides of the river could be utilized for docks, thus giving fourteen miles of dock front. The river is navigable for vessels of the largest draft, the only objection being a bar at the mouth. It would not cost a mint of money to dredge a channel through this bar, and once it is done, vesselmen assure me, it would be an easy and a cheap matter to keep it clear. The railroad company have already built coal docks, but that is the only improvement they have made. I look upon this as confirmatory of my impression that the managers of the Canadian Pacific railroad will do just as little as possible to encourage the building of a port at the upper end of Lake Superior. They cannot afford to hold out inducements for water competition.11

Beyond the Port

As you leave Port Arthur and sail further down the lake, the scenery becomes grander and milder. As I am not a scenic word painter, and as my object was to observe more the designs of man than the beauties of Nature, I must be excused if I do not “spread myself” on a theme suitable only to poets and other cultivators of the imagination. But those who wish to take this trip for the mere pleasure of it,
will find neither the sublime nor the beautiful lacking in the towering bluffs, the multitudinous ranges of hills that roll back one of the other, revealing glimpses of green vistas and peaceful coves nestling between them that are beautiful in the extreme. I regret to say that from a utilitarian point of view these hills and bluffs have nothing to commend them, but then there are some things in life and Nature that are good even if they are not—in the narrow sense of the word—useful. At Vert Island there is a brown stone quarry that runs clear across from one side to the other, and yields a stone of unexceptional fineness of grain and in unlimited quantity. The quarry is owned by a Chicago company, and is under the management of Gen. John McArthur of that city. The stone is very hard, of a pinkish tint, and is capable of a high polish. The manager assured me that experiments he made proves it better able to resist fire than granite, and while hard to work, is very durable. Four cargoes have already been shipped to Chicago this season, and with enlarged facilities the company will be able to meet the growing demands upon them. I mention this stone so that St. Paul builders, who are tired of granite, may know where to look for a change.

The Eastern Extension of the C.P.R.

The Canadian Pacific road from Port Arthur eastward for nearly a thousand miles is one of the greatest undertakings of the age. It is a gigantic piece of work. If it doesn’t swamp the company and the country it will not be Nature’s fault. It is almost literally true to say that there is not a foot of clay or earth on the entire route. It is all rock and mostly the hardest kind of rock. It looks as if Nature had issued an adamantine fiat that no railroad should penetrate these rocky fastnesses, yet man’s energy, genius and money have set the decree at naught. The road is building and at certain portions work never ceases day or night. It skirts the lake shore as far down as Peninsula Harbor, at which point it diverges fifty miles into the interior, and thence eastward to make connections. On the boat down with me was the well known contractor, J.S. Winston, who has eight miles of a contract. He told me that it is as difficult a piece of work as he ever saw, and says that many parts
of it will cost more than $100,000 a mile. K. McLeod,\textsuperscript{16} of Denver, Colorado, has a contract for three miles, near Red Sucker cove, and in these three miles he has two tunnels, 120 and 400 feet respectively, through the hardest kind of granite.\textsuperscript{17} As the road leaves the last tunnel, the grade rises until it is 125 feet above the surface of the water. At this elevation the line crosses a cove 250 feet wide, on a trestle 105 feet high and 1,200 feet along. The trestle is built on a causeway of stone and earth ten feet above the water line. Not quite half of these three miles is finished, but the work already done has cost more than $150,000. I take this contract only as an illustration of the character and cost of the work now doing on the Canadian Pacific, and from it some slight idea may be formed of the magnitude of the undertaking.

How is it going to pay? That is the question which forces itself upon an outside observer. From Callander in the east to Winnipeg in the west—a distance of 1,080 miles—there never will be any local traffic. All that stretch of country is good for nothing, neither for farming purposes, nor mineral development, nor manufacturing. There is no timber that is good for anything, and although explorations have been made for mining nothing has been found. The farmers of Manitoba, already groaning under the exactions of the company, will find that the completion of the road will only add to their burdens. They must supply the through freight, and there being no competing company they will have no redress against rates, which must, perforce, be high enough at least to pay the running expenses of a road costly in construction and without country or feeders. At least this is the way it looks to a man not laboring under the delusion of a national idea or a national policy.

The Ocean carried me as far as Peninsula Harbor [Marathon], at

\textbf{Figure 6: Scottish-American General John McArthur (1826-1906), manager of the Chicago and Verte Island Stone Co. (Cummings & Co.) from 1882 to about 1890. [Wikipedia]}
which point, as I have already said, the road strikes fifty miles into the interior. Peninsula Harbor is large and commodious, but will never be anything except, possibly, a railroad station. The country is rough, rocky and hilly, but the scenery is magnificent. The place once had a very hard name, and even yet is not remarkable for its soft mannered inhabitants. They are all railroad laborers, with a few soiled doves flitting about in calico. There are probably fewer of these fallen women and less drunkenness on the Canadian Pacific than on any other road built in this western country. No liquor is allowed to be sold to the men, and while a good deal is smuggled in, none is reported sold over bars. When the men want to have a "hurrah time" they go up to Port Arthur and blow in their money, until neither a cent nor their senses are left; then they return to work.

On the way back we stopped at Pay's Plot [Pays Plat], in the corrupted pronunciations of the line, Peepos' Plot. Here are situated the works of the Lake Superior Powder Company, manufacturers of all the explosives used on the line of the road. The dynamite and other dangerous matter is kept on an island some distance from the mainland,
so that if a spontaneous blow-up were to occur, no one would be injured. It might be as well to finish this paragraph in solid nonpareil, as I don't want to be accountable for any effort O'Donovan Rossa might make to capture the place. It would be rare vantage ground to fight the English, and rarer sport to hoist them with their own petard.

The Rabbit Mountain Mines. 21

There are many other places of interest that might be mentioned, but this letter has already grown longer than I intended. I must not, however, omit to say a few words about the Rabbit Mountain mine and Silver Islet, in most of which St. Paul capital is and has been interested. On the boat with me from Port Arthur Monday last was a member of one of the wholesale houses of St. Paul, but with the modest characteristic of the business men of your city, he desired me to withhold his name. He is one of the parties that recently purchased the Rabbit Mountain mine, and had just come in from a prospecting tour. After paying a tribute to the improvements recently made in the [St Paul] Globe, and pronouncing it far ahead of its cotemporaries, especially in its local features, he kindly submitted to an interview. The company paid $250,000 for the mine. They own 160 acres of land. The vein in one place is 7 x 3 and the other 14 x 7; the lead is 800 feet long. Three shafts have been sunk: No. 1 is thirty-eight feet. No. 2 fifty-five feet, and No. 3 twenty-eight feet. They have also run cross cuts from one shaft to another. At the bottom of No. 3 they have struck ore, which the sanguine owners believe will run $20,000 to the ton. Here's richness for you! It is estimated that the ore now on the dumps is worth $50,000. In Port Arthur I heard it was worth $100,000, but my St. Paul informant is satisfied with the lower estimate. The company have a store and boarding house, and twenty-three men are now employed at the mines. If the walls of the mine continue to run parallel, then the owners think there is no estimating its wealth. If, on the other hand, the walls should meet somewhere below, the mine will pan out, although what has been taken out so far justifies the purchase. This is the present condition of the Rabbit Mountain gold and silver mine.

Silver Islet. 22

Silver Islet is a mere speck on the lake that a man with good legs can cross in five strides. A few years ago it was considered the richest silver mine in this section of the country, and it is said that $3,000,000 were taken out of it. Now it is
nothing but an abandoned bit of ground, almost too small to hold the smelting works that stand up dark and silent against the watery surroundings. The owners have worked the mine so thoroughly that only a mere sphere of earth serves as roof between it and the waters above. The works stopped last fall, owing, I was told, to the fact of a coal barge not reaching the Islet before the lake froze up. The fires went out and eighteen hundred feet of water now fill the mine. On the main shore, where less than two years ago there was a thriving village, with two churches, a few inhabitants still linger, but why or whereupon I cannot say. The mine is abandoned for the time being, but whether it will be worked again depends upon circumstances. I understand an effort is now working to interest English capital in the enterprise, and, if successful, the managers will pump out the water and go down another thousand feet in search of hidden treasure. It is said to be still rich in precious ore.

Concluding Remarks.

It would only be proper for me to conclude this letter without a few remarks for the benefit and advantage of possible visitors to that region. It is a trip that can be made without any inconvenience and at very little expense. The tourist who leaves St. Paul or Minneapolis by the St. Paul & Duluth road on Tuesday morning, arrives in Duluth in time to catch the beautiful propeller Ocean, which is the only one stopping at all points of interest along the north shore. The boat is handsomely furnished, the state rooms are neat and comfortable, supplied with spring mattresses and every other convenience which a fastidious traveller requires. The fare on the boat is good, substantial and plentiful. The officers are all pleasant gentlemen who spare no trouble to make the trip agreeable to their guests. The captain, Mr. A.I. Thompson, is one of the most reliable on the lakes, and although a comparatively young man, boasts of nineteen years experience on the "raging brine." He is a great favorite with tourists and deserves the good opinions he has won. The clerk, James Macgregor, seems to have no other thought than the comfort of those entrusted in his care, and as he is constantly bubbling over with good humor, he does much to prevent the trip from growing monotonous. He is ever alert to look after whatever may add to the pleasure of his guests, and has nothing of that moroseness that sometimes characterizes those in similar positions. In every way a trip down the north shore of Lake Superior is well worth the taking. R.J.M.
Endnotes

1 The passenger steamer Ocean was purchased in May 1884 by the lumber firm, Graham, Horne & Co., for their Lake Superior line and placed on the route from Duluth to Michipicoten to service the Canadian Pacific Railway construction camps along the North Shore. It was sold in April 1886 to its previous owner, Sylvester Neelon (1825-1897), MLA for Lincoln, and placed back on the route between St. Catharines and Montreal. There was plenty of competition for passengers and freight in 1884, from the Beatty Sarnia line’s Sovereign, the Collingwood line’s steamers Frances Smith and Owen Sound, and Thomas Marks’ North Shore Line steamers City of Montreal and E.M. Foster, all of which serviced points along the North Shore. Port Arthur Daily Sentinel (PADS), 24 May 1884; 9-10 June 1884; 17 April 1886. "George Alexander Graham,” Scollie, Thunder Bay Mayors & Councillors, 183. The Dept. of Marine and Fisheries registry reads, “Steam screw OCEAN, Official Canada No. 88633. Of 684 tons gross; 451 tons net. Built St. Catharines, Ont., 1872. Home port, St. Catharines, Ont. 137.0 x 23.3 x 11.7 Owned by S. Neelon, of St. Catharines, Ont.” The Ocean burned to the hull at Port Dalhousie, Ont. in Nov. 1904.

2 Thomas Gradgrind, the notorious headmaster in Charles Dicken’s novel Hard Times, a man of facts and calculations.

3 R.J.M.’s observation is confirmed by others. A man from Owen Sound wrote to the Winnipeg Free Press in May 1884, “We left Port Arthur as busy as a town can be which caters to a floating population outnumbering its residents. Every day a fresh gang of railway men, with pockets well lined, takes the place of the gang that got through its "blow out" the day before. The tavern-keepers got most of the spoil but all manner of traders seem to do an active business. Their harvest from the navvies is unlikely to last long, however, and one publican, speaking in my hearing, almost wept as he prophesied of the early day when “construction headquarters” shall be moved to Michipicoten.” PADS, 29 May 1884, 3, “Port Arthur.”

4 R.J.M. can be forgiven for not seeing any agricultural prospects in the district. In 1884 some households gardened within town limits. A small number of settlers had located in arable areas of McIntyre and Oliver townships which were accessible by the train (Murillo was a CPR station) or by one of the colonization roads, the Dawson or Red River Road through McIntyre, or the Oliver Road (built 1879 to Murillo). Exploitation of the Slate River valley land in Paipoonge Township was hampered by the lack of good roads and bridges, as well as absentee landowners. Paipoonge would be settled after 1884.

5 The outstanding example of a man who made his “pile” at Port Arthur was merchant John Bartle (1855-1932) who first came to the Landing in 1879 and left in 1887 for Monrovia in southern California taking with him, it was said, $30,000, a phenomenal amount for the time. But most successful merchants stayed put. Scollie, Thunder Bay Mayors and Councillors, 46-47.

6 The Queen’s Hotel, owned by S.W. Ray, Thomas Marks, and D.F. Burk, burned Saturday 20 June 1884. In 1885 the Northern Hotel replaced it as the town’s premier hotel. Thunder Bay’s first grain elevator east of the town centre was built in late 1883 by the Canadian Pacific Railway, but did not receive grain until 1884.

7 James Michael McGovern (1854-1916), a Catholic Irish-Canadian from the Eastern Townships of Quebec, and Conservative patronage office-holder, had served as Canadian immigration agent at Duluth MN 1882-1884. He had just become immigration agent at Port Arthur 15 May 1884 and would serve there and at Winnipeg until his death. Scollie, Thunder Bay Mayors & Councillors, 110-11.
The steamers were the Alberta, Algoma and Athabasca. The Algoma foundered off Isle Royale 7 Nov. 1885 with the loss of 46 souls.

The Dominion government erected the emigrant-immigrant shed in 1883 on Manitou Street at North Water Street. In the early days it was often used for the annual fall exhibition of the West Algoma Agricultural Society. The building was declared surplus in 1919 and sold by public tender. PADS, 27 March, 29 April 1883. The Weekly Herald and Lake Superior Mining Journal (PAWH), 4 July 1883, The News-Chronicle (PANC), 2 & 4 & 23 Dec 1919.

The Fort William Town Plot corresponds to modern-day West Fort. The “precipitous bluff” is Mount McKay. The Hudson's Bay Company buildings on the lower Kaministiquia had vanished in the CPR coal yards by 1884. Prior to this, most travelers to the North Shore described the fur company buildings, garden and cows. R.J.M. makes no mention of the CPR’s first Fort William grain elevator upriver from the coal docks because in August 1884 only the piles had been driven for what became CPR Elevator A.

The author was wrong about the CPRs intentions. After 1884 the CPR added grain elevators and made east Fort William its rail and lake terminus. By having its own passenger boats connect to its railroad lines at southern Ontario and Thunder Bay, it retained the fares within its system, although there was plenty of competition on the lakes for these passengers. It enjoyed a monopoly on passengers when the lakes were frozen, December to April or May.

Interestingly, the author makes no mention of Thunder Cape or the Sleeping Giant, which usually appealed to Victorian travellers interested in the picturesque.

Scottish-born John McArthur (1826-1906) was a brigadier-general in the Union Army during the American Civil War. He was general manager of the Chicago and Vert Island Stone Company of Chicago which quarried Vert Island sandstone from Nipigon Bay from 1882-90 as building stone for the mid-west market.


Virginia-born James Sutton Winston (1848-1886) contracted for the first eight miles east of McKay's Harbor (Rossport). He died 20 Dec. 1886 at Richmond VA only two years after speaking to R.J.M. He does not appear to be a member of the Minneapolis MN contracting firm, Winston Brothers, a family of Virginians, who had contracts to build the Northern Pacific Railroad, as he was not a brother of Fendall G. Winston, Philip Bickerton Winston and William Overton Winston, partners in the firm. See entry for “Fendall G. Winston” in History of Minneapolis, Gateway to the Northwest (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co, 1923), v.III, 306-309. The notices in Engineering News, 8 Jan. 1887, 30; 19 Feb. 1887, 127, are confusing American Contract Journal, 16 Feb. 1884, 73, gives details of all construction contracts, citing the Weekly Herald and Lake Superior Mining Journal, 17 Jan. 1884.

The Sentinel reported in March 1884 regarding McLeod, “A narrow escape. Camp of Kenneth McLeod, CPR construction east, came near being blown into the air recently, a huge piece of rock was carried from a blast about 300 feet away, through the side of the magazine shed containing 700 pounds of dynamite and 15 kegs of black powder, knocking over the stove and its burning embers. Luckily no explosion resulted.” Another column adds about a fatal accident at work of K. McLeod at Red Sucker Cove. “Camp at Red Sucker Cove about 150 miles east of here, man named Mike
Stranbenzer killed by rock in blast three weeks ago.” *Thunder Bay Sentinel* (TBS), 14 March 1884, 3.


R.J.M. was wrong. The town of Marathon took shape at Peninsula Harbor between 1944 and 1946 with construction of a paper mill by the Marathon Corporation of Wisconsin. See Lavallée, *Van Horne’s Road*, 153 (illustration 246) for a photograph of the buildings at Peninsula Harbor.

