A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF THE NORTHERN CREE PEOPLE OF MANITOBA

Being a Thesis
presented to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
the University of Manitoba
In Partial Fulfillment
of Requirements for the Degree
of Master of Education
by

Robert F. Bishop

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the learning experiences of the northern Cree people of Manitoba from prehistoric times until the present. It is possible to show that long before Europeans came to the shores of this province, a learning process was developing which to a great degree paralleled that of the newcomers.

Evidence will be produced to prove that the native people were able to adapt to the demands of the dominant, new culture. It will be demonstrated that these people operated efficiently within the limits of the new, commercial society. The fur trade became their way of life.

As the fur trade operation declined, so did the power of the northern people. Subsequently they evidenced the ability to adapt to the demands of the new technological society.

Despite this proven ability to adapt to change there is an apparent failure to suceed in today's society.

The question posed is-----Why this failure to operate on equal terms with the members of the larger community?

It is hoped that this thesis may explain the reasons for lack of success and suggest the possibilities of solution.

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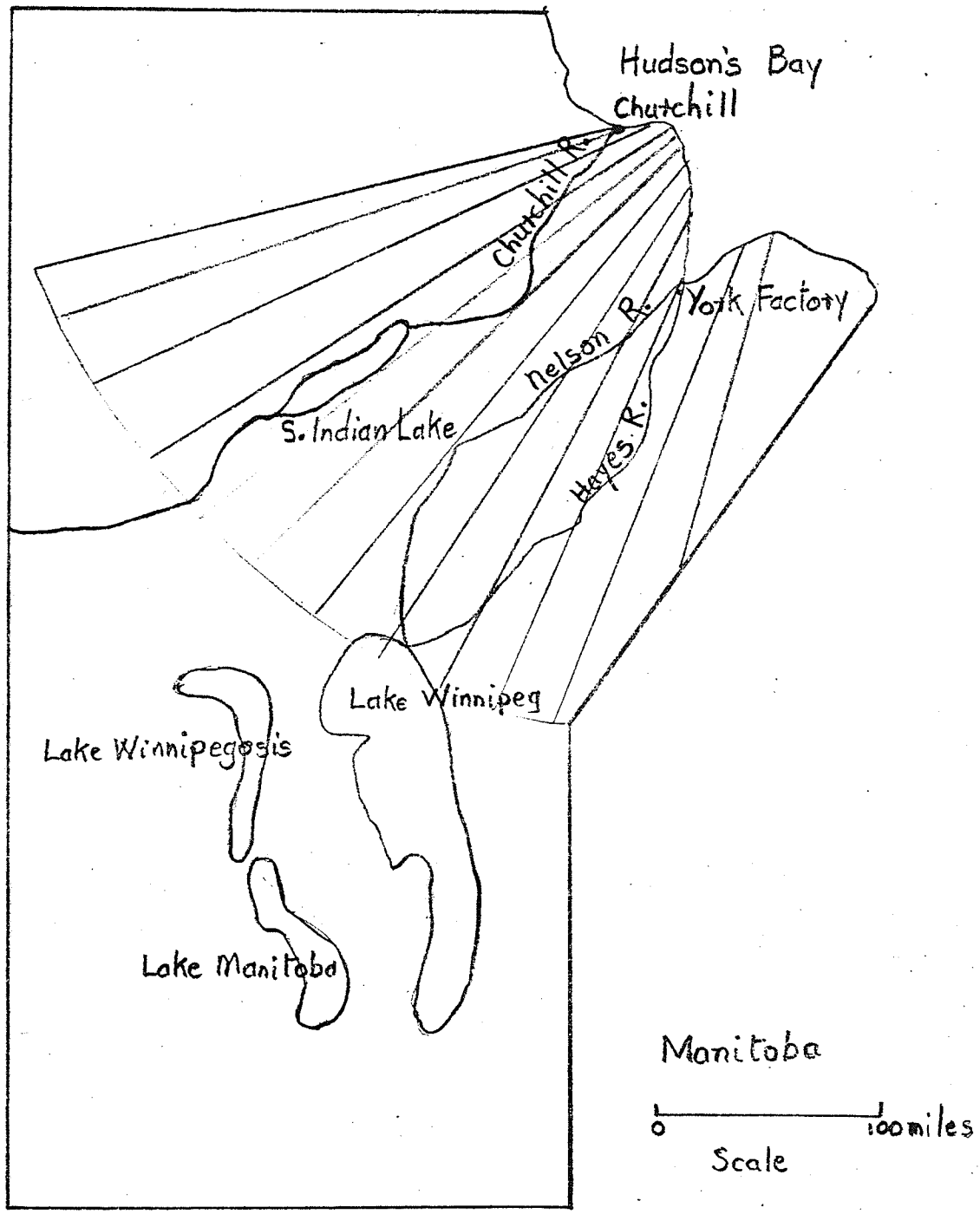