Construction engineer Roderick McLennan (1823-1911) noted in his diary for Saturday, June 7, 1884, “This place Peninsula Harbor getting to be a fearfully rough place with vagrants and hoodlums,” cited in Arthur, *Thunder Bay District*, 134. The *Daily Sentinel* had frequent reports of violence there, PADS, 30 Aug. 1884, p. 2 “Peninsula Harbor. A boom of whiskey. Rowdymism rampant.” PADS, 22 Sept. 1884, “Attempt to Kill. A Desperate Affray in a Saloon at Peninsula Harbor.” Railway construction had largely ceased by December 1884. The *Weekly Herald* reported in its 31 Jan. 1885 issue, “Down the line Peninsula Harbor Jan 20. The track of the CPR is now completed between here and Heron Bay and in consequence but few men are employed now in and around Peninsula Harbor. Great activity is going on in building the immense trestles between Jackfish Bay and Heron Bay. The whole of the liquor men of the town were fined last week by Judge [Lewis] Hill; in all cases the fines were $25 and costs. Several notorious women are here yet but neither the liquor men or they are meeting with much encouragement.”

O'Donovan Rossa (1831-1915), an Irish Fenian terrorist and member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, organized the first ever bombings by Irish republicans of English cities. The expression “hoist them with their own petard” means “blow them up with their own explosives” from William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, Act 3, Scene 4, 202-209.


Steamboat captain Andrew Imrie Thompson (1854-1929), one of whose daughters Dorothy Petrea Thompson married druggist Herbert Francis Crooks 28 April 1921. Their son druggist Jamie Crooks (1922-2014) continued the pharmacy business in Port Arthur. Dentist Dr John W. Crooks is also a grandson. TBS, 4 March, 6 June 1884, PANC, 21 May 1928 wife, 30-31 Jan, 16 Feb 1929.
In the summer of 1948, the Mississagi fire scorched 747,520 acres in northeastern Ontario, making it the largest forest fire in provincial history. Unlike previous fires, this one led to unprecedented action from the Ontario Department of Lands in Forests (DLF). Within the burned area, which one firefighter referred to as the “biggest, blackest graveyard,” the DLF was left with a huge volume of salvageable wood, in the form of both partially-burned and still-living trees amidst the charred ones. Planning needed to begin immediately as the government wanted to react effectively to the devastation or face criticism for allowing so much of a valuable resource to go to waste.

A promotional film, Out of the Smoke, later released by the government after the salvage was completed, imagined how the Department outlined the early plans for the project. After describing the forest fire, the film’s narrator states that, “In Toronto, the Minister of Lands and Forests held an urgent meeting to discuss timber salvage in the area.” As the camera shifts from outside of Queen’s Park, we see the DLF’s top brass convening around a table. At the centre of the congregation, in front of a map of the burned area, sits Minister Harold Scott and to his right, Deputy Minister Frank MacDougall. Other high ranking Department officials are also seated at the table, amongst the clutter of what appears to be schematics and maps, undoubtedly positioned to depict the diligence of the planning process. While Scott continuously vacates his seat to direct his colleagues’ attention to the map,
the narrator bellows that “he demanded action.”

Regardless of the accuracy of this depiction, it reveals how the Department envisioned the project’s early stages. In the postwar era of increased professionalization and utilitarianism, it wanted the public to see its top officials craning over detailed maps and carefully planning an operation that the government depicted as being of great benefit to Ontarians on the basis of upholding the tenets of conservation and minimizing waste.

But the reality was far different from the scripted scenes in Out of the Smoke. From the very beginning, the Department’s original plans were dashed when it was unable to persuade Ontario’s larger and more seasoned firms to carry out the mission. As a result, it was forced to organize the project itself and entice smaller and inexperienced companies to undertake the workload. Consequently, as the salvage unfolded, the DLF began learning from its on-the-ground inspectors that many of these crews, often poorly supervised and sometimes incompetent, were challenging the government’s authority in the blackened woodlands. However, in order to maintain a façade of professionalism and expedite the project, the Department rarely dismissed these crews because the overriding goal of the project was to salvage as much timber as possible. Rather, the government opted to accommodate and negotiate with its contractors in order to realize this objective and also to legitimize its authority.

This paper argues that despite the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests mandate and shift towards more professionalized management of its woodlands in the postwar period, these plans did not always translate into success in the field. As a result, the government had to alter its plans and often accept or overlook activities and practices that it was striving to correct. The reality was that the conditions in the forest were worse than the Department envisioned and this created an unfavourable situation with some bush workers who tested the limits of the DLF’s approach to modernization and professionalism. This paper will demonstrate that the Department of Lands and Forests needed to adapt its plans from the outset by incorporating and working with local operators, but it also needed to negotiate continuously with these firms throughout the salvage in order to realize its goals. To maintain the appearance of control over the environment and the operation itself, the DLF took a pragmatic approach to the project in order
to finish the salvage but also to maintain public support. As the project progressed, the government attempted to legitimize its efforts on the ground through these negotiations and later, through the dissemination of media releases designed to extol the benefits of the salvage while minimizing the fact that not every aspect of the salvage was going as planned.

In the postwar period, Canada’s forests increasingly came into the purview of federal and provincial management agencies. As new technological developments such as chainsaws and motorized vehicles enhanced productivity in the industry, emphasis was also extended to the long-term viability of these resources. In British Columbia, the provincial government introduced legislation at the time that sought to end exploitive timber harvesting and manage its trees for the future, moving towards more modern management practices. In Newfoundland, similar action was taken with the establishment of a Royal Commission in 1950 to address the longstanding issue of the extent of the government’s involvement in forest management, an issue that needed to be remedied for the sake of the new province’s timber.

In Ontario, both the provincial forest industry and its supervisory body, the Department of Lands and Forests, made great strides and improvements during and after the Second World War. Former provincial forester, Ken Armson, has pointed out that just after the war, “public and political concerns about forestry” began to emerge again. Under the guidance of Minister Norman Hipel and Deputy Minister Frank MacDougall, the Department underwent a series of radical changes in 1946, including a complete reorganization, as part of an effort to professionalize it. Richard S. Lambert and Paul Pross, the DLF’s official biographers, have argued that the reorganization itself was largely done “to remove the suspicion of corruption and incompetence that hung over the Department” as a result of its dealings with pulp and paper companies. Immediately after the war, Conservative Premier George Drew appointed Major-General Howard Kennedy to head a royal commission on forestry. Its report focused on a myriad of issues, but its overriding recommendation was to improve the utilization of Crown timber and curb needless waste. While much of Kennedy’s report was ignored by the government, particularly the most radical parts that called for a complete overhaul of the province’s forest
management system, some noteworthy changes were implemented.

One of the most noticeable reflections of the Department’s renewed commitment to professional forestry was its passage of the *Forest Management Act* in 1947. This new legislation was introduced in order to increase the level of accountability of woodland operators harvesting on Crown land. The Act dictated that companies cutting Crown timber would be required, at the Minister’s discretion, to provide the DLF with an estimated inventory of the timber being cut, a master plan for managing the area, and a map of the area that was divided into operational units. In addition, the *Crown Timber Act* was amended in the spring of 1948 to address the issue of wasteful forest practices originally outlined by the Kennedy Commission. While somewhat vague and perhaps intentionally so, the Act charged that “no person shall commit wasteful practices in forest operations.” It was decided that the Lieutenant-Governor in Council would define “wasteful practices” in the future so that violators could be subject to penalties. Thus, while the government did not adopt Kennedy’s recommendations wholeheartedly, it negotiated and incorporated many of his suggestions as it saw fit.

The Ontario government began incorporating these new recommendations into its day-to-day activities, signaling its new emphasis on professionalism and efficiency. The DLF identified as its primary concern the proper utilization of timber and declared that if these resources were to be used intelligently it would require “an intimate and scientific knowledge.” The Department’s annual reports from the mid-1940s reveal that it was exploring a wide range of scientific experiments, including projects designed to control destructive forest insect outbreaks. The DLF sought to make, in its own words, “every effort to improve the quality of service rendered.” Thus, by the late 1940s the Department’s commitment to better management, a trend observable in other Canadian forest agencies at this time, was well under way in Ontario. This was a significant improvement from years prior when the government of Mitchell Hepburn (1934-1941) had slashed the DLF’s budget to the point where its ability to function effectively was hampered. As Beverly Soloway has pointed out, these financial cuts laid the seeds for a particularly bad forest fire season in northwestern Ontario in 1936.

It was within this context that
the Mississagi fire erupted. While a similar fire could have ignited in northwestern Ontario, as that region had also experienced devastating fire seasons in the 1880s and 1930s, climatic conditions in the late 1940s in the region rendered it a veritable tinderbox.¹⁸ The massive area that the conflagration razed was centred within the Mississagi River valley and the Chapleau district in northeastern Ontario. The forests there are part of a vast pinery, which ranges from the southeastern shores of Lake Superior in the west to Temagami in the east, and beyond.¹⁹ In May 1948, fires began and rapidly spread in both locations. Beginning as two separate fires, they were referred to simply as one entity, the Mississagi, once the two conflagrations joined later that summer.²⁰

By mid-June, the fires had already consumed approximately 500,000 acres, and settlements near and far began feeling its devastating effects.²¹ In White River, to the fire’s west in the neighbouring Algoma district, it was reported that “cottagers being evacuated by truck had to use flashlights to find their way in broad daylight.”²² The town of Chapleau even had empty boxcars on standby at the railway station in case an emergency evacuation was needed, as was the case in the 1916 Matheson fire, which claimed 224 lives.²³ Farther away, the fire’s impact was less dangerous but still noticeable. At its apex, the United States Weather Bureau reported that it was the cause of a gigantic smoke cloud travelling south. According to the North Bay Daily Nugget, “the air over Washington
[DC] appeared to be filled with haze ranging from light to dark gray and the early sun was ringed with a bright red halo."\(^{24}\)

The worst of the fire was over by late June.\(^{25}\) Rain began showering the burning area, dousing it intermittently for the next ten days. This proved to be a decisive factor in the suppression campaign. Firefighting efforts continued until 21 July, largely against sporadic smudge fires, until the DLF classified the situation as under control and, by 1 August, all firefighting crews had been withdrawn.\(^{26}\)

In the aftermath, the DLF determined that the most menacing prospects to salvaging the remaining tree stands would be a potential insect infestation, namely spruce budworm or boring beetles. Major-General Howard Kennedy had identified this spectre in 1947 in his report on forestry for the province, recommending that in respect to insects the "salvage of damaged timber... is imperative and should not be delayed."\(^{27}\) While the government ignored many of Kennedy’s suggestions, his opinion in this regard evidently resonated with the Department as it quickly began preparing a strategy to realize this aim. The salvage would entail parceling out sections, or "logging chances," to various contractors. The Department conceived of the burned area in schematic terms and it divided the tract into forty-nine logging chances, and estimated that the total number of board feet within these locations was around 271,533,000.\(^{28}\) The firms would harvest fire-damaged trees in their respective areas and either ship out the trees whole or as processed lumber, depending on whether they were operating a mill on-site. All Crown timber or lumber was then to be collected at a temporary central depot in North Bay, run by the newly-created Great Northern Woods Company, where the salvaged wood would be processed and marketed.\(^{29}\)

To implement a timber extraction project of this magnitude, the Department would have wanted the most established and veteran firms to do the work, but circum-
stances prevented this from happening. Salvaging wood to the degree required by the Mississagi fire would be an immense task and, as Lambert and Pross write, “large, well established lumber operators would not forego their own planned operations to assume the risk of producing lumber from fire-damaged timber.”

Firms that were already operating in the vicinity of the burned area, such as the McFadden Company and Elk Lake Lumber, for example, backed out because both believed that the government had underestimated the severity of the fire and did not want to divert resources from their existing operations.

C.E. Smith, McFadden’s general manager, wrote to Harold Scott, Minister of the DLF, and told him that trying to recover fire swept timber would only add a further burden to its operation and concluded that the company was seriously concerned over the whole situation and deemed it a massive risk.

Smith had good cause to say this as McFadden experienced the Mississagi’s devastation firsthand in June when one of its camps, including eleven buildings and a warehouse, had been reduced to ash. Similarly, D.R. Young, Elk Lake’s manager, told the Department that “the project represented a potential loss that the company could not afford.” In addition, Young also cited the fact that McFadden was not participating as further evidence that the operation was undesirable. He argued that since McFadden had operations within the salvageable area, thereby having an advantage in terms of existing transportation routes, and had still
said no, this meant that the conditions were far from ideal. Beyond the schematics drawn up at Queen’s Park, the Department first reached out to these local firms to inquire not only about the conditions on-the-ground but about their willingness to participate. When both McFadden and Elk Lake declined, the government needed to alter its plans.

To do this, the DLF turned to firms that were not skilled or experienced enough to take on such a difficult and, potentially, non-profitable extraction. Desperate for help, the Department placed advertisements for prospective operators near the end of August in Toronto, Pembroke, North Bay, Sudbury, and Sault Ste. Marie newspapers. However, Frank Sharpe, Chief of the Division of Timber Management, reported that by October 1948 “there was little response [and] it became quite obvious... that little or no progress would be made unless there was some arrangement for providing working capital.”

Thus, in order to make “Operation Scorch,” as it was dubbed, work, the provincial government offered an array of incentives to inexperienced firms. To compensate for what the Department believed were lower calibre operators, it was willing to provide resources in the form of cash advances and financing for additional startup costs such as roads and equipment. The DLF also had to factor in that “a large portion of the area was quite isolated,” and as a result it agreed to help contractors by assuming half the cost of road building. As the Department later reflected, it “had no alternative but to look to many small operators to carry out woods operations, the majority of whom were ill-equipped to carry out their commitment.”

In dealing with these operators, the government quickly learned how often and how significantly it would have to negotiate with them and approach the issues it encountered on a case-by-case basis if it wanted to complete...
the salvage. In one or multiple ways, a number of companies—accounting for roughly half the timber harvested on this project—would significantly violate their contracts with the government, and for the most part, would not be dismissed. While the Department’s top brass continued to take a synoptic approach from Queen’s Park, on-the-ground officials would witness how the project was deviating in practice. Mary McRoberts’ study on British Columbia’s postwar forest policies argued that it failed to accurately consider the forest industry’s structure and future needs. Similarly, but on a more micro level, the Ontario government also did not realize how its salvage plans would not conform to the realities in the blackened woodlands.

Early into the project, despite receiving information from trusted officials on the ground, the Department often failed to take any remedial steps to address or revise its current plan, but instead pushed forward because it believed it had no choice. Logan Eagle, a veteran DLF inspector, eloquently summed up this situation following a project-wide inspection. Writing candidly to Ross Hyslop, a fellow government forester, Eagle argued that “many of the operators are taking advantage of the poor and short labour supply. Coupled with the idea we want to get these logs sawn at any cost, and in any fashion, in order to get the job done, they are not putting their best effort into trying to do a good job."

Hyslop later communicated some of these observations, as well as his own, to Frank Sharpe, head of the Timber Management Division within the DLF. Noting his frustration with how the project was progressing only a short while after it had begun, Hyslop stated that many of the activities occurring on the ground were “entirely unwarranted and wrong in prin-
The government’s management forester for the Thessalon area, Jack Hope, also wrote to Sharpe to inform him that supervision in the project’s early stages was becoming a problem and reminded him that this could “result in waste, loss and be a perfect example of woods operation which Timber Management is striving to correct in this industry.”

Even though the government accepted, as a given, that many of the firms were unseasoned, and that some setbacks were bound to happen as a result, it could hardly have anticipated the myriad problems which accompanied some operators. For example, the Cooke Logging Company, headed by Roy Cooke and hailing from Iron Bridge, was cited by a local inspector for the deplorable manner in which he ran his operations. Government forester T.W. Hueston reported that

the main camp itself violates every health regulation in the book – the stable drains directly into the water supply, a distance of forty feet – the garbage is dumped, uncovered, immediately behind the cookery – there is a three hole privy for 85 men – sleep camp has almost no window space but plenty of lice – there seems to be no curb on drinking in camp and some of the men, including the foreman, have been dynamiting fish in Honey Lake.

Despite the company’s rank disregard for the health and safety of its workers and the fact that it was also in clear violation of its contractual obligations to adhere to the Public Health Act, Cooke was neither penalized nor dismissed. Instead, after learning about the ugly realities on the ground, the Department analysed the Cooke case pragmatically and allowed the company to continue operating un-
impeded for the sake of expediting the salvage.\textsuperscript{46}

One of the more widespread and challenging problems for the DLF on the salvage was when firms encountered financial difficulties and, here again, the government simply adapted. Some episodes were protracted, as in the case of Briscoe Logging, another outfit from Iron Bridge and led by Harold Briscoe. After one operating season, it started experiencing serious pecuniary difficulties, which prompted government forester Ross Hyslop to recommend the DLF “reduce its [Briscoe’s] financial burden.”\textsuperscript{47} By the summer of 1953, the situation was largely unchanged, and Harold Briscoe was due in court for failing to pay his income tax. Consequently, he needed to pay his fines to the federal government or he would face incarceration.\textsuperscript{48} Once again, Hyslop went to bat for Briscoe and his bedraggled firm, and the DLF assumed the cost of the penalties until the company’s contract was completed. Ultimately, Briscoe avoided jail time, and the company concluded its contract with the DLF in the fall of 1953.