A. Area under consideration

Chapter I

Introduction - The Problem

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study is to examine certain situations concerning the Northern Cree who inhabit the land stretching west from Hudson's Bay in the area of the Nelson and Hayes Rivers. One of the situations is unique in the area now known as Manitoba in that, for three hundred years, a group of these people was engaged in an unusual partnership in a great trading venture with the Hudson's Bay Company.

During this time the native people advanced from an almost stone age existance into a technical and commerical world. This was a very abrupt change and required an adaptation demanding the learning of many completely new ideas, basic to another and entirely different culture.

It is hoped that this study will expose a singular paradox for examination. An examination will be made of many situations where the people resident in this area were very capable of surviving in their native environment, introduced the white newcomers to these very necessary skills of survival and themselves engaged capably in a new form of commerce, the fur trade. The study will examine why, despite all the demonstrated skills, the Cree people of the area in question are still a considerable way from successful adaptation to the accepted ways of the larger society.

Importance of the Study

Any acquisition of knowledge may be defined as education. However, there is generally little acceptance of the fact that these Cree people gained a great store of knowledge from their experiences in their own environment and also from the newer culture which came to their homeland during the seventeenth century. The writer hopes that this study will expose that there is evidence that they operated within the newer culture with great skill and efficiency. The study will also pose a question which asks why the ability to master the demands of the three previous centuries has not been carried over to the twentieth.

Procedure

Chapter I, the introductory chapter, will outline the purpose and methods of the study. Included in this chapter will be the comments on literature and other sources of information. Chapter II will discuss in some detail the definitions on three of the more important terms which must be frequently used ---- Civilization, Culture and Education. Chapter III, Prehistory, will deal with the geological evolution of the area and the effects of the ecology on its inhabitants, demonstrating some of the acquired skills which existed before the European arrival. Chapter IV will show how the arrival of the European caused cultural alteration, and will attempt to demonstrate that the native person was not only a full partner in a vast commercial enterprise but was often the actual leader. Chapter V will give examples of the ways in which the native culture has been

suppressed by the larger one and will show that the memories of the older way of life are still retained. Chapter VI will comment on the modern problems of the area. Chapter VII may both draw conclusions and suggest possible solutions.

Methodology

This work will essentially follow a historical pattern. Srarting with the entry of the first man into the area, it will survey his adaptation to the environment, look at his fur trade activities and discuss his modern problems. A definite attempt will be made to use original material gathered from Hudson's Bay Company documents and interviews with northern peoples. Rather than use just the opinions of writers of history works the writer will try to make use of the opinions of persons who had or have had experience of the region under survey.

Sources of Information

a. Works by authors who actually lived in the area. Including edited works of residents. Most of these were employees of the HBC.

b. Material from HBC records personally researched by the writer.

c. Personal interviews with persons resident in the north.

d. Articles researched by others from HBC documents.

e. Information by archeologists and anthropologists which has been recently acquired and may serve to shed new light, particularly where this establishes information on pre-historic situations which may be contrasted

with older but rather limited ideas on the earlier progress of the local people.

f. A minimum use will be made of other published works whose authors may not have had direct contact with the area, including some who demonstrate empathy with northern problems.

Limitations

The greatest limitation is undoubtedly that it is impossible to adequately research the wonderful Hudson's Bay Archives fully. Although the writer has gleaned a fair amount of quite original material from this source, how can one ever fully investigate a collection of one million pieces, of which at least fifty per cent relate in some way to the area under consideration?

There has been much opportunity to do personal research on church documents, so most references to religious activities must be general, or if specific, from others researches.

Personal interviews have been made in about half of the larger settlements within a radius of York Factory reaching two hundred and fifty to the north and west. But even in these places I have undoubtedly not spoken to many of the reputed story-tellers.

Perhaps the last paragraph is very significant in that it illustrates the crux of the problem. So much of the lore of the old culture is dying without its being made available to the younger generation.

Chapter II

Definition of Terms

Civilization, Culture and Education

In any cross-cultural situation where there is interaction between two societies at differing levels of development, which at the time of first contact in this work is between the seventeenth century Englishman and the native inhabitant of what is now the northern part of this province, it is important to establish terms of comparison. I would therefore like to discuss the importance of three words---- civilization, culture and education.

Any definitions of civilization which are at all detailed create immediate problems in accomodating one or other of the two societies. Webster's Dictionary quotes:

> An ideal state of human culture characterized by complete absence of barbarism and non-rational behaviour, optimum utilization of physical, cultural, spiritual resources, and perfect adjustment of the individual within the social framework.[1]

Consider the life of the average seaman who came in early days to this continent. Entailing as it did poor food, incredible hardships and vicious punishments for disobedience, was it not barbarous? Think of the fate of Hudson, abandoned in a small boat on an icy sea.

How should we regard the massacre of the Eskimo at Bloody Falls by some of Matonnabee's men who guided Samuel Hearne? Neither group could be included under this part of the above definition.

Is it possible to regard as adjusted within their own social framework such men as Anthony Henday, hero of the long journey to the Blackfoot country in 1745, yet an outlawed smuggler in his native land? Many men in the service of the H.B.C. were there because of problems within their original society.

To find a definition which will accomodate both races one must seek broader terms:

> a developed or advanced state of human society, a particular stage or particular type of this. 2

This it is proposed to use as a reference for civilization.

No great degree of difficulty is encountered when one examines the word culture. Cultural Anthropology helps here since it often sees in relatively primitive societies activities which in pattern parallel the actions of more developed races. These are regarded as part of the total structure regardless of the stage of progress achieved. Gue's choice is that culture includes all the learned behaviors of mankind and the products of those behaviors. 3

With such an all-embracing statement, which appears to be fair to both parties involved, it seems reasonable to ignore the narrower ones. These often imply that the aquistion of a high level of literary skills or artistic abilities is necessary.

Education, comments on which must occur frequently in this work, merits more consideration. There appears to be

considerable variations of opinions on styles of education. Where the people under consideration had a settled way of life in an urban setting, no matter how long ago, they are often seen as operating a form of education which parallels those of many modern city-based societies.

In ancient Egypt the physical environment influenced and limited education. Within a limited area life became quite complex. Writing opened the way to good positions, social privileges and a life free from manual work. Great value was placed on literature. In addition, because of an accurate time concept based on the movements of the sun and moon, mathematics was well developed and was used expertly in surveying, architecture and engineering. Medicine was well organized, although often connected with the will of the gods and demons. Plant drugs were used, but some other cures were more exotic, such as bat's blood and crocodile dung. It is interesting to note that these latter were listed in European pharmacopoeia in the seventeenth century when some white men who will be refered to later were meeting Indian people for the first time.

Within the limiting confines of the desert environment emerged a rather narrow education system:

> No better methods exist than those of Egyptian imitation and memorization for insuring the fixity and stagnation of human thought. The Egyptian mind was enslaved by its worship of the words and by its fear of tampering with these words lest the wrath of the gods should be turned against men. 4

Some of this we may not look upon too harshly either when looking at the earlier processes of the Cree people or even our own modern system.

There was apprenticeship training for the trades, but this was a perogative of boys and probably only about five percent of the population had this privilege. The masses were controlled by fear and ignorance, and for them society was the only teacher.

In the older India all education was derived from the major religions of Hinduism, Islam and Bhuddism. All systems were fairly complicated, particularly the polythestic Hindu religion. With the two larger groups, Islam and Hinduism control was in the hands of the priests and education extended to warriors and in later years, the merchants. Thus education was limited to those in the upper levels of society. Most formal education was limited to the teaching of holy scripts. Thus education was often a blind priest-directed faith. The majority of the people were, as in Egypt, taught by the daily and social activities of the village.

But are either of the foregoing of use in terms of comparision with the Northern Cree? Can one compare an urbanized life with one where many people were forced to travel on long waterways in summer or across frozen, inhospitable land in winter, searching for sparsely scattered game? Such people have often been termed 'primitive', but what do we mean by primitive? No dictionary definition suggests that

people in this category are without hope of progress. According to Mulhern:

> Today primitive suggests preliterate is an arrested form of civilization. 5

Thus there is recognition that civilization occurs in degrees and that one must consider many facets of man's development. Education has too often been defined within the narrow limits of ability to read and write. Some of this idea still persists even today, to the obvious exclusion of the type of learning of a rapidly developing technology. Perhaps we have been so engrossed in acquiring a high standard of intellectual achievement that we have tended to forget the more basic needs. Myers says:

> There are two phenomena that are so characteristic in all societies that preliminary mention of them is required. These are the apprenticeship method and oral tradition. 6

Thus it may be seen that the need to learn the practical has been a priority for all developing societies. How does English education of the period when the first white men landed on the shores of what was to become modern Manitoba appear under examination? It seems appropiate to quote from one man who was born, died and was buried in very close proximity to where one of our more notable explorer-heroes, Henry Kelsey, spent his last years.