While Briscoe bled slowly until the Department stepped in, other companies such as the J.D. Campbell Lumber Company (Campbell) hemorrhaged cash until the firm was rescued by the DLF.\textsuperscript{49} Following one of the company’s first inspections in the spring of 1949, the DLF’s local official, Logan Eagle, reported that the firm was heading towards financial ruin.\textsuperscript{50} The next winter the problems continued, and a government scaler, J.D. Pennock, reported that financial difficulties still plagued the operation.\textsuperscript{51} Shortly thereafter the company’s situation spiraled out of control, and it had no choice but to file for bankruptcy and allow the government to take over responsibility for its operation and assume its debts. As a result, the Crown suffered a considerable loss of nearly half a million dollars with Campbell alone, but its strategy of accommodating the company worked towards realizing the goal of the project.\textsuperscript{52}

The Department’s pragmatic approach to dealing with insolvent companies also extended to how it dealt with firms that were shirking their commitments to the government. Harold Block, the head of Block Logging from Swastika in far northeastern Ontario, refused to work with the government in any capacity. The DLF’s Jack Hope explained that “supervisors have spent very little time in the area because of Block’s lack of cooperation which often amounts to insult and abuse [and] proper administration
by the field officers” was impossible. 53 Unable to check Block’s activities and brook his insubordination, another department official, Charles Tregonning, concluded that there was no way “to maintain any control or supervision [over] the operation.” 54 According to the report, Block had stated “he wasn’t operating a free boarding house for the staff of the DLF and that as far as he was concerned the Mill Studies and Yard Estimates were unnecessary.” In spite of the frustration that this undoubtedly caused the Department, Block was never reprimanded, and, even worse, the government’s senior officials acquiesced to the company when they directed field staff to avoid Block’s operation until further notice. 55 The Department actually had grounds to terminate Block but opted to take the path of least resistance and not assert its authority and oversee the operation, essentially giving Block free reign. 56

It is unclear if Block committed any forestry violations outside of the watchful eye of the Department, but the same could not be said for L. Portelance Wood and Lumber. 57 Headed by Leo Portelance, during the 1950-51 cutting season, his firm had broken numerous regulations, including cutting trees outside the boundaries set by the Crown and harvesting timber that was not fire-damaged. 58 The Department’s local official tried to remedy these problems immediately, informing the firm in early February 1951 that

because of your wasteful cutting, our supervisors instructed your foreman to stop cutting over any further areas... you have been ignoring our instruction and carrying on as before. This is the second time we have advised your foreman about wasteful cutting. I must now request your cooperation in this matter. If it is not remedied at once, we will have to request suspension of your operating permit. 59

The language used by Hyslop is quite telling because, despite possessing evidence of violations, the immediate course of action was not to terminate the contract or dismiss Portelance but rather ask that the company stop what it was doing. Hyslop’s words failed to strike a chord with Portelance, as the latter’s wanton cutting continued for the remainder of the season and beyond. 60

The DLF was not completely impotent in its dealings with operators but at times allowed nefarious activities to proceed unchecked if it did not significantly violate regulations or compromise the Department’s larger aims. The eponymous J.L. Lahti Lumber
Company drew the ire of the DLF because of its incompetence but more so because it misappropriated government sawlogs. During the summer of 1950, the Department had discovered that the company had used salvaged lumber, for which it had not paid any Crown dues, to construct an office building and two residences in Thessalon. These logs were government property, and Lahti had neither purchased them nor obtained consent from the government before using them, which breached Section 18 of its contract. While Lahti was supposed to be penalized for the wood used, there is no evidence that this occurred and the fact that the company continued to operate suggests that no punishment was meted out.

Not long after the first incident, Lahti again misused timber and found itself embroiled in another controversy with the DLF. Government inspectors discovered in 1950 that the company had dumped roughly 125,000 logs “in 10 different lakes on which no sawmills are operating at present.” Even worse, no roads had been built to these lakes, which would make the retrieval of the wood extraordinarily arduous and costly. In addition, the company was also in very bad financial standing. These factors, and an apparent “lack of interest in completing [the] operation,” left Lahti little choice; he was forced to declare bankruptcy. Officials toyed with the idea of assuming the company’s debts, as it had done with Campbell, but the DLF’s senior officials vetoed this idea in large part because of the company’s deplorable track record in its dealings with the DLF. Instead, the Department assumed control of the manufacture and marketing of the remaining logs and lumber, using Lahti’s equipment with the consent of his
creditors. When this operation was completed the DLF allowed the company’s creditors to repossess all the equipment Lahti had financed, and in 1954 the Sheriff of Algoma seized the last of its assets.66 Once again the Department plugged its nose to documented violations for the sake of completing the salvage.

As part of the ongoing process of legitimizing the salvage in the charred woodlands, the DLF also launched a public relations campaign to disseminate a decidedly positive message and to present a façade of professionalism.67 Beginning in 1948, it issued weekly news releases, which served as the DLF’s medium for informing the public of its activities. If the government had lost control over operations in the woods, at least it could try to control the public’s perception of them by spinning them in its favour. Some of the early reports praised the project for being one of “the most highly mechanized operations of its kind in Ontario.”68 More importantly, the press releases emphasized the DLF’s commitment to realizing unprecedented levels of efficiency. Early missives from 1949 stated that the Department was committed to saving as much timber as possible from the Mississagi fire and that reforestation efforts were already well under way.69 Forester Jack Hope had even surmised that the Department not only had to worry about the physical nature of the operation but also, through a public relations campaign, ensure “that the public thought the salvage was a necessary recourse.”70

The desire to safeguard the project from negative, unwanted attention was not merely precautionary, as the potential for embarrassment had been poignantly demonstrated early in the salvage. In January 1950, William Howe, a logger from Parry Sound, was compelled to write a scathing editorial, after he spent some time working on the salvage, that was later published in the Globe and Mail. It offered a first-hand perspective on some of the problems that the Department was facing in the ashen timberlands. Not mincing his words, Howe stated that “it seems that the government is the sucker, and we the taxpayers are being taken for a ride. These scalpers, self-named timber operators, working under the guise of a salvage contract, are cutting down the remainder of the timber that was untouched by the fire, whether mature or not.”
tors, working under the guise of a salvage contract, are cutting down the remainder of the timber that was untouched by the fire, whether mature or not.” While this type of editorial was admittedly rare, it did demonstrate to the DLF the importance of winning over the public’s support in the face of criticisms, should they occur. So much so that Wildred G. Dyre, supervisor of the salvage in Thessalon, felt the need to formally rebut Howe. In a submission of his own to the Globe, Dyre downplayed Howe’s allegations and also told readers that the government was saving timber, building roads, and creating jobs.

Even as the operation neared its conclusion and incidents with operators tapered off, the press releases continued to praise the salvage for its achievements. Comments of conservation of our natural resources leaves no room for wastage, let alone wastage on a colossal scale.” After the operation was officially completed in 1956, the government still felt the need to defend its record on the salvage. In that same year, Minister Gemmell reflected on the project while addressing Sudbury’s Young Progressive Conservative Association. Before the partisan crowd, Gemmell defensively postured that the operation was “a complete success [and] denied a loss of $800,000.” If the DLF was not able to assert full control over the operation on the ground, the news releases and media reports allowed the government to maintain a veneer of professionalism in the media. Even when the government faced criticism years after the salvage was completed, it found inno-
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radicative ways to rebut the attacks. After learning about the government’s issues with J.L. Lahti on the salvage, Liberal opposition leader Frank R. Oliver chastised the government when he asked, “what was the use of spending hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayers’ money to salvage the Mississagi reserve, just to have the lumber piled up... and rot?” While the Conservatives addressed Oliver’s criticisms in the Ontario Legislature, the Department went one step further by glamorizing the project, releasing the promotional colour film, Out of the Smoke. It charged that out of the “destruction came millions of feet of Ontario pine lumber, lumber for homes, whole rows, whole streets, whole towns. The burned land gave up to salvage enough sound lumber to build more than 16,000 homes.”

In the end, the government’s pragmatic approach to carrying out the project and dealing with its operators had succeeded. In terms of lumber production the DLF had surpassed its salvage target of 200,000,000 fbm by over fifty percent. It is also important to note that the salvage led to positive developments for a small number of operators, such as Dubreuil Brothers Limited, which was able to use the experience to establish themselves in Ontario’s forest industry for the long-term. In addition, to access much of the salvageable timber, the contractors and the Crown had been obliged to construct over 540 miles of roads. They added to Ontario’s rapidly expanding transportation network, and facilitated the penetration into a part of the province that had been previously inaccessible and remote. This was greatly beneficial to Ontario’s timber industry in particular and to the province in general, as it considerably increased the ease with which visitors could enjoy this section of the province. Yet, figures show that by 1954 the Mississagi salvage had cost the province $794,478.56.

Two years later in the Ontario Legislature, Minister of Lands and Forests, Clare Mapledoram, openly admitted that the province would probably not recover the $750,000 it had invested into the operation but instead reminded his fellow MPPs that the initiative “was a tremendous operation, probably the largest operation ever undertaken in the province of Ontario. I think it was to the credit of the government and Legislature that it undertook it. It would have been a tremendous loss to this province to have that tremendous amount of timber rot after a fire.”

Aside from the money lost to the blaze and the salvage, the gov-
ernment also learned some hard lessons from the fire. Reflecting later on the Mississagi years, DLF Deputy Minister Frank MacDougall believed that it taught the government that they could no longer “handle with the existing methods of fire fighting, one of these great fires, and so it paved the way to entirely new ways and approaches to fire fighting.” Similarly, in early 1950, Port Arthur MPP Charles W. Cox asked the provincial legislature to consider that “the loss from fires has been something colossal [and] the practice of handling forest fires could be improved upon.” This led Ontario to focus on better aerial approaches for both forest fire prevention and suppression techniques during the 1950s. Ultimately, the Mississagi’s devastation helped the DLF better prepare for the future and take measures to prevent forests in northwestern Ontario, and elsewhere in the province, from experiencing a similar outcome as the fateful events that played out in the northeast in the summer of 1948.

The Ontario Department of Lands and Forests could not have scripted a better story if it had tried. But, it actually did just that in Out of the Smoke, where it charged that, “this [was] the spectacular story of a war against destruction, carried out under great odds, saved as part of its duty to the people of Ontario, owners of our forests.” The Department’s utilitarian message that undergirded the salvage was visible for all to see in colour, in a poignant film that vibrantly

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Figure 9. Private collection courtesy of Gord M. Campbell. Photograph by K. M. Andresen. “Timber Salvage Operations- Shot showing the result of Fire” Flame Lake, Chapleau- Dec 13, 1948”
displayed the DLF’s success. Yet this roseate portrayal, as great as it looked and sounded, did not illustrate the complexities that were encountered when the plans went from the boardroom in Queen’s Park to the forest floor in far northeastern Ontario. However, once plans for “Operation Scorch” began, the Department, in light of the refusal of the larger companies to take part, had to solicit the local knowledge and support of small firms. Before the salvage even began, the government became acutely aware of the fact that it would need to make compromises and negotiate on its original scheme. Part of this came in the form of accepting inexperienced and neophyte operators that often tested the limits of the DLF’s authority. Unruly firms that fished with dynamite, verbally abused inspectors, and committed timber-harvesting violations were often allowed to continue working in order to assist the government in completing the project. Although the Department made significant advances towards more modern and professional management in the postwar period, it was not immune to the idiosyncrasies of the natural environment and the realities of bushwork. As a result, the DLF often accepted or at least condoned behaviour and activity from its operators that contravened its current outlook towards forest management. This approach was seen as a necessary evil so that the government could expedite the timber salvage and realize its larger goals of conservation and utilitarianism. Non-human nature does not bend to the will of bureaucratic agendas and the Mississagi timber salvage was a poignant example for the Ontario government that wrangling nature into schematics is usually easier said than done.

Endnotes

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1 Stephen J. Pyne, *Awful Splendour: A Fire History of Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), 430. According to Stephen Pyne the Mississagi was technically two fires (the Mississagi and the Chapleau) but is generally referred to as simply the Mississagi. The former burnt 323,520 acres and the latter 424,000.
Despite the importance of the salvage to Ontario's history, it has only been mentioned in passing by historians. Most notably, in his comprehensive fire history of Canada, *Awful Splendour*, Stephen Pyne devotes little more than an afterthought to the operation that was responsible for opening up a large part of northern Ontario's woodlands, 431.

This quote was attributed to an anonymous firefighter in Bruce McLeod, “Red Hell on the Mississagi,” *Maclean's*, 15 August 1948, 39.

Out of the Smoke. Ontario Department of Lands and Forests, photographed by Richard Robinson, assisted by K.M. Andresen, and scripted by Dave Gillespie (Toronto, circa 1956).


Ken A. Armson et al. “History of Reforestation in Ontario” in *Regenerating the Canadian Forest: Principles and Practice for Ontario* edited by Robert G. Wagner and Stephen J. Colombo (Markham, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2001), 9. In Armson’s *Ontario Forests*, he argues that Frank MacDougall’s appointment as Deputy Minister in 1941 was integral to changing the Department’s mantra because MacDougall “brought a high degree of professionalism to his work,” 147.


19 Ministry of Natural Resources Depot (MNRD) Blind River (BR), 28 June 1944, E.E. Grainger report. MacDougall to the Department of Lands and Forests. The bulk of the research for this article was drawn from these files. These were the original documents from the Mississagi salvage that were preserved in the Blind River MNR depot garage by former forester Gord Campbell. The collection has not been archived in an official sense but a rudimentary finding aid was created by the author through the course of the research. Other germane records were housed at the Archives of Ontario in Toronto but were destroyed between 2003 and 2008, making the Blind River location the sole depository of the documentary heritage of the Mississagi timber salvage operation. When I first stood face to face with the cabinets of records in Blind River, I remember being completely overwhelmed. I told my then-girlfriend, now wife, Chantal, that there was no way I would be able to thread a story together from these seemingly disparate files. She reassured me that I would be fine and her sage advice proved accurate. The documents helped me complete my Masters at Laurentian University and formed the basis for other manuscripts.

20 Pyne, Awful Splendour, 430.


22 Bruce McLeod, “Red Hell on the Mississagi” Maclean’s, 15 August 1948, 39.

23 “May evacuate Chapleau-Box cars ready as fire nears,” North Bay Daily Nugget, 12 June 1948, 1. The Matheson fire was actually the deadliest in Canadian history.


26 A smudge fire occurs when flames flare up from wet but still-smoldering timber. The result is an extremely hot and smoky conflagration. Though not as dangerous as other types of bush fires, they can quickly escalate into much larger fires if not extinguished properly.


28 MNRD BR, 1948, Ontario Forestry Branch, “Logging Chance Estimates” This number does not factor into account the number of pulpwood cords believed to be in these areas.

29 AO, RG 1-243, DLF News Releases, Box 1, 26 September 1949, 7.


31 MNRD BR, 6 August 1948, C.E. Smith (McFadden) to Harold Scott. Also, 28 September 1948, D.R. Young (Elk Lake) to Jack Hope.

32 MNRD BR, 6 August 1948, C.E. Smith to Harold Scott.

33 “3,000 fight fire now raging in the 450,000 acres,” Toronto Daily Star, 14 June 1948.

34 MNRD BR, 28 September 1948, D.R. Young to Jack Hope.

35 Ibid.

36 MNRD BR, 10 August 1948, H.H. Parsons to Frank J. Sharpe.

37 MNRD BR, 4 October 1948, Frank Sharpe memorandum.

38 MNRD BR, 1954, Clare E. Mapledoram & Frank A. MacDougall.

39 MNRD BR, Special Collection, March 1954, Clare E. Mapledoram and Frank A. Mac-
Dougall to Department.

41 MNRD BR, 24 August 1951, Logan Eagle to R.S. Hyslop.
42 MNRD BR, 15 December 1950, R.S. Hyslop to J.F. Sharpe.
43 MNRD BR, 5 July 1949, Jack Hope to J.F. Sharpe.
44 MNRD BR, 30 May 1949, T.W. Hueston to J.F. Sharpe.
45 MNR BR, July 1949, Department of Lands and Forests, Timber Agreement with Roy Cooke, 3.
46 MNRD BR, 13 December 1949, Jack Hope to J.G. McMillen regarding Cooke’s operation and status of roads.
47 MNRD BR, 21 April 1951, R.S. Hyslop to J.F. Sharpe and MNRD BR, 26 July 1951, R.S. Hyslop to J.G. McMillen.
48 MNRD BR, 4 June 1953, R.S. Hyslop to J.G. McMillen.
49 Campbell Logging hailed from Wahnapitei, a village east of Sudbury.
50 MNRD BR, 2 May 1949, Logan Eagle to Division of Timber Management.
51 MNRD BR, 7 January 1950, J.D. Pennock to Jack Hope.
52 MNRD BR, March 1954, Clare E. Mapledoram and Frank A. MacDougall. The exact number was $429,939.02.
53 MNRD BR, 29 August 1949, Jack Hope to Division of Timber Management.
54 MNRD BR, 4 July 1950, Charles Tregeonning to R.S. Hyslop.
55 Ibid.
56 Section fourteen of every salvage contract obliged operators to furnish suitable and adequate board, lodging and necessary facilities for Crown scalers and supervisors. MNRD BR, 11 January 1949, Department of Lands and Forests, Timber Agreement with Harry Block, 3.
57 The Sudbury company completed negotiations with the DLF in October 1948 for two logging chances north of the town of White River.
58 MNRD BR, 9 February 1949, Department of Lands and Forests, Timber Agreement with Leo Portelance, 3.
59 MNR BR, 6 February 1951, R.S. Hyslop to Leo Portelance.
60 MNRD BR, 11 September 1951, R.S. Hyslop to J.F. Sharpe.
61 MNRD BR, 8 June 1950, R.S. Hyslop to J.G. McMillen and J.F. Sharpe.
63 MNRD BR, 20 July 1950, R.S. Hyslop to J.F. Sharpe.
64 MNRD BR, 3 April 1951, Memorandum to Minister Harold Scott.
65 Ibid.
66 MNRD BR, 23 April 1954, R.S. Hyslop to J.D. Hughes.
67 Other Canadian projects from this era also utilized aggressive public relations as part of their strategy, such as the New Brunswick Electric Power Commission (NBEPC) in relation to the Mactaquac multi-purpose hydroelectric development. Please see James L. Kenny and Andrew G. Secord, “Engineering Modernity: Hydroelectric Development in New Brunswick, 1945-70,” Acadia [sic] XXXIX, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2010): 3-26.
68 AO, RG 1-243, DLF News Releases, Box 1, 26 September 1949, 1.
69 AO, RG 1-243, DLF News Releases, Box 1, 24 June 1949, 2 and 26 September 1949, 1.
70 MNRD BR, 28 January 1949, Jack Hope to Mr. Lewis, Manager of Imperial Bank in Thessalon.
The Mississauga Fire and Timber Salvage

73 AO, RG 1-243, DLF News Releases, Box 1, 25 May 1953, 5.
76 Out of the Smoke (circa 1956).
77 MNRD BR, “Mississagi Salvage Project-Final Result, July 1948-November 1954,” 1954, 2-6. The total number was 312,649,422 fbm of sawlogs. One foot board measure is the volume contained in a one-foot length of board that is one foot wide and one inch thick. 1,000 fbm is equivalent to 2.358 cubic metres.
79 AO, RG 1-243, DLF News Releases, Box 1, 25 May 1953, 6.
80 MNRD BR, 1954, “Mississagi Salvage Project: Financial Result,” 1. The texts that do cite the Mississagi salvage in passing do not mention the financial loss that the Department suffered or the problems it encountered on the ground with its operators. It is largely seen as a mega project that occurred in the wake of a disastrous forest fire.
82 AO, F 1014, Frank MacDougall Fonds, F 1014-1-2, “Forest Fires.”
84 Out of the Smoke (circa 1956).
The formation of Tee Harbour dates back many thousands of years. It is part of the Sibley Peninsula created when the last glacier retreated and left the waters of what became Lake Superior. It is said that at one time the lake covered the peninsula and has retreated ever since. Over the centuries the harbour was probably a safe haven for many, especially those who travelled by water. I don’t know very much of that period and can only relate to the more recent times when as a boy I lived in Tee Harbour.

There was a book I recall reading titled *The Eagle of Thunder Cape*, which was about a canoe trip along the north shore of the Lake and which mentioned staying overnight in Tee Harbour. This trip took place in the early 1900s, before my family even came to Canada. The eastern point with the cliff was described as a drum that would allow the thunder to roll or echo on some occasions. The title of the book was derived from the shape Sibley Peninsula which, on a map resembles the head of an eagle. I will skip over those times and speak about the period from 1930 to 1940 when the Harbour was the haven for a group of commercial fishermen. In some of these years there were ten houses occupied by the various fishermen. They chose the harbour for their seasonal home during the 1920s and the 1930s.

I will recall some of the experiences and the challenges they met, and what it was like to live there at that time. It was isolated compared to our present standards. There was no road, we travelled by boat, or sled, or walked to Silver Islet about three miles away. The fishermen set gill nets, pound nets, and even did some recreational fishing with weekend visitors. Some residents remained there all year; others returned to the city for the winter season to be with their families. There were good times and dif-

icult times. The weekend visitors often envied the life as they saw it. However, they were also not there when the fishermen had to battle the weather, the ice, the tangled nets, and sometimes poor catches and poor prices.

Gill nets are still used in the commercial fishing industry. They come in various heights and sizes of mesh. The larger the mesh the larger the fish to be caught. So if you want to catch herring you would use a small mesh. The nets have a cork or float line, and a lead or sinker line. When set, they become a barrier into which the fish swim and are caught. These nets are quite portable and if only a few fish are caught they can be moved to a new site. Generally they were lifted daily. The pound net is a more permanent installation where the fish follow a lead into a trap or pot. The net is attached to piles driven into the lake bottom and the leads are strung between the piles and guide the fish to the trap where they swim until it’s time to empty it. Then the access is closed and the fish are dipped out into the boats. One advantage to this type of net was that the fish were kept live and fresh, especially useful if a storm delayed the emptying of the net. Also if you were unfortunate enough to capture undesirable fish such as suckers or ling, then they could be sorted out of the catch and released. The more com-
monly used version to-day is a trap net. This does not require the pile driven posts and is a little more portable.

The harbour was chosen as a base because of its location, which provided protection from the prevailing southwest winds. It was also deep. I have been told I arrived there in fish box when I was an infant and for several years enjoyed being one of the youngest inhabitants; I had several places to call for cookies or treats or pop or cake. When I was able to move about on my own, I had a constant companion. She was a Boston Terrier who went wherever I did. When my mother checked to see where I was she would see Tippie sitting on the neighbours step and knew I was in for a visit and a treat.

At that time my family stayed all year. When I had to start school my mother and I were transferred to the city for the term. But the day following the school year we were on our way back to Tee Harbour for the summer.

There was no electricity at Tee Harbour, so coal oil lanterns were the source of light. Cooking was done on a wood range. Heat was provided from the range as well as an auxiliary wood stove during the coldest months.

It was isolated but probably not any more so than many rural locations at the time. There was the battery radio, mail was three miles away, and winter transportation was by dog team or kick sleigh.
There were many similar locations of fishermen all along the north shore of Superior as well as Isle Royale, and in Minnesota from Pigeon River to Duluth.

With names like Aijala, Erickson, Luoma, Liikila, Koski, Royko, Jarvis, Westerback, and Suo, it isn’t hard to determine that the fishermen here were Finnish immigrants who had come to Canada during the mid 1920s and were now facing the Depression and earning their living from the lake. I am not sure but it was about this time that the Booth Fishing Co. ceased operation. That company had held a monopoly on the fishing on the north shore and some of the men here had worked on their boats. Now those men had their own licenses and the group in Tee Harbour seemed to hold licenses from Sawyers Bay to the mouth of Black Bay. Some had previously fished from Sawyers Bay, and another group fished from Green Point. This meant they set their nets, maintained their catches, and shipped to the Lakehead twice a week from Silver Islet. These fishermen were truly jack-of-all trades. They could build structures, build boats, and repair their equipment. They could also mend and sew nets and find fish without the aid of modern day electronics. They were skilled sailors who could handle their crafts in all kinds of weather. They respected the lake and its moods and knew the limits of their boats. They sometimes stayed at home or sought shelter instead of venturing out into a day of heavy winds. However, when caught out in the poorest of weather, they were skilled enough to find their way home with a simple compass and chart and a knowledge of the area. Fog could be a problem but most knew their fishing grounds both by sight – by the time it took to go from one set to another – and by the depth of the water. When really unsure in a fog they would shut off the motor and listen for a blast of the fog horn from Trowbridge, Porphyry, or Angus Island. If they came into the harbour a little off course they had time to correct when they could see the boulders on the bottom in the clear water of the day. Usually you could see to a depth of about ten feet and their boats required only three feet of water.

The fishermen were a hard-working group that built docks and camps, repaired boats, motors and nets and attempted to catch as many fish as possible in the season. They worked in two man teams at this time. The nets – cotton and linen – were set and then lifted hand-over-hand over a roller into the boat the following day or
so. The wooden roller could be placed on either side or on the stem depending on what the wind and waves demanded. Excess water was pumped out by hand with a homemade wooden pump. At twenty strokes a minute, water was ejected at the rate of twenty gallons per minute. Manual pumps were replaced first by mechanical pumps and then by a system that allowed the propeller to suck out the water when a cap was removed; of course the boat had to be under power or the water would reverse and come in instead of running out.

The boats at the time were powered by converted automobile engines. I recall our boat had a Studebaker engine. It could be started by kicking over the big fly-wheel with your foot which would turn the engine over like a crank. This was usually done when its battery was weak – like jump starting. The boats were similar in size – usually in the 30’ range – with wooden hulls and keels and most had a layer of sheet metal from the keel to above the waterline to assist in going through ice. They had cabins covered from the bow to the centre of the boat and open in the back, especially during the summer. In the fall, some put a temporary enclosure over the whole

*Fishing boats being moved onto the ice to await the spring thaw. Photo courtesy of Carl Westerback.*
boat to keep out cold and snow. As time progressed and each person gained some financial stability, they purchased their own boats. There was a period when the metal lifeboats from freighters were available. These were then converted by adding a keel and putting on a cabin, which made them suitable for a one-person operation.

The wooden roller was replaced by a small gas powered winch that could lift the nets, thereby reducing some of the physical labour. The head of the winch was round and had a row of clamping teeth which pulled the net on one side of the head and released the net on the other side. This was accomplished by a series of springs inside the drum.

Spring was a time of activity. Those who had been in the city for the winter returned. The boats got their annual coat of paint and repairs to motors were completed. Some boats, which had been taken out of the water for the winter, were hauled by tackle and log rollers onto the ice in the bay to await the break up so that the annual fishing routine could begin anew.

When the ice was sufficiently weakened they fell through and were ready to go. The first trips in the spring were hazardous because even if the men were able to get out of the bay and set their nets there were still fields of ice drifting about.

We often watched and waited as the ice fields, driven by the wind, would drift by, allowing the boats to return to the harbour. Sometimes just after breakup the wait could be days so the fishermen had to take sufficient food to carry them over should the ice keep them from returning. The water in springtime was usually the coldest of the season and the catches were best just after the ice had broken or melted.

The men and their families were happy in the spring because income had been restored, some past bills paid and new equipment could be purchased. Bi-weekly trips to Silver Islet were again routine and supplies could be had in smaller
quantities and better varieties. The process was simple: they sent a list of requirement with the buyer's driver, and it could include anything from groceries, to engine parts, oil and gas. These would be purchased and charged to their accounts. In return they sold him the entire catch of fish and hoped that, at the end of the season, they came out ahead. The buyer on occasion would also finance or carry the purchase of new nets, and even new equipment.

Then as spring turned into summer, repairs to buildings and docks progressed, and the logging industry began rafting their logs from nearby cutting areas to their mills. I am told a raft holding 10,000 cords of logs was not unusual. Some rafts went to Thunder Bay, and many to Ashland, Wisconsin. The rafts were useful to the folks of Tee Harbour. Escaping logs washed up on the beaches and in many bays; Lehtinen Bay, the western half Tee Harbour, was a natural catch all. The men would use the logs, conveniently cut in eight or sixteen foot lengths, to build cribs, which would then be filled with rocks and become the foundation for docks. These same logs could form the framework for sheds, ice houses and small buildings. Such logs, especially when they became water-logged, could also turn into navigational hazards. Dead heads, as they were called, would float upright and, in a sea, sometimes come shooting straight up. If you hit one coming over a wave they could cause significant damage to a hull or propeller. Eventually they would sink to the bottom where they could cause damage to nets. If there was a great storm and the seas were large enough the logs would roll on the bottom and become entangled in the nets.

We had many visitors. Family and friends could visit on weekends for recreational fishing. There were game wardens, known as conserva-
tion officers now, and many different tugs at various times used the harbour to wait out the weather.

Following such a weekend, one of the men volunteered to return all the visitors in his boat to the Silver Islet dock so they could return to the city. There had been some thunderstorms in the area during the day, but it was quite and calm in late afternoon when they left for Silver Islet. Returning to Tee Harbour he said he could see a thunderstorm developing on the horizon and, in the dusk, the light at Trowbridge lighthouse. Several times he looked at the light and felt there was something different, but could not quite understand what it was.

As he neared Tee Harbour it registered that the light was turning backwards. This could mean a distress signal. Then he noticed someone standing at the base of the light swinging a lantern in each hand and, also, a plume of smoke rising from behind the light. He reached for the throttle and raced into Tee Harbour where the families were still sitting and chatting, oblivious to the emergency. When he sped up and made a circle in the bay to come into the dock, the men on land remarked that he was showing off. But when he shouted that the lighthouse was on fire, they all clambered into his boat and sped to Trowbridge Island.

We, who were left behind, hurried to our lookout atop the cliff and could see the boat rushing to the island and the plume of black smoke rising from it. We learned later that the light had been struck by lightning, the keeper had been injured, and it was his wife who had reversed the light as a distress signal. She had been urgently attempting to attract our attention. The men were able to contain the fire to the boardwalks and some of the mechanical room and away from the oil storage building.

One of the pets we had one summer was a young buck deer. He loved rolled oats and would follow anyone, especially me, to obtain some of his favourite treat. This

*Carl and the deer. Courtesy of Carl Westerback.*
was fine and interesting, but I had little hands. I would offer him some oats and he would lick them from my hand. But when they were all gone, he would put his head down and try to butt me over until I got some more out my pocket.

The deer was quite tame and became quite comfortable in our surroundings. One day a neighbour had baked a cake and added icing with nuts. She left it on their table to cool and went off to do other things. When she returned the deer had licked off the icing and nuts. He was not too popular that day. Tippie my little dog was also not too impressed with this deer and often told him so in no uncertain terms.

There were always hazards. One disadvantage with living at Tee Harbour was that the fish had to be brought to the end of the road at Silver Islet twice a week regardless of rain or wind because if kept too many days the fish would spoil. The fish was packed in wooden boxes, on a layer of ice, covered with another layer of ice and a top nailed down. These fish boxes were also of uniform size and sometimes ended up as cupboards, storage bins, handy transportation boxes or infant beds.

After everyone had labelled their box, the cargo was loaded on as many boats as necessary to make the trip to the buyer’s truck. One somewhat windy day, there were enough for two boats, and the Svea and the Esa were loaded. The Svea was our boat, and my father was usually in command. These were always good days because we could go along and get treats at the store, mail and news from town, and new supplies for another week or so. We left the harbour and headed east. These boats were very similar in construction and power. Of course there was also some competition. They moved out of the bay and into the rolling swells. About one third of the way there is a group of rocks from a shoal which of course was to be avoided. It was then that the Esa suddenly lost power and began to drift with the waves rolling in the trough.

One of the men on our boat came out of the cabin, looked at me sitting on the end of the box, and simply said, “Stay there.” Why? I didn’t know there was any other place to go but, even if I had intended to go for a stroll, the tone of his voice said there was a problem and I was to keep out of the way. He had a coil of rope over one shoulder and climbed over the boxes to the stern and securely tied the end of the rope. He then climbed back over the boxes and around the cabin onto the bow of the boat.
We had made a circle and were now nearing the bow of the Esa. As we were about to pass, the man on our bow threw the coil of rope toward the drifting boat. It hung lazily in the air but then the wind caught it and it fell across their deck. They quickly secured their end of the rope to the post and our engine sped up and turned us back out into the channel.

We towed them into Silver Islet where we were told that a wave had come over the bow, crashed through the window and stalled the engine. There was a lot of chatter before they unloaded their fish and headed for the store for the long awaited treats of the day. They were able to restart the engine and we returned without further incident.

When summer turned to fall, the number of visitors was reduced. The weather could also get worse and wives became more concerned and nervous about their husbands out on the lake, especially around 2:00 pm. The men usually left to lift nets at dawn, and tried to get home before 2:00 pm because the wind, if there was any, was often at its worst at that time. So on days when there was a lot of fish, or problems with the nets, or when nets were moved to other spots, delays could occur.