In 1644 John Roan was buried in the parish church of St. Alphege at East Greenwich, London, England. Here too, as far as is known, died Kelsey, in a street alongside that

church. Roan, a fairly wealthy merchant, asked that his estate go:

> to bring up so many town's born children of East Greenwich at school that is to reading, writing and cyphering, and each of them forty shillings per annum towards their clothing until each of them shall reach the age of fifteen years. 7

This school was typical of the other 'grammar' schools which started around this period in England. Indeed, the famous surveyor David Thompson came from such a school, the Grey Coat, which had similar beginnings, and in fact some early connections with the Roan School.

How did their schools include the apprenticeship? Was it not more likely that they were conducted along the lines of memorization which 'resulted in fixity and stagnation'?

Apprenticeship suggests a lengthy process of learning with encouragement from a skilled mentor. However, during an inspection of this school, actually at a time long after its founding, in 1853, pupils stated that the bulk of their instruction was received from senior boys who:

> played half their time in the mornings at marbles and buttons. 8

Lest one be too hasty to condemn this establishment it should be noted that after almost three hundred years the school had won considerable respect over a wide area as a Grammar School and numbered amongst many distinguished ex-scholars an Astronomer Royal and a Captain of the ocean liner Queen Mary. Its beginnings, and progress, is probably fairly

typical of a number of others which started in the same period.

Probably the educational limitations and inconsistencies were mere products of the English society as it evolved at that time. Perhaps this comment should be borne in mind for later statements when comparisions are being made? In England literacy was not too far from the time of its introduction and universal education, other than that which was the equivalent of the village societies of Egypt and India, had yet to begin. There is reasonable archeological proof that the people of this land, before the European came, were possessed of a considerable skill in picture writing. Unfortunately the shock of the abrupt change from an almost stone age existance to one of industrialism and commerce during the fur trade era, plus the one hundred years of isolation under the reserve system, have all but destroyed the ability to interpret these messages. Personal communication by northern Cree peoples has assured me that not too long ago there lived men who could tell the stories represented by these drawings. In other societies, particularly the river valley ones of the Middle East this form of communication was the prelude to what we recognize as an alphabet. How far were the people under consideration from this stage when the white man arrived?

Ones criticism of the Cree skills must be made with care.

Chapter III

Prehistory of the Area

That vast area of land between Hudson's Bay and the Rockies owes its final surface shape to the actions of the Quaternary Ice Age. This may have begun as long ago as one million years.[I] This enormous layer of ice may have stretched from the Mackenzie delta in the north-west in an arc which swung south to the position of modern New York. West it stopped at the Rockies and south it dipped deep into the Great Plains of America. The Prairies on which we live are a jumble of soil and boulders brought down by the ice from the Shield. The pattern on deposition was a very irregular one, timed as it was by the alternation of cooler and warmer periods which occured during the regression of the ice. Set in this mix of deposited materials is one large regular layer of soil, the rich Red River Valley and Portage Plains area. This is the floor of one of the great glacial lakes---Agassiz. This large body of water was trapped by ice in the colder north and was able to escape only slowly to its natural drainage basin, Hudson's Bay.

Lee quotes the most recently carbon dated material, the oldest which could be found, as 7300 B.P. for a specimen just south of Churchill to 12,500 in the Brandon area.[2]

It was some time after the latter date that man may have

made his first entry into south-west Manitoba, then gradually moved northwards, until he occupied the area around Hudson's Bay. During the period when the regression of the ice varied its pace the area around the Bay was often flooded. The last inundation has been named after the famous historian, explorer and surveyor Joseph Burr Tyrrell. The Tyrrell Sea stretched as far inland in the area under study as Split Lake on the Nelson, Knee Lake on the Hayes, and Gods Lake on the river of that name. The writer has from a plane seen the western strand line of this old sea, stretching from the north-west of Gillam in a curve north, running parallel to the railroad track between Herchmer and Churchill.