We were usually up on the cliff by 3:00 pm watching for the boats to return. We would see them often as far away as the Silver Islet Mine, approximately three miles distance, and then try to watch them all the way home. If there was a good wind blowing especially southwest, there could be a heavy sea running against them. I used to like to see them disappear in the trough between waves and then, keeping my eyes on the approximate spot, see the bow burst forth in a spray of white water as they came closer and dove into the next wave. We would watch them until they were closer home. Then we would come down off the cliff and down to the dock to welcome them and to see what problems accounted for them being so late. Meanwhile, the meal had to be started.

One day – I guess it was laund...
she put her shoes outside the door. Evidence at last. I crept up to the shoes, touched them, and sounded the alarm to all neighbours that “Oonie” had indeed fallen in the lake.

Common visitors in late summer early fall were the game wardens. They either walked from Silver Islet or came in a small boat with an outboard motor. The men were, it seemed, always unkind to these visitors and usually greeted them with “Where’s the Beer, No Beer No Fish.” The purpose of their visit was to check for poaching and if there were any guns. I don’t know, but I guess there was some regulation regarding firearms that said we were not supposed to have them. Anyway, when they were sighted, the rifles were hidden. I was under strict orders not to mention to these visitors that we had guns.

They questioned us all. Do you have any firearms, does your father have a gun; they asked the older boys if they had guns. I guess I came to the conclusion this had gone far enough, I think I was 4 or 5 then and said I had guns. This, from the look on some faces, indicated concern, and from the game wardens—interest. I will show you I said and hurried to our camp, went in, closed the door and strapped on my best two cap pistols and stepped out the door. I drew the pistols and the bang of the guns could not be heard above the roar of laughter from the group outside. They thanked us for the hospitality, they did get coffee and left to return to Silver Islet amused by the incident.

The weather turned colder, and stormier, and the fall season was nearly over. The families who intended to stay over the winter now had some long range planning to do. How much of what kind of food was required to carry them over the cold winter months during freeze up was calculated and a trip to the city by boat was in order. The city, by water, is approximately
twenty miles and probably on a good weather day took about two hours. There they visited the wholesaler and the cartons of the various orders were brought to the dock and loaded onto the boat. We may have stayed in the city for a few days, since there was other shopping to consider; cold weather clothing, and then those secretive boxes containing items for future events such as Christmas. Then one morning, usually early to avoid any bad weather, we returned to Tee Harbour. The purchases were unloaded and stored away. The season was over now and the boat had to be removed from the water to its winter storage area on the beach in the bottom of the bay. There were no power or electric winches. The boat was brought as close as possible to the shore and with the use of rope blocks and some more of those handy pulp wood logs it was manually hauled up on the beach. This usually required all the manpower available. There was a lot of “getting a good grip on the line” and then on the command of “heave” they all pulled in unison. The boat would move forward one or two feet and the process started all over again. When up as high as desired, the boat was straightened up and supported and covered for the winter.

The time of year would be December now, and sometimes there would be snow. The temperature was cold enough for skim ice to form, but the winds of the day would break it up then, during the day and evening, we would hear the music of the tinkling of the ice as it washed against the shore or the docks. Then one morning we would wake up to silence. Freeze up had started in earnest. The ice was not strong enough to support us yet but would soon be thick enough for harvesting.

The fishermen had to harvest and store in ice houses sufficient ice to pack their fish for shipment during the summer. Early January was usually the time for harvesting. The men who had moved to town for the winter arrived one day and the process was started. By this time the ice could be 18 to 30 inches thick and this again was a completely manual process. The ice was cut with a large saw, similar to the kind you see in pictures used by loggers. A difference was that there was only one handle, probably because they couldn’t find anyone to stay under the ice in the water to pull on the other end. Anyway, the ice was cut in 2 x 3-foot blocks, then hauled across the ice and into the ice houses. These houses were constructed with thick walls and insulated with either sawdust or moss. The layers
of ice were carefully placed, with snow packed between the cakes and a thick layer of sawdust spread over the top. This preserved the ice with the least amount of shrinkage for use in the summer.

December was a busy month. The trip to the city. The hauling out of the boats, and then Christmas. How would Santa Claus find me, one person, in this isolated spot? There was a lot of concern over this, regardless of the assurance that he would certainly arrive in due course. First we needed a Christmas tree. One year, the women decided that they would find the tree. Father was sceptical, but finally agreed. He wanted a uniform tree, not too bushy because instead of lights we used small candles in a specially designed clip. Well, they returned with their trees, Mother had brought home a tree that did not meet the standards. I guess a modern day description would be something like a Charlie Brown tree. Certainly it had sufficient space between the branches to mount the candles. This would not do, so Father set forth to find a tree more to his liking. He placed it upright in a snow bank by the woodshed and took the first tree away before coming into the house to show us the better tree. Unknown to him, he was being observed by our neighbour and, when he went into the house, the neighbour scooted out and switched the good tree with the poorer tree. Father came in and told us to look out

Ines Westerback, with the dog team. Photo courtesy of Carl Westerback.
the window to observe the new tree. Mother exclaimed that it was certainly no better than the one she had got. Father looked out and made some appropriate exclama-
tions and hurried outside. He found the better tree and switched them back as he raised a threaten-
ing fist toward the neighbour’s house.

Then it was Christmas Eve. I had decided that if Santa Clause came, his reindeer would be tired and needed nourishment. Comparing them to our eight dogs I decided a good feed of frozen herring should be appropriate. I placed these treats outside and settled back for a long wait. Later in the evening Father suddenly drew my attention to the window with “What is that, Look, Look.” I rushed to the window, and while I was attempting to see what was outside, the back door opened, there was a crash, and the door closed. Off the chair into the back room and I found a toboggan. Next morning I checked and the frozen herring were gone, and there were hoof prints in the snow beside our house. Yes there was a Santa Claus and he had found me and delivered as requested.

Our method of transportation to the store at Silver Islet was by dog team or kick sleigh. The kick sleigh was a one-seater with a high handle bar and a person could stand on one runner and propel it forward with the other foot something like a scooter. I was riding on the seat and we were skimming over the ice surface and keeping ahead of the dog team. We came to a pressure ridge. This is where the ice, badly cracked, moved apart and then crashed together again. This forms a ridge of ice and sometimes a crack of open water underneath. The dogs would not cross it at the point we came to and they headed for the shore end. We turned and went away from the ridge and then turned again. There were no seat belts on the seat but I was told to get a good grip and hang on tight. We picked up speed and were aimed at a lower section of the ridge. We hit the sloped ice and as it crashed like breaking ice I could see open water as we were airborne and sailed across to the other side. Now we were ahead of the dog team. The dogs liked a race and once over the barrier yelped and barked and came after us at full gallop. They caught up to us after a while and seemed to have enjoyed the run and also the rest when we got to the store. When we returned home we could see that the ice we had been on was breaking up and if the dogs had followed us they would probably have not made it.

Our dog team was three dogs,
Penny, Prince, and Bear. Penny, the leader, was trained to follow commands like Gee, turn right, and Haw, turn left. The other dogs would naturally follow. Geea or almost Gup was the command to go. Whoa was to stop. Father could issue the commands and they would obey. Mother could issue the commands and they would occasionally obey. Bear was a St. Bernard, large, fortunately friendly, and able to go a greater distance to arrive back home.

In 1940 or 1941 the fishermen started to search out a new location. They realized that in the first place they did not own the land on which they had constructed their buildings. There was also talk of a Provincial Park. They approached the owners of property to the east of Silver Islet and purchased individual lots in a bay now known as Camp Bay. When the docks and required buildings such as ice houses, packing houses and net sheds were nearing completion they moved their residences from Tee Harbour on the barge portion of their pile driver and brought them to Camp Bay. This location was serviced by a road and the bi-weekly trip to deliver the catch was no longer required. There was still no electricity at the new location and there is still none there today. Several families installed generators and others used propane gas for cooking and refrigeration. Descendants of some of the original group still live in Camp Bay.

On the Ontario shore of Gunflint Lake lies the scattered remains of a town founded 123 years ago. Here can be found rusted and neglected scraps of metal, railway spikes, bolts, nails and even small chunks of coal. The crumbling foundations of several buildings and rock ovens dot the landscape. In 1893 hopes were that this would become an urban oasis in a remote wilderness frontier, an extension of the burgeoning growth that was gripping Fort William in the late nineteenth century.

These traces of a place long-forgotten are those of Leeblain.1 This little town was founded in the early days of 1893, coinciding with the completion of the Port Arthur, Duluth and Western Railway (PAD&W). Its fate intertwined with that of the railway, Leeblain would survive for only a decade. The story of how this place came to be and its ultimate failure are interesting chapter in the history of Northwestern Ontario.

A Wilderness Railway

The saga of this ghost town begins in the summer of 1892. That year saw the imminent completion of the Port Arthur, Duluth and Western Railway. Originally incorporated as the Thunder Bay Colonization Railway in 1883, the project had languished through many false hopes until the corporate name was changed to the PAD&W in 1887.2 There was an aborted attempt at construction that year but it was not until the

The railway was incorporated and subsidized by the Dominion Government did construction begin in the late summer of 1889. By then, the original route of the railway had been changed, and it would now proceed southwesterly toward the U.S. border at Gunflint Lake. The intent was to tap a newly-discovered iron deposit just inside Minnesota, as well as to provide a much needed link to the city of Duluth.³

By the close of 1889, rails had been laid from Westfort (mile post 6) to Stanley (mile post 19) and work had begun on the large Howe Truss bridge over the Kaministiquia River.⁴ However, all was not well with the PAD&W. In the fall, newspapers reported that the contractors had used up all their available capital and had not constructed enough mileage to receive government subsidies.⁵ The company therefore petitioned Parliament for an extension to complete construction and possibly combine subsidies from other railways.⁶ It appeared as if the railway was in serious financial trouble, and all the previous work and hope could be for naught.

Fortune was on the side of the railway however. In late January 1890 the PAD&W received permission to, and issued mortgage bonds in the amount of $1,392,000, and an advance was given to the company on those bonds from the Canadian Bank of Commerce.⁷ The question was, where did a cash-strapped railway find the necessary leverage to obtain these funds? The answer was Toronto.

The Toronto Syndicate

For reasons that are still unclear, the PAD&W had attracted the attention of investors in the provincial capital.⁸ The first two
outsiders to join the railway were Hugh Blain and Joseph F. Eby, owners of the wholesale grocery firm Eby, Blain and Company.9 They were joined later in the year by Arthur B. Lee and John Leys Jr. of hardware retailer Rice, Lewis and Son.10 Blain’s brother, former Member of Parliament David Blain, and Lee’s son, Major A. Burdette Lee Jr., would represent the interests of the “Toronto Syndicate” on the PAD&W Board of Directors.11 From this group, Hugh Blain and Arthur Lee would rise to become the railway’s most prominent and active financial backers.

Hugh Blain was born in York County, Upper Canada, on 23 June 1844, a descendant of the Blains from Blanfield, Scotland. He had intended to become a teacher, but was drawn into business after graduating from the Normal School in Toronto.12 In 1866 he accepted a job offer at Nerlich and Company, where he was eventually made a partner in 1875. In 1880 he left Nerlich to take ownership of one of Toronto’s leading wholesale grocery firms along with Berlin, Ontario, native Joseph Fisher Eby; it would become known as Eby, Blain and Company.13 Specializing in tea, coffee and spices, the Front and Scott Street business had more than fifty employees and thirteen travelling salesmen.14

It was around this time that Blain joined an organization that would thrust him into the centre of the Toronto’s social elite. Prior to the First World War, the Canadian Militia was an organization that attracted young and old alike into its ranks, most likely drawn by the title and prestige it offered. In Toronto, the essence of this military fraternity was the Queen’s Own Rifles.15 For several years Blain was the paymaster and held the honorary rank of Captain, joining such men as A. Burdett Lee Jr., Henry Brock and Henry Mill Pellat, the builder of Casa Loma.16

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Portrait of Arthur Lee. Authors Collection/Toronto Board of Trade
Blain was also a member of other key social organizations, most notably the prestigious National Club, linking him to the elite of Toronto’s upper society. In 1873 he joined what was probably the most powerful business organization in the Queen City at the time, the Toronto Board of Trade. Later Blain was elected to the executive council of the Board, serving for many years as vice-president and eventually president. It was presumably here that he was introduced to fellow businessman A.B. Lee.

Arthur Brindley Lee Sr. was born in Toronto on 31 January 1838. His parents had immigrated to Canada in 1832 along with the Gooderham clan, which would go on to become one of the most powerful family empires in Ontario. After his public school education, Lee joined the oldest hardware firm in Toronto in 1856, Rice, Lewis and Son. By the year of Confederation, Lee had been made a partner in the business along with John Leys Jr. When Rice, Lewis became a joint stock company in 1889, Lee was elected president.

In 1878 Lee was elected as president of the Board of Trade, and remained on the executive committee for many years. He was also on the board of directors of the Bank of Hamilton and the Toronto General Trusts Company, where he joined powerful and influential men such as W.R. Brock, Robert Jaffray, G.A. Cox, and George Gooderham. Like many of his peers and colleagues, Lee had for many years been an active investor in the Ontario railway boom. Both Lee and Leys had sunk money into several projects, such as the narrow-gauge Toronto, Grey and Bruce Railway, which even had a locomotive named Rice, Lewis & Son.

Construction Continues

With the backing of some of Toronto’s most affluent businessmen, and a huge infusion of capital, railway construction resumed in earnest in the last half of 1890. By the start of 1892, track-laying had reached North Lake, and all that remained was a mere twenty miles of work to complete the line into Minnesota. However, those final miles would prove to be the most difficult, and costly to build. By August construction crews were toiling along Gunflint Lake, laboriously blasting rock cuts from the shoreline, filling swamps and erecting trestles. Portions of the grade had to be blasted from the rocky shores of the lake, in some cases measures had to be taken to prevent the rock work from sliding into the depths.
tion costs were devouring money at an alarming rate; thankfully in April the Ontario Legislature had granted the railway an additional bonus of $21,000 for seven miles along Gunflint Lake.  

Some more good news arrived in July 1892, when the PAD&W and the newly formed Gunflint Lake Iron Company signed a contract to ship one million tons of iron from Minnesota to the Canadian Lakehead over the next ten years. This then prompted an intense debate between the cities of Port Arthur and Fort William as to where the lucrative ore docks were to be located. Further complicating matters would be the influence of the Toronto Syndicate and their desire to see their investment pay dividends. They would later elect a new, rather mysterious president for the soon to be completed railway, influential Toronto businessman William Rees Brock.

That summer, the 600 labourers were camped on the eastern shore of Gunflint Lake, just beside a beautiful sandy beach. Work had had been delayed by several forest fires and the contractors were anxious to make up the lost time. The workforce would swell to 800, and then climb even higher as contractors Conmee and Middleton pushed to complete the line before the close of the year.

In September, clearing and grading crews began work in Minnesota, while rock work in Ontario continued to cause delays. The American portion of the line, known as the Port Arthur, Duluth and Western Railway of Minnesota, was organized by James Conmee, Gunflint Lake Iron Company owners John Paulson and Kristian Kortgaard, along with several other Minneapolis businessmen. It would allow the PAD&W to reach the Paulson Mine and eventually the town of Ely, Minnesota, some fifty miles distant. The new road would be leased to the Ontario company, and although on paper it appeared to be an American venture, records reveal the financial involvement of the Toronto Syndicate.

Many of the labourers on the line were Italian immigrants who had only recently arrived in the area. The work was intensive and dangerous; eventually it would claim the life of Joseph Montegia in a tragic accident. While blasting a rock cut a mile east of the boundary, Montegia and several colleagues watched as two of the three charges they set detonated. After waiting some twenty minutes, Montegia and the others went to investigate the misfire. Carefully, they began to scrape away the loose rock and as they
did, the charge went off; Montegia was killed instantly. His body was transported back to his young bride Anna in Port Arthur for interment in St. Andrew’s Cemetery. In his memory his colleagues carved a cross into the wall of the rock cut near where he died.  

In November the predominantly Italian ballasting crew, previously based at Iron Range Lake, would establish their camp on a bay on the western end of Gunflint Lake. It was most likely these newcomers who built several small rock ovens at this location in order to bake their bread in the old world style. Presumably construction began on a sizeable station in the general vicinity of the camp at this time as well.

As work neared completion on the Ontario side of Gunflint Lake, the bulk of the construction shifted to the Minnesota PAD&W. Originally estimated to cost $125,000, or $21,000 per mile, the difficulties of building through the very rugged terrain in the U.S. required the builders to take out mortgage bonds in the amount of $120,000, raising the cost per mile to nearly $41,000. Payment of the bonds would eventually be assumed by the Ontario company. After blasting the line along the shore of Gunflint Lake, the railway would follow the Cross River Valley until it neared the Paulson Mine. A mile from the mine, and 200 feet below it in elevation, the contractors were forced...
to build an elaborate double-trestle switchback, several rock cuts and embankments, a large 500-foot trestle and yet another switchback to complete the line.\footnote{41}

By mid-December, the international bridge across the Gunflint Narrows was completed and trains could now cross from Canada into the United States.\footnote{42} Within days the remaining track laying would be completed to the Paulson Mine and the line was examined by the Dominion Inspector of Railways Thomas Rideout [sic]. The report was favourable and the line was now ready for general traffic.\footnote{43}

A Town is Born

On 4 January 1893 a special event took place on the newly completed line. Contractor James Conmee had arranged a tour of the railway all the way to the Paulson Mine for selected guests and dignitaries. No doubt this group included all the principal promoters from the Lakehead, as well as members of the Toronto Syndicate. The train left Port Arthur at nine o’clock, and after a quick stop in Fort William, proceeded toward the boundary with an American customs official onboard.\footnote{44}

By noon the “special” had reached North Lake where lunch was served \textit{à la Russell} [sic] to all the VIPs.\footnote{45} A few hours later the train pulled into the newly completed station beside the construction camp on the bay at Gunflint Lake, a scant three miles from Minnesota.
The building was apparently a two-storey structure and measured 40 x 24. Unlike many of the crudely built log structures on the line, this one was crafted with some care and attention from sawn lumber.\textsuperscript{46}

The powers that be had decided that this would be the railway’s principal location outside of Port Arthur. Given its proximity to the international boundary and the PAD&W of Minnesota (which was a separate legal entity) it was to serve as the railway’s Canadian terminus. Also, as the only spot on Gunflint Lake with a reasonable amount of open space (roughly 60 acres), the railway would locate a roundhouse and other maintenance facilities here.\textsuperscript{47}

With the business generated by the PAD&W, the Paulson Mine, and iron prospects on the Canadian side of the border, there was the potential that this location could prosper and experience a large population growth. This was not going to be just another railway stop; a future metropolis such as this would require a proper name. Railway vice president, Daniel Francis Burk, was the first to suggest that since the bulk of the financing for the railway had come from the Toronto Syndicate, it should be anointed with their names. No doubt there was considerable discussion on this matter, but it was finally decided that the town should be christened for the line’s biggest champions, A.B. Lee and Hugh Blain. Thus Leeblain was born.\textsuperscript{38}

Afterwards, the party proceeded across the boundary to the mine where John Paulson himself gave a personal tour of the progress of operations.\textsuperscript{49} There was certainly much excitement and expectation for the future of this property. Work would continue through the winter and the plan was for iron shipments to begin in the spring or early summer. Preparations were also underway to complete the remaining fifty miles through to Ely, Minnesota, once the railway began to collect ore revenues.\textsuperscript{50}

There are but scant few details of life at Leeblain during its brief existence. Its only confirmed resident was area businessman Adolph Perras, who took over the hotel at “Le Blain” [sic] in May 1893, obviously hoping to capitalize on the impending commencement of operations in Minnesota.\textsuperscript{51} Perras brought with him many years of hospitality experience, having previously operated the Bayview Hotel in Port Arthur, as well the hotel at Silver Mountain.\textsuperscript{52}

While there is no other record of his activity at Leeblain, or the length of time he resided there, it must have been enough to make an impression. In 1947 a man in his
70s by the name of Perreau [sic] arrived at the Gunflint Lodge on the Minnesota side of the lake where he rented a boat. He travelled to the site of Leeblain where he stated he had stayed as a young child; could this have been one of Adolphe’s younger sons Ernest or Clement visiting an important place from his past?  

Anticipating continued population growth, the Province of Ontario named Leeblain as a voting site for future elections in the spring of 1893. Later that year, a promising mineral discovery was made approximately one mile north of the town site by Albert Quirt. Work had begun in June by sinking a timber-lined shaft 22 feet into the granite bedrock, and later a vein of gold more than 2 feet wide was uncovered which yielded very favourable assays. Certainly big things were in store for Leeblain and its burgeoning population.

In the months following the incorporation of Leeblain, the town presumably continued to blossom; unfortunately no detailed maps exist of the town as it was in 1893. Later maps and documents show an 1,100-foot spur to a ballast pit located across from the station and a 1,200-foot siding on the south side of the line. However some insight as to what may have existed at Leeblain comes from the work of long-time residents Justine and Bruce Kerfoot, who lived on the Minnesota side of Gunflint Lake.

Justine Kerfoot first arrived at Gunflint Lake in the late 1920s. She quickly became close friends with the local Natives, many of whom were alive in 1893. Based on their knowledge and recollections, Justine’s son Bruce explored the site as a young adult. He was able to identify upwards of seven structures in the area (in addition to the station). They were most likely small cabins, except for a combination log trading post/hotel located near the shore of the lake (complete with cold cellars below the floor and a root cellar behind the structure).

These discoveries, coupled with cursory archaeological work in the spring of 2013 by Bruce Kerfoot, Harold Alanen, and the author, reveal some insight into life at the town. Barrel hoops, metal cups and pots, shards of ceramic containers and even a skate blade all point to a vibrant place poised to experience a dramatic trans-
However, in 1893, Leeblain’s continued growth would depend on events across the border.

The American Connection

The explosion of steel manufacturing linked to the Industrial Revolution created a huge demand for iron in the second half of the nineteenth century. Iron became the new gold and it was plentiful in Minnesota. The first mention of iron in the Gunflint Lake area occurred in 1850; however conclusive evidence of substantial deposits in the area would not come until 1886 when Grand Marais, Minnesota, pioneer Hazael “Henry” Mayhew made discoveries at the western end of the lake. This attracted the attention of investors in the state capital.

In late 1886 an enterprise known as the American Realty Company was incorporated in Minneapolis, namely John Paulson and Kristian Kortgaard. With financial backing from the bank, the American Realty Company would purchase large tracts of land in Township 65, Range 4 West (T65, R4W) of Cook County. Later, in 1892, Paulson and Kortgaard, along with Orrin D. Kinney of Ely, would incorporate the Gunflint Lake Iron Company to mine the iron deposits. Unfortunately everyone associated with the mine were about to have his hopes dashed by events in faraway New York.

It began inauspiciously in January 1893 with the failure of one American railroad, the Philadelphia and Reading, but it was the forbearer of much darker times. By early May, there was a sharp decline in world markets due to economic uncertainty. The world was entering into a depression, better known as “The Panic of 1893.”
Fearing a financial meltdown, many people in the United States rushed to withdraw their savings from banks and other institutions. This forced many banks out of business; one such casualty was the State Bank of Minneapolis. Between March and June of 1893, withdrawals exceeded $100,000, precipitating a suspension of payments. The situation was so dire that it incapacitated President Kortgaard.

The collapse of the bank had catastrophic repercussions at Gunflint. In July the American Realty Company disintegrated, followed into receivership a month later by the Gunflint Lake Iron Company. Operations were suspended at the mine and unfortunately were never to resume. The Gunflint Iron Company would leave a huge trail of debts, not the least of which was to the PAD&W. The properties of the American Realty Company, including the mine, were sold in 1896. The failure of this venture deprived the railway of its primary source of revenue and irrevocably damaged its chances of success.

It was against this chaotic backdrop that the Port Arthur, Duluth and Western Railway officially opened in June 1893. Outbound trains ran Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, arriving at Gunflint Narrows after a seven-hour journey; they would return the next day in six hours. Unfortunately, that first season had begun on a troubling note. Foreshadowing future events, the Howe Truss bridge over the Kaministiquia River had been swept away by high water and ice in the spring.

A Struggle for Survival

The most celebrated event that summer would be the visit of Ontario Premier Oliver Mowat. Touring the Algoma region, Mowat was taken on an excursion along the PAD&W as far as Whitefish Lake on Monday, 28 August. At Whitefish Station (mile 43), the premier, his entourage, and the hundreds of guests were met by a “special” arriving from the west. In a well-orchestrated publicity stunt, the train carried one carload of iron ore from the excavation, even though the Paulson Mine had closed. This occasion was to produce one of the most famous photographs of the railway; the ore, the only ever taken from the mine, would yield only one small iron horseshoe.

Because of this, the railway was desperate to attract passengers and business to the Gunflint area. In the 4 March 1894 issue of the Algoma Miner & Weekly Herald, the PAD&W took out the following large advertisement:
The Port Arthur, Duluth & Western Railway

This road will on the opening of Navigation give special rates for Passengers, Boats, Canoes, Outfits and Provisions to Gunflint Lake.

Guides, Provisions, Tents and Canoes can be obtained at Port Arthur. This will be the favourite route to The Rainy Lake Country as soon as navigation opens, for parties who desire to get Mineral Lands on the ground floor plan. This canoe route is along the International Boundary. The country on both sides is practically unexplored. For further particulars apply to

A. McCOMBER, Secretary
ROSS THOMPSON, Superintendent

However business was not forthcoming to Leeblain. Trains and their crews would normally overnight at Gunflint Narrows, mostly likely after turning around on the wye that had been installed on the Minnesota line, a mile and three-quarters west of the Narrows. Because of this fact, the residents on both sides of Gunflint Lake tended to gravitate towards the Narrows. Eventually all the structures at Leeblain would be abandoned (except for the station); a new hotel/trading post, along with a customs house and coaling facilities for the locomotives were built at the Narrows.73

Contact with the western end of the line became more infrequent as the years passed; the railway simply could not afford to run trains more than a few times a week. In 1896, trains were running to Gunflint twice weekly, covering the 85-mile distance in nine hours. However, a year later, service had been cut back to once a week, with an excursion special travelling as far as Stanley on Saturdays.74 Often train movements were also restricted by the forces of nature, with huge snowdrifts blocking the tracks in winter. Spring was a particularly troublesome time, as run-offs tended to wash out tracks and damage bridges. Indeed, almost every year from 1893 to 1898 the bridge over the Kaministiquia was damaged by high water, halting service for weeks at a time.75

The lack of economic prospects and the service disruptions were to have a severe impact on Leeblain and the Gunflint area. By the late 1890s it can be estimated that only twenty to thirty people were living on the lake. Ownership of the Gunflint hotel/store changed hands several times and there is no record of events at Leeblain. In November 1899 a telegraph line was constructed along portions of
line, but it did not reach as far as Leeblain or Gunflint.\textsuperscript{76}

Despite the best efforts of the railway management, nothing could rectify the damage that had been done by the closure of the Paulson Mine and the collapse of the silver market.\textsuperscript{77} That first critical year, the PAD&W would lose in excess of $22,000, mostly due to carry over construction costs. There were huge debts to pay and revenues were pitifully small; no amount of passengers or lumber could keep the railway from haemorrhaging money at an alarming rate. Newspapers even reported that financial situation had bankrupted Eby, Blain and Company. The rumours proved to be unfounded, but Blain and Eby would withdraw from the syndicate in 1896; the railway had lost one of its earliest and most vocal supporters.\textsuperscript{78}

After three years of operations, losses on the PAD&W totalled more than $30,500. Investors were becoming leery and the railway was subject to ridicule in the newspapers.\textsuperscript{79} A.B. Lee and the remaining members of the Toronto Syndicate began to take control of the board office and were clearly looking for a willing buyer.\textsuperscript{80} In May 1897, the Toronto General Trusts Company offered the railway for sale but found no takers.\textsuperscript{81}

**Beginning of the End**

In the summer of 1898 buyers did come forward; railway builders William Mackenzie and Donald Mann viewed the PAD&W as a crucial piece of their planned line from the Lakehead to Winnipeg.\textsuperscript{82} Legal challenges by D.F. Burk would negate the transaction, however, and result in an Ontario High Court decision to sell the PAD&W by sealed tender. On 4 August 1899, the winning bid of $500,000 by \text{	extael}milius Jarvis and Company was accepted; Jarvis in turn sold the assets to Mackenzie and Mann’s Canadian Northern Railway (C.No.R).\textsuperscript{83} The change in ownership was felt almost immediately. In January 1901 Canadian Northern renamed the PAD&W the C.No.R-Duluth Extension.\textsuperscript{84} The revamped moniker was a reflection of the intention to complete line through to Ely.\textsuperscript{85} Around this time the 1,100-foot spur to the ballast pit at Leeblain was removed, most likely as it had served no practical purpose since the railway’s construction.\textsuperscript{86}

Of more importance however were modifications C.No.R made to the train schedules that year. In the spring, trains ran four times a week to North Lake (mile post 71) and on Fridays to Gunflint Narrows. In July, the runs to North Lake were curtailed to Gravel Lake.
Station (mile post 50); by October, Gravel Lake became Whitefish Station (mile post 43), and only once a week.\footnote{87}

It was clear that until a connection with Ely was completed, there was no benefit in running trains to the border. It appeared as if the lack of population, business and prospects (another attempt to open the Paulson Mine failed) had finally caught up with Leeblain and Gunflint Lake.\footnote{88} In 1902 the inevitable occurred; trains stopped running to Gunflint Narrows. Service now terminated at North Lake, and only “specials” would travel beyond that point as required.\footnote{89}

A year later, the area would experience a short reprieve courtesy of the Pigeon River Lumber Company. Daniel J. Arpin’s outfit moved into the Lakehead area shortly after it was organized in Wisconsin in 1900. In addition to well publicized operations along the Pigeon and Arrow Rivers, the company acquired timber rights along the eastern and southern shores of Gunflint Lake.\footnote{90} They incorporated and built the Gunflint and Lake Superior Railroad, which branched from the Duluth Extension at Little Gunflint Lake and ran some five miles into Minnesota.\footnote{91}

Since the logs were imported from across the border, both the United States and Canada established customs houses at the boundary at the eastern end of Gunflint Lake. In January 1903, Ottawa dispatched Thomas I. Roberts to represent His Majesty’s interests.\footnote{92} Government bureaucracy would dictate that this new customs outport have an official name; it was decided to adopt the name “Leeblain” due to its proximity to the town site, even though it lay more than four miles to the east.\footnote{93} Canadian Northern temporarily reinstated service to “Le Blain” [sic] that year, although it is unclear which site this referred to. The railway also completed the telegraph line to Gunflint in late 1903, albeit only as far as the outport.\footnote{94} The name Leeblain had a new lease on life, but only on paper and only as long as the timber lasted.

One of the chief motivations behind the construction of the railway was to provide Port Arthur with another transportation outlet through the United States. A connection to the town of Duluth took on increased impetus after the closure of the silver mines and the failure of the Paulson venture. In 1893 it was the expressed desire of the company to complete the final fifty miles from Gunflint to Ely as quickly as possible.\footnote{95} However, the aforementioned financial issues made that unfeasible.

In the 1890s there was hope
that an American railway would be built north to join the PAD&W. The most likely candidate was the Duluth and Iron Range Railroad (D&IRR) whose lines terminated at Ely. In 1891 the D&IRR sent surveyors to locate a line from Ely to Gunflint; however their reports were very unfavourable due to the rough terrain. A 21-mile extension of the D&IRR from Tower to Ely in 1888 had proved very costly and this would have certainly weighed on the decision not to build north. Six years later they tabled another proposal but were again thwarted, most likely by the $2.5 million price tag. However Canadian Northern was committed to completing its transcontinental lines, and that work took precedence.

Compounding matters, fickle markets turned on the company in 1907 and the once plentiful construction capital disappeared; projects and priorities were revised. Port Arthur and the handful of people at Leeblain held out hope that Mackenzie and Mann could deliver. In 1909, the Pigeon River Lumber operations at Gunflint were still going strong and upwards of 130 cars of logs per week flowed into the company’s sawmill in Port Arthur that spring. Indications were, however, that the company was ready to conclude its activities in that part of Minnesota. Whatever the circumstances, the fate of Leeblain, the logging and everything west of North Lake were to be sealed shortly thereafter. Forest fires had broken out on the Minnesota side of Gunflint Lake in late May and, despite the reports to contrary,

Access to Leeblain was severely limited when the rails were removed between 1915 and 1940. Author’s Collection, Sue Kerfoot.
the flames had spread into Ontario. Many newspapers reprinted a story out of Winnipeg that stated, “Forest fires prevail in the Gunflint section of the Duluth Extension...bridges are burned...” There is no definitive evidence, but one of the “burned bridges” was likely the 1000-foot trestle across a bay at the western end of North Lake.

Requiem

The loss of the trestle spelled the end of Leeblain and Gunflint. Even though regular trains did not travel to Gunflint Lake, the stop was still listed on railway timecards; that all changed in 1910. Canadian Northern was still publicly stating that a line to Duluth was to be completed via Ely, but clearly events dictated otherwise. By 1912 their bonds had become unmarketable, even those backed by the Dominion government, and crushing debt was threatening the solvency of the company. The coup de grâce for Canadian Northern occurred on 4 August 1914, with the outbreak of the First World War; in response Mackenzie uttered the words “I’m finished.”