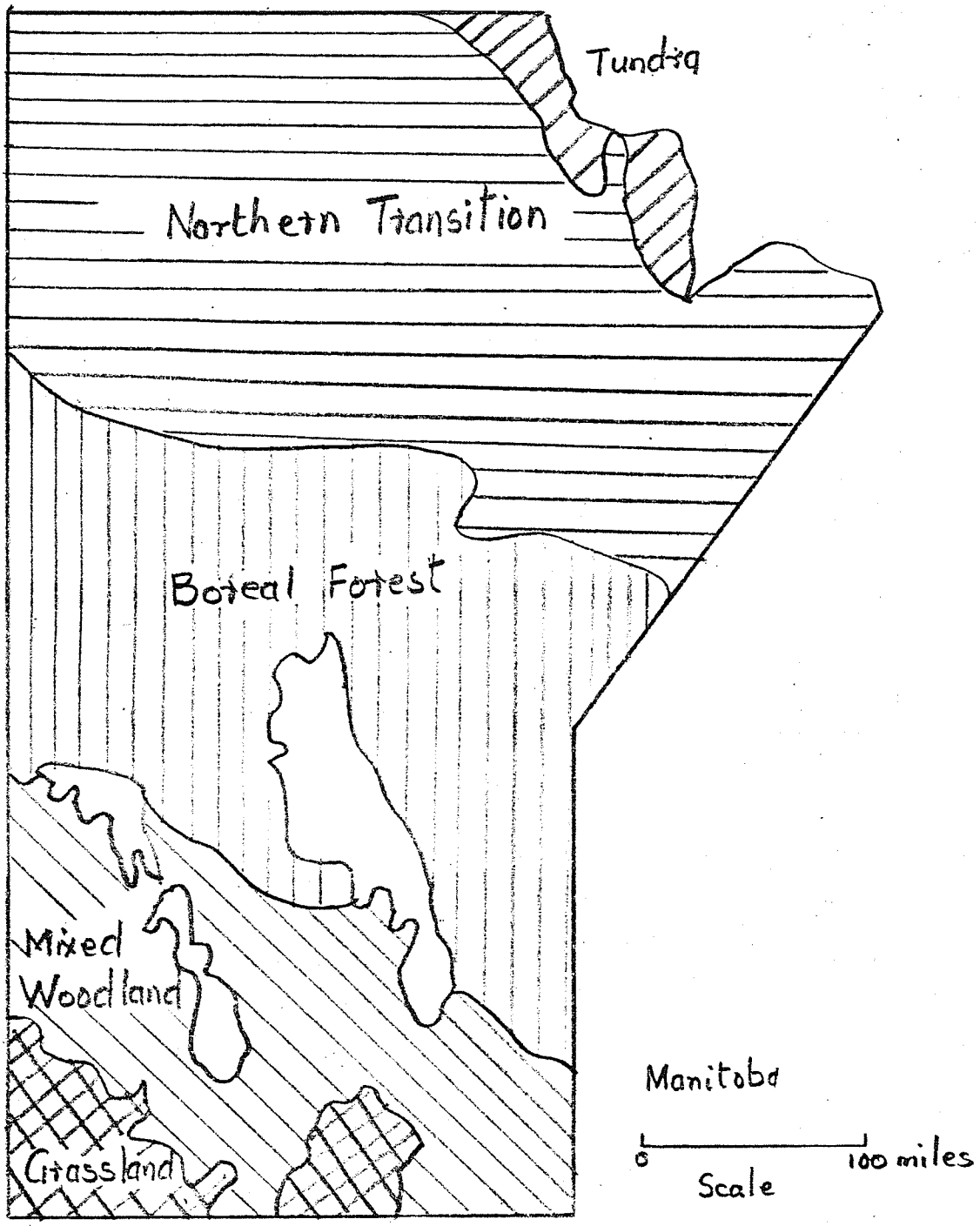
What must have been the thoughts of the first man as he came from the west and walked over the rise of the beach ridge and gazed across the great sea which seemed to reach endlessly to the east?

Who was he? Although many of our current writings which are most readily available ascribe first occupation of the area to the Cree people it might be wrong to allow enthusiasm for their later fur trade activities to mislead one. Some archeologists prefer theories that the Inuit may once have lived near to Split Lake. It appears that Arctic Small Tools have been found near Shamattawa and there is evidence that in historic times one or two Inuit stayed for long periods at York Factory.[3]

At this point it may be proper to consider factors resulting from the recession of the ice which made the area habitable by man. Mayer-Oakes describes the natural areas of Manitoba as Grassland, Mixed Woodland, Boreal Forest, Northern Transition and Tundra. In general these divisions progress from south-west to north-east as shown on the map B, page 15.[4] Broadly speaking it is safe to say that these areas varied from more to less hospitable in the same direction. Where the climate was milder and game larger and more plentiful there was a predisposition to more settled forms of life, where even forms of agriculture were practised. Towards the north the land was, in prehistoric times, even as today, less inviting. Much territory could only be traversed in winter when it was frozen. In summer the inhabitants were forced to move along rivers or coastal edges. Small wonder that when the early explorers visited our shores they so often lamented that they were unable to contact the indigenous people:

> They saw the tracks of Deer and Bears; good store of Fowl; of which they killed some; but no sign of people.
>
> to see if we could discover any Signs of Savages.
>
> They saw no signs of Savages.
>
> that there were no Savages on the island.[5]

Thus reported Captain Thomas James in his voyage of 1631-2. Although he circled the Bay in an anti-clockwise



B. Natural Zones

direction, landing many times, he met with none of the people he wished to contact.

When at the commencement of the fur trade era Radisson and his partner were seeking to establish a trading contact it appears that they had to journey many miles up the Hayes River to find local residents.

Hlady states:

> The human population is much larger today than in former times. It is not possible to state accurately the number of people living in northern Manitoba at the beginning of the fur trade(ca. 1682). It is likely however, that the number was less than 1,000. There were no permanent settlements and the nature of the country coupled with the technology in use demanded a nomadic type of hunting and gathering economy.[6]

Despite the fact that recent work in the South Indian Lake area shows evidence of a stable community based on a combination of fishing and hunting in that place, the above statement must be regarded, in the main, as true, at least until other proof to the contrary appears. This statement may be refered to later to show how the distribution of the population over a very large area of land was altered radically by the demands of a new way of life.

When considering the identity of the first people in northern Manitoba one must also give some consideration to the recession from and reoccupation of territory by the ice. Most archeologists consider that the Inuit came from Alaska some two to three thousand years ago, moving in a south east-

erly direction. This may have occured as the climate cooled and they sought better living conditions. At the same time of course, Indian peoples who had come from the south of the modern Manitoba earlier might have retreated under the same pressure.

Weighing most of the available evidence it would appear that Cree people occupied the largest area over the greatest period of time. There is a large amount of evidence to show that the occupation of the Boreal forest area of this province occured as early as 5000 years B.C. The people concerned may have been big game hunters who left the plains area for the treed zone to the north. The first period lasted until about I A.D. and is called the Shield Archaic. Artifacts related to this period have been found over a large area, from Athapapuscow Lake in the west, Gods Lake in the east, Rock Lake in the center and coastal areas around the Churchill and Nelson Rivers in the north.[7] Little is known about how these people were able to subsist. Most artifacts consist of stone tools and pottery. It is suggested that they lived in tents and that their way of life changed very little in the period, since a great deal of time was necessary for them to progress in adapting to the difficulties of the environment. Indeed, even their technology was by contrast limited in its development. At the same time as these people occupied the Boreal Forest there were people of the Old Copper Period who were using metal tools. Steinbring in his report on this period maps many areas around the Great Lakes and a large number of sites around the Winnipeg River. However, in the Interlake zone

and westward the number of finds is much fewer. Anything found further north appears to be of Inuit origin and from a later date since most of the projectile points are of the insert type. There are none of the socketed kind which have been associated with sites of this period in the south. It would seem that they were unable to exploit the finds of metal which were used a much later date from Coppermine River.[8]

The next stage of occupation was that of the Woodland Culture. This group of people occupied the northern treed zone from some time after the birth of Christ until the arrival of the white men altered their way of life. The very system which has been responsible for the most recent warping of the Cree way of life provided funds for investigation of the lives of past inhabitants of the woodlands. Manitoba Hydro paid for an investigation of a considerable portion of the South Indian Lake, Notigi and Burntwood Rivers system. This has revealed that although the coasts of Hudson's Bay may have appeared harsh and devoid of inhabitants to Captain James, in the interior there were fairly large groups of people who were well adapted to life on the shores of the lakes and rivers. South Indian Lake probably supported large numbers of the ancestors of the present day Cree and Chipewyans.

The estimate of site in the area of the archeological rescue program which began is as high as 500, while the largest is spread over an area of 35 acres of lakeshore. The wide range of pottery belonging to the Laurel tradition is evidence of a

people who had adequate spare time which permitted