It was presumably in 1915, the same year that its transcontinental dreams were realized, that C.No.R made the decision to remove the rails in Minnesota. The rails were simply rusting in place and the company needed every scrap of revenue; they may have been shipped overseas for use in the war effort. When the rest of the steel was lifted is more uncertain, but sources point toward a staggered removal between 1915 and the 1940s. In 1918 what remained of the PAD&W became part of the newly created Canadian National Railways (CNR).

While the dream that was Leeblain was, for all intents and purposes, finished, a brief glimmer of hope appeared in 1921. Trains still ran to North Lake, and that spring reports surfaced of activity at the Paulson Mine. Chicago-based Palatine Mining and Development Company, composed of Polish-American capitalists, planned to re-open the mine and re-lay 21 miles of track. They went as far as to re-grade portions of the abandoned line and call for tenders to replace four bridges, including the massive North Lake trestle. However, like the railway and most other ventures associated with it, Palatine’s efforts ended in failure.

Leeblain, with all its hopes and potential, became but a faded memory; the PAD&W would eventually join it in time. The
failure of the Palatine venture and other business, coupled with the loss of a trestle at Mackies, led CNR to stop running trains to North Lake in 1923.\textsuperscript{115} Fifteen years later, increased competition from buses and trucks, coupled with deteriorating infrastructure, led CNR to abandon the entire line.\textsuperscript{116}

For the next seventy years Leeblain disappeared from the map. Accessible only from the Minnesota side of Gunflint Lake, it was virtually unknown except to the residents and travellers. All that changed in 1990; Canadian National’s decision to sell the right-of-way resulted in the re-opening of the former grade as a recreational trail. Now adventurers, hikers and snowmobilers could visit the town-site from Ontario once again.\textsuperscript{117}

Unfortunately, very little remained of Leeblain, aside from the rock ovens and former railway grade. The ravages of time, as well as numerous forest fires over the years had taken their toll.\textsuperscript{118} Nature was not finished with Leeblain though. In 1999 the boundary waters area was hit by a massive windstorm that knocked down millions of trees; the storm and the subsequent logging operations damaged some of the rock ovens and any potential archaeological remains. The logging road that was constructed into Gunflint Lake, however, provided the first viable Ontario overland access to Leeblain since 1909.\textsuperscript{119}

Then, in 2007, a massive forest fire originating in Minnesota, the Ham Lake fire, swept across the area. Whatever standing trees remained were consumed by the flames, further exposing the site.\textsuperscript{120}

Today efforts are underway to have Leeblain and some of the surrounding area declared a historic site. This would provide a measure of protection for this unique piece of Northwestern Ontario history, and hopefully raise awareness amongst its residents of the dreams and aspirations of generations long gone. One can only wonder what this little town on the shores of a remote lake would appear like today had the railway succeeded and Leeblain prospered.

\textbf{Endnotes}

\begin{enumerate}
\item Statutes of Ontario, 46 Victoria, Chapter 56, “An Act to incorporate the Thunder Bay Colonization Railway Company,” 475-484; S.O., 50 Victoria, Chapter 83, “An Act to change the name of the Thunder Bay Colonization Railway Company,” 341-42; Elinor Barr, \textit{Thunder Bay to Gunflint} (Thunder Bay: TBHMS, 1999), 6-36.
\item \textit{Weekly Sentinel}[\textit{WS}], 23 September 1887; \textit{Fort William Journal} 6 October 1887; \textit{Algoma Miner & Weekly Herald} [\textit{AMWH}], 29 Oct 1887; S.O., 51 Victoria, Chapter 75, “An Act to
further amend the Acts respecting the Port Arthur, Duluth and Western Railway Company,” 216; S.C., 51 Victoria, Chapter 84, “An Act respecting the Port Arthur, Duluth and Western Railway Company,” 182-83; S.C., 51 Victoria, Chapter 3, “An Act to authorize the granting of subsidies in aid of the construction of the lines of railway therein mentioned,” 49; Railway News 3 August 1889; WS 9 August 1889; AMWH 10 August 1889; AMWH 17 August 1889; Thunder Bay Sentinel [TBS] 30 August 1889; TBS 23 August 1889; Fort William Journal [FWJ] 7 September 1889; Barr. Thunder Bay to Gunflint, 37-45.

4 AMWH 14 December 1889; AMWH 28 December 1889; WS 3 January 1890.
5 AMWH 16 November 1889.
6 AMWH 23 November 1889.
7 Annual Report of the PAD&W to the Interstate Commerce Commission of the United States for the years ending June 30, 1894 1462, 19; Archives of Ontario, [AO] RG 22-409 High Court of Justice, Chancery Suit #27/1899.
8 There is some loose evidence that the Toronto investors were connected to the Ontario & Rainy River Railway, which would later share mileage with the PAD&W. Also, these gentlemen attended the conference of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in August 1889 where geologists Alexander Winchell, N.H. Winchell and H.V. Winchell spoke about the iron deposits of the Thunder Bay District and northeastern Minnesota. Could they been inspired by the revelations of iron in the area? Proceedings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (38th Meeting), (Salem, Mass; Salem Press, 1890).
9 AMWH 15 March 1890; Toronto Illustrated 1893 (Toronto; Consolidated Illustrating, 1893), 26, 163.
10 AMWH 6 September 1890; FWJ 13 September 1890; Monetary Times 27 September 1889, 379; The Toronto Board of Trade: A Souvenir (Toronto; Sabiston Lithograph, 1893), 124-25.
14 Toronto Illustrated 1893 (Toronto; Consolidated Illustrating, 1893), 163.
16 Cochrane, Men of Canada, 181; The Militia List of the Dominion of Canada January 1885 (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1885), 68.
17 Toronto Globe 16 January 1930.
18 Ibid., 16 January 1930; Toronto Board of Trade A Souvenir, 124-25.
19 Toronto Star 22 June 1904.
21 Toronto Globe 7 December 1889; Charles Mulvary et al., History of Toronto & County of York, ON (Toronto: Blackett Robinson, 1885); Toronto Star 22 June 1904.
22 Toronto Star 22 June 1904; Toronto Board of Trade A Souvenir.
23 Ibid.; John A. Cooper Men of Canada (Toronto: Canadian Historical Company, 1901-02), 179; The Canadian Almanac (Toronto: Copp Clark Company, 1891), 3.
24 Rod Clarke, Narrow gauge through the bush: Ontario’s Toronto Grey & Bruce and Toronto & Nipissing Railways (Toronto: R Clarke and R Beaumont, 2007), 27, 284-88.
25 AMWH 20 August 1890; AMWH 27 August 1890.
26 AMWH 16 January 1892; FWJ 20 February 1892.
27 Field notes and photographs, Dave Battistel 1994.
29 Daily Sentinel [DS] 15 July 1892; Chicago Daily Tribune 16 July 1892.
30 FWJ 30 July 1892; DS 7 September 1892.
31 Canadian Statesman 5 October 1892; Library & Archives Canada, RG 12 Department of Transport, Subsidies-PAD&W Railway 1885-1900, Volume 1861, File 3268-32. There is no clear evidence as to why Brock became involved with the railway. He was formerly in business with H.W. Darling, president of the Bank of Commerce, when loans were arranged with the PAD&W. He was also a director of the Toronto General Trust Co., which was managing the assets of Leys who died in January 1892. He would serve as President until the railway was sold in 1899.
32 DS 15 July 1892; AMWH 12 August 1892.
33 AMWH 29 July 1892; Manitoba Free Press [MFP] 27 August 1892.
34 FWJ 3 September 1892; DS 12 September 1892.
35 Chicago Daily Tribune 3 May 1892; AMWH 7 May 1892; St. Paul Globe 12 May 1892; State of Minnesota Archives, MNHS, St. Paul PAD&W of MN Articles of Incorporation, Index or Corporations, 1:609, K-Q.
37 Name quoted as Joseph Montegen in newspapers. A.O. Registrations of Marriages, 1869-1926, MS932, Reels 1-793; AMWH 14 October 1892; Cook County News Herald 12 December 1963; Field notes and photographs, Dave Battistel 1994.
38 FWJ 5 November 1892; Le Blaine-A Border Ghost Town Minnesota History News, volume 3 (June 1962); Cook County News Herald 12 December 1963; Field notes and photographs, Dave Battistel 1994. In 1997 the author located and documented three rock ovens in the area. As of 2012, after the 1999 forest blowdown and 2007 Ham Lake fire, all three plus a fourth have been re-discovered.
39 FWJ 5 November 1892.
40 National Archives of the United States “Annual Report of the Port Arthur, Duluth and Western Railway Company” #1463, mfm 959, T913 Annual Reports Submitted by Common Carriers to the ICC, 1888-1913; AMWH 17 December 1892.
41 Field notes and photographs, Dave Battistel 1994.
42 FWJ 26 November 1892; WS 2 December 1892; FWJ December 17 December 1892.
43 FWJ 21 December 1892. Name is Ridout.
44 St. Paul Globe 6 January 1893; MFP 6 January 1893; DS 6 January 1893; FWJ 7 January 1893.
45 À la Russe—courses served sequentially.
46 FWJ 16 November 1892; Archives of Ontario, [AO] RG 22-409 High Court of Justice, Chancery Suit #27/1899.
47 DS 6 January 1893; Field notes and photographs, Dave Battistel 1994-.
48 Ontario Department of Mines Annual Report 1892-1894 Vol. 2-4 (Toronto: Warwick Bros & Ruffer, 1893), 67-69; Canadian Statesman 5 October 1892; MFP 6 January 1893; DS 6 January 1893; FWJ 7 January 1893; TBS 31 March 1893.
49 St. Paul Globe 6 January 1893; MFP 6 January 1893; DS 6 January 1893; FWJ 7 January 1893.
50 AMWH 24 February 1893; TBS 24 February 1893; New York Times 27 March 1893; TBS 31 March 1893; Duluth Tribune 10 June 1893.
51 TBS 5 May 1893; Barr, Thunder Bay to Gunflint, 82.
52 Walpole Roland. Algoma West: Its Mines, Scenery & Industrial Resources (Toronto: Warwick & Sons, 1887) 200; The Canada Gazette 2 July 1892. Perras was also involved in several prospective silver properties near Silver Mountain.
55 Ontario Department of Mines, Four Report of the Bureau of Mines 1894 (Toronto: Warwick Bros & Ruffer, 1895), 231; Barr, Thunder Bay to Gunflint, 82.
58 Field notes and photographs, Dave Battistel 1994-.
62 Raff, Pioneers in the Wilderness 147-56; State of Minnesota Archives, Minnesota Historical Society, Gunflint Lake Iron Company Articles of Incorporation. Index of Corporations, I:274, A-]; There were clearly some shady transactions/shenanigans between the State Bank, American Realty and Gunflint Iron Co.
Depression of the Nineties” The Journal of Economic History 16:2 (June 1956), 138.


65 Chicago Tribune 24 June 1893.

66 AMWH 30 June 1893; SPG 8 July 1893; SPG 24 August 1893; New York Sun 28 August 1893; SPG 30 August 1893; 31 August 1893; 2 December 1893; In November 1893, Kristian Kortgaard was arrested and eventually convicted of embezzling thousands of dollars from the bank to fund the real estate and mining ventures. SPG 12 November 1893; 30 November 1893; Duluth Tribune 10 October 1894.

67 New York Sun 28 August 1893; SPG 30 August 1893; 31 August 1893; TBS 8 September 1893 The company owed the PAD&W $13,000.

68 DT 7 April 1896.

69 Railway timecard AMWH 16 June 1893.

70 TBS 12 May 1893.

71 AMWH 1 September 1893; New York Sun 28 August 1893; Barr, Thunder Bay to Gunflint, 81.

72 AMWH 24 March 1894.


74 Timecards, AMWH 15 July 1896; 20 August 1897.

75 AMWH 26 March 1897; Engineering News 3 May 1894; Evening Record 22 April 1896; Fort William Daily Journal [FWDJ] 1 April 1897; 6 May 1897; AMWH 6 May 1898.

76 Cook County News Herald 12 December 1963; Legislative Manual of the State of Minnesota Election returns 1894, 390; Raff. Pioneers in the Wilderness, 175-76; AMWH 20 August 1897; FWDJ 4 February 1901; 20 November 1899; Field notes and photographs, Dave Battistel 1994-.

77 AMWH 11 August 1893.


79 Canada. Parliament. Summary Statements: Annual Reports of the Department of Railways & Canals-Sessional Papers: Railways and Canals, 1892-1901 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1892-1901); Cook County Herald 16 May 1896; New York Sun 7 June 1896; AMWH 12 June 1896. While many claims were fabricated, the railway’s reputation was no doubt damaged.

80 LAC, RG 12 Department of Transport, Subsides-PAD&W Railway 1885-1900, Volume 1861, File 3268-32; [AO] RG 22-409 High Court of Justice, Chancery Suit #27/1899. FWJ 15 July 1896; Toronto Globe 1 October 1897. Leys had died in January 1892 and his stake in the PAD&W was managed by the Toronto General Trusts Company. Blain’s & Eby’s interests were acquired by Lee and Leys estate.

81 Engineering News 13 May 1897; The Railway News 29 May 1897.

82 AMWH 19 August 1898; Toronto Evening Star 22 August 1898.
LEEBLAIN: THE METROPOLIS THAT NEVER WAS

83 [AO] RG 22-409 High Court of Justice, Chancery Suit #27/1899; Daily Mail & Empire 5 May 1899; Toronto Globe 30 May 1899; 5 August 1899. Jarvis was the nephew of TGTC director Æmilius Irving. Many TGTC directors were associates of Mackenzie & Mann. Canadian Who's Who (Toronto: Musson Book Co., 1910).

84 AMWH 25 January 1901.

85 New York Times 1 September 1900; Minneapolis Journal 11 September 1900; AMWH 13 September 1900.

86 International Boundary Commission. International Boundary No. 25 [map] 1:24000 (surveyed 1911), (Washington, DC: USGS, 1929); Field notes and photographs, Dave Battistel 1994-; The spur is listed on the 1899 sale documents, but is missing from the 1911 boundary survey.

87 Timecards, FWDF 20 May 1901; 7 July 1901; 22 October 1901.

88 Raff. Pioneers in the Wilderness, 168.

89 FWDF 14 February 1902; Timecard FWDF 14 March 1902; Cook County Herald 20 September 1902.


94 FWDTJ 29 August 1903; Field notes and photographs, Dave Battistel 1994-.

95 MFP 14 June 1893.

96 DS 2 December 1890; Railway World 27 December 1890; Grand Marais Pioneer 30 July 1891, 6 August 1891.

97 Frank A. King The Missabe Road (Minneapolis: University of Minn Press, 1972), 34. The extension cost $569,000 or nearly $28,000 per mile.

98 Thirteenth Annual Report of the Railroad & Warehouse Commission of Minnesota for the year ending November 30, 1897 (St. Paul; Dispatch Printing, 1897), 17-22.

99 Cook County News Herald 21 September 1901, 5 October 1901, 3 March 1906; DT 19 November 1902, 10 April 1905, 24 February 1906, 8 August 1906, 12 September 1906, 19 February 1907, 14 November 1907, 15 November 1908, 7 April 1909; FWDTJ 17 April 1905, 3 April 1909; International Railway Journal January 1906; MFP 17 April 1905.

100 Fleming The Railway King, 110-11.

101 Ibid., 159-60, 126, 132.


104 *PADN* 29 May 1909; June 1909; Boston Evening Transcript 4 June 1909.

105 International Boundary Commission. *International Boundary No.26* [map] 1:24000 (surveyed 1911), (Washington, DC: USGS, 1929); Field notes and photographs, Dave Battistel 1994-. Clearly trains were running over the trestle in 1909, but it is absent from the 1911 surveyed boundary map. The trestle was destroyed by fire as evidenced by the pilings that lie upright just under the surface of the lake and the rails that litter the bottom. The bay is referred to now as Trestle Bay.


107 *Engineering & Contracting* 10 April 1912; *MFP* 6 March 1911; *DT* 12 March 1911, 16 March 1911, 27 March 1911, 29 April 1911, 1 December 1911, 27 December 1911, 29 December 1911, 19 January 1912, 27 March 1912, 13 April 1912, 25 April 1912, 31 May 1913.


110 Ranger Pat Bayle quoted in Albert Britt “Paddle & Portage in Minnesota” *Outing Magazine* Vol. LXXII (April 1918), 9; Fleming, *The Railway King*, 210; Ontario Ministry of Transportation Gunflint Highway Plan 1935 F2671-2/3; Bruce Kerfoot, interview with author, 23 March 2013. At present, no definitive date has been discovered for the removal of the tracks. Bayle’s comments suggest 1915 for the Minnesota portion and Fleming states that some “branch line trackage” was removed in 1915 and sent to France. He does not mention which branch lines nor does he provide a source. The Gunflint Highway Plan shows no rails past North Lake, but makes no mention of those on Gunflint. Gunflint Lake resident Bruce Kerfoot states that his parents removed the remaining rails along the Canadian side during WWII.

111 Fleming, *The Railway King* 235; *DT* 28 December 1918.


113 *PANC* 26 April 1921, 9 May 1921, 13 May 1921, 17 May 1921, 18 May 1921; *DT* 25 June 1921; *Canadian Railway & Marine World*, May 1921, June 1921, August 1921, October 1921.

114 *The Iron Age* 12 January 1922.


116 *FWDTJ* 25 March 1938; *PANC* 6 October 1938.

117 Field notes and photographs, Dave Battistel 1994-.


119 *Chronicle-Journal* 5 July 1999; Field notes and photographs, Dave Battistel 1994-. The technical term for the storm is a derecho.


The founding group of the Pass Lake Historical Society held its first meeting on 25 January 1983, with nine people in attendance. The purpose of the Society was to bring together those people interested in the diverse historical heritage of Pass Lake and to research, preserve and present historical data pertaining to the region. Because of Pass Lake’s unique start as a Danish settlement, this aspect of its history had special significance. John Cooney was subsequently elected as the first president.

A constitution and by-laws were drawn up and they were adopted at the second meeting on 22 February 1983. On 4 October 1983, application for affiliation with the Ontario Historical Society was made and the Society became incorporated as an affiliate member on 3 December 1983.

Starting in 1983, ongoing interviews were conducted with long time residents to document their recollections of early days in the community. Pictures, newspaper articles and other papers were collected and binders were made up for public viewing. One of the Society’s first tasks was to assist in the celebration of Pass Lake’s 60th anniversary in 1984.

The Society compiled a translated a collection of a Danish magazine’s 1939 pictorial expose of Pass Lake. It portrays the lives and accomplishments of the Danish

*Salem church at Pass Lake. TBHMS 972.41.39*
pioneers over a fifteen-year time span as seen through the eyes of a Danish photographer-reporter.

Another project was the translation and publication of a book written by Idun Engberg in the war years. It gives a unique insight into Pass Lake in the early years. Although treated as fiction, the characters and situations were created by the author’s keen sense of humour and observation of people and happenings around her.

A small one-time grant from the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Communications was received in March 1991. The funds were used to fund display equipment and interviews. The Society also applied for and was pleased to receive ongoing Heritage Organization Development Grants. Although not large amounts, they enabled the Society to set some longer-term goals.

In May 1992, several members met with Rolf Buschardt Christensen, president of the Federation of Danish Association in Canada. He extended an invitation to the Society to join the Federation as a member and, at the June meeting, the motion to do so was passed.

A natural rock memorial to the early settlers was erected outside the local cemetery entrance. A plaque describing Pass Lake’s history is also situated outside Salem Church.

Pass Lake is now, of course, made up of people from many different ethnic backgrounds. It is enriched by each newcomer regardless of origin. It is the aim of the Pass Lake Historical Society to keep alive the memories of the brave, hard working individuals who created the community and to document the efforts being made to follow in their footsteps.

June Huston
Recent works on Northern Ontario

Compiled by Luana Buckle


The Year in Review

A Letter from the President

by Frank Gerry

As President of the Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society it gives me great pleasure to give this short report to the membership.

I would like to again thank the board for their support and dedication on all fronts, for without them my job as president would be impossible. They all bring their individual skills and strengths to the board and it is very much appreciated. This year we saw two new board members leave and two new replacements come onto the board. Gloria McKay a long serving and dedicated board member, left but continues to be involved in helping at the museum. As well Lana Stevens left to spend more time on other volunteer activities as well as working as a teacher. We wish them both good luck in their future endeavours. The two new members of the board are Jesse Roberts, Head of Reference Services at the Thunder Bay Public Library and Gillian Bishop a Lawyer at Carrel + Partners LLP.

Next year’s car raffle will be a 1972 Corvette that I know that people will be glad to own, and the tickets will almost sell themselves as it is a beautiful car, so get your tickets early as it’s bound to sell out again. Tory also deserves the credit for finding another very desirable car. In keeping with fundraising and special events, the annual Victorian tea was again a success, not only raising money but encouraging people to visit our Museum, some of them for the first time. It is the “original Victorian Tea” and definitely has the best atmosphere. That team deserves a lot of credit for it is truly a joint effort.

Tory’s director’s report will outline in more detail what has been happening this past year and I would again like to stress that your staff deserves a great deal of credit for what they have accomplished. Diane Robnik came back from maternity leave and then left for a full time position at Lakehead University. She was replaced by Emily Lada who completed the term of our Ontario Trillium Foundation grant.

I would especially like to thank the City of Thunder Bay for their ongoing support over the past year, as well as the various foundations and senior levels of government. We will continue to use their money wisely in the preservation of our historical past.
In 2014, Catherine Caughell replaced Christie Parry as our Education Officer and, after Diane Robnik moved on to work at the university, Emily Lada came onboard as Community Resource Officer. She left us in September 2015, completing an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant that helped us expand our outreach into the community and launch our Shipwrecks of Lake Superior travelling exhibit. We thank Diane, Emily, and the foundation for their valuable assistance.

Final touches were done on the shipwreck exhibit in the fall of 2015 in preparation for it shipping in 2016. This exhibit replaces our Robert Flaherty exhibit that was shown across the country for several years.

Two larger exhibits were created in 2015. The first showed, for the first time in many decades, our entire collection of William Armstrong original watercolour paintings along with a number of mechanically reproduced,
hand-coloured nineteenth-century engravings of his work. Thirty fragile and beautiful works were on display thanks to the TbayTel for Good competition in which our submission was awarded a runner-up prize. The money allowed us to re-mat and frame most of the paintings helping to ensure their long-term preservation.

The second exhibit, our main summer feature, dealt with the medical history of Thunder Bay. This was the result of a cooperative venture with the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre which was seeking a way of celebrating their tenth anniversary. In this exhibit we chose to stress how advances in public health, disease prevention and technology improved the lot of Thunder Bay’s citizens over the past 200 years. Much of the exhibit will be displayed in the hospital following its run on the Museum’s second floor.

We also hosted a smaller travelling exhibit that recognized the thirty-fifth anniversary of Terry Fox’s epic run across Canada. This came to us courtesy of the Canadian Museum of History and the Terry Fox Foundation and with the financial assistance of the City of Thunder Bay. We were pleased to be the first venue to host this important exhibit.

With the assistance a couple generous donors, the Society has undertaken a long-term task to digitize the newspapers in its holdings so as to make them accessible to readers for decades to come. This move was propelled by not just the convenience to researchers of having work searchable documents easily in hand but...
by the difficulty we’ve encountered keeping our old microfilm readers operative. At the time of writing, we have digitized local newspapers from both Port Arthur and Fort William from 1900 to 1929.

In 2015, another project was began that will have long-term consequences for our collections. We entered into an agreement with the Lakehead Social History Institute to seek out ethnically-based archival collections in the community and either accept their records into our archives or digitize those records in a way that they can be made accessible to all in our reading room. We look forward to working with the members of LSHI and acquiring access to records that may otherwise have been lost to history.

During the past year, the Society took a role in supporting heritage preservation in the community. We assisted a local organization trying to preserve the CN caboose by the difficulty we’ve encountered keeping our old microfilm readers operative. At the time of writing, we have digitized local newspapers from both Port Arthur and Fort William from 1900 to 1929.

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THE YEAR IN REVIEW, 2015

Summer student Kate Beaulieu conducts a walking tour of the north core.

Currently on exhibit at the waterfront next to the old railway station. This may, indeed, blossom into a larger venture seeking to create a transportation museum. We were also pleased to have awarded the Professor Ken Dawson Trust bursary to Beverly Soloway of Lakehead University who will use the funds to advance her research into the construction of Highway 61. Finally, we participated in the creation of new, self-guided historic walking tours in the city through the efforts of the Big Boreal Adventure team. We also created a walking tour of our own of Thunder Bay’s north core, which turned out to be an enormous success; close to 300 people attempted to sign up for one tour!

Some major acquisitions were made over the past year, including a large and important painting by Gregory Furmanczyk of Bora Laskin, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada. The artist himself donated the work. Another painting, this one dating from the nineteenth century and showing Kakabeka Falls, returned to us after undergoing many years of restoration at the Canadian Conservation Institute. The painting went to the Institute in very poor condition, cracked with age and dryness, a large hole in its centre and a frame in deplorable shape. It has returned to us as a true masterpiece, full of vibrant colour. We thank CCI for their excellent work.

The Museum’s elevator presented a major hurdle for us. At the end of 2014 and into the first half of 2015, the elevator suffered a series of failures that left us without reliable service. A grant of $50,000 from the Enabling Accessibility in Communities Fund (through Employment and Economic Development Canada), supplemented by donations through the Thunder Bay Community Foundation and from our members will help us carry out a major retrofit of

The Thunder Bay Museum was the first to host the new travelling exhibit Terry Fox: Running to the Heart of Canada, produced by the Canadian Museum of History and the Terry Fox Foundation.
the elevator.

For over twenty years the Society has successfully staged and annual Victorian Tea both as a fundraiser and a special event. In the past few years, under the leadership of Margaret Gerry, the tea has continued to grow. In recent years, the event has been a virtual sell-out, with people lined up well into the afternoon.

Education has been the hallmark of almost everything we do at the Museum, including exhibits, publications, monthly lectures and special events. As usual, our programs for children during March Break and the summer months, filled up quickly. In 2015 we expanded the summer theme camps to accommodate the expected demand. To enhance such programs and to reach new audiences, we’ve developed social media connections with the community using Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Flickr. One thousand images from our collection were loaded onto our Flickr account drawing tens of thousands of views.

Steps were taken over the past year to enhance our existing library. We got rid of the old folding tables that graced our reading room and installed solid oak table; old used filing cabinets gave way to new ones of uniform colour and design; and the first steps were taken to upgrade our finding aids from a card catalogue to an electronic database.

Eight students were hired over the summer of 2015 courtesy of Federal and Provincial employment...
programs. These students wrote articles, digitized photographs, accessioned archival fonds, surveyed the membership, attended the front desk, assisted with the education program, helped upgrade the Society’s website and instituted our first walking tour.

All in all, it was a busy year.
In September 2014, the Society was saddened to learn that long-time member Jean Morrison had passed away at the age of 87. For over 47 years, Jean was crucial in the activities of the society and played an important and prominent role in the historical community within Thunder Bay, Ontario, and across Canada.


Until retirement in 1990, Jean served as research historian at Old Fort William (now Fort William Historical Park) and established herself as a leading national expert on Fort William and the North West Company. In recognition, Fort William Historic Park’s named its library the “The Jean Morrison Canadian Fur Trade Library.”

A prolific writer, she wrote dozens of books and articles on Canadian labour and fur trade history winning numerous awards and accolades in the process. These included the Ontario Historical Society’s J.J. Talman Award in 2009 for her last book Labour Pains: Thunder Bay’s Working Class in Canada’s Wheat Boom Era. In 2013, the Department of History at Lakehead University awarded Jean its inaugural alumni honour award for her outstanding contributions to the field of history.

Jean was a significant figure and force within the historical community in Northwestern Ontario and beyond. Her advice, knowledge, and willingness to help set an example to generations of historians. Her friendship and guidance will be sorely missed.

Michel Beaulieu (2015)
Helen Knights

Helen Knights was born in 1912 in Toronto where she was educated at Havergal College and then at Victoria University, earning a B.A. In the war years, she drove an ambulance in Toronto, volunteered as a nurse at Christie St. Hospital and Women’s College Hospital, and worked in the family’s business, Lake Simcoe Ice and Enterprises. After the war, and the death of her first husband, she became a dietitian at Moulton Ladies College.

Helen’s marriage in 1946 to Orval Knights brought her to the Lakehead and a domestic life. It was here, after her children left home, that she let loose her creative skills. She became a very versatile, award-winning artist in a variety of mediums — enamel on copper, oil and acrylic paintings, batik and tie dye, rug knotting, etching and collographs and the fabric arts of quilting and making her own clothing. Her etching and collographs appeared in International Shows and are held today in many important collections.

As she approached her 100th birthday, and still producing amazing art, Helen donated a sizeable portion of her collection to the Thunder Bay Museum. A major show of her work, entitled Knights at the Museum, was held here in 2011. In recognition of her contribution to the Society she was named an Honourary Artifact of the Museum. Helen died on November 23, 2014 at the age of 102.

Tory Tronrud (2015)
David W. Delgaty was a friend and an enthusiastic supporter of the Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society for forty years. During the formative period of the revitalized Historical Society, he proudly served on the executive and became president in 1978. This was an exciting and stressful time because the Society not only established an historical museum but it also created the National Exhibition Centre, now the Thunder Bay Art Gallery. As president, David presided over the gala opening of the Centre’s Group of Seven and Tom Thomson exhibit. He hosted A. J. Casson, the last living member of the Group of Seven, as well as Robert and Signe McMichael, visionary Canadian art collectors.

David was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in 1938 and moved to Fort William with his parents at the age of four. After graduating from Fort William Collegiate, he studied at McMaster University, University of Toronto and Lakehead University. He completed his graduate studies at the University of Hull, England.

Dave was a dedicated and gifted teacher of high school students of all abilities; he engaged students with his wit, knowledge and humanity. He taught at Westgate, before becoming the head of history at Selkirk; later he would rejuvenate the history department at Churchill. He led by example and always got the best from his staff and students.

Dave was a passionate advocate of lifelong learning and adult education. As night school principal he administered a wide range of credit and non-credit courses. Due to his efforts, many adults completed their high school education.

From the time he was a boy, Dave spent his summers at Silver Islet where he gained an appreciation of the outdoors. His involvement with
the naval reserve allowed him to share his knowledge of the natural world. These interests led to his work in bringing the Duke of Edinburgh Awards program to Thunder Bay.

Dave and his wife Sas shared a passion for adventure travel. They enjoyed mountain walks, and country rambles in Europe. Their fascination with ocean travel found them sailing the Adriatic coast, cruising Asia Minor and completing several transatlantic voyages.

He was justifiably proud of his three accomplished daughters: Jill, Pam and Laura. Jill is a Captain in the Royal Canadian Navy; Pam is a lead Nurse Practitioner and Laura an academic. They share their father’s dedication to leadership and service to the community.

David Delgaty was an affable, optimistic man, an engaging conversationalist and raconteur. He was an ardent promoter of the Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society and he will be missed.

Mark Chochla (2015)
Not far from Thunder Bay, 35 years ago, Terry Fox was forced to abandon his Marathon of Hope. His plan to run across Canada to raise money for Cancer research had ended when the disease he had set about to conquer reclaimed him. But even then his place in Canada’s history had already been firmly cemented.

Why will Terry Fox be remembered? As an athlete, he ran over 5,300 km in only 143 days, a monumental feat. As a spokesperson, he raised the profile of disabled athletes and changed how we think about them. As a humanitarian, even before he died in 1981, he had exceeded his target of raising a dollar for every Canadian to help cure cancer. To date, almost 700 million has been raised in his name for the cause. As a visionary, he set an example for us all. He helped us realize that we have within ourselves the power to change the world. At the news conference in Thunder Bay where Terry announced he was suspending his run, he summed it up best: “I just wish people would realize that anything’s possible if you try,” he said, “Dreams are made if people try.”

There’s no doubt Terry Fox will be remembered. His life and accomplishments have inspired songs, movies, books, sermons, a symphony and many statues. Schools, libraries, pools, parks, youth centres, laboratories, roads, running tracks and even an icebreaker bear his name as do a mountain in the Rockies, and a provincial park. Terry Fox appears on a special-edition of the Loonie, the first time that a regular-circulation Canadian coin depicted a real person other than royalty.

But his true significance lies not in things but within ourselves. Terry Fox has often been called a hero. In mythology a hero is one who sees a challenge, undertakes a quest, faces adversity, overcomes weakness, displays courage and self-sacrifice, and ultimately serves as an example to us all. This exemplifies Terry Fox, a superb athlete, a great humanitarian, a man who ventured much, made the ultimate sacrifice, and in the process became a role model.

It can be argued that a hero is the incarnation of a culture’s spirit. Other cultures find their heros in great men of power and strength—persons known for their triumphs on the battlefield, founders or topplers of states. It is perhaps typical of Canadians that we find our hero in someone like Terry Fox. For, despite his heroic acts, he came across as just one of us. We could see ourselves in him. We participated in his triumphs. We shared his pain. What he did was monumental, yet he made us believe that each of us can triumph over adversity if only we put our minds and hearts to the task and our shoulders to the wheel. He changed the way we think. He made it possible to dream again. History will remember him as a truly Canadian hero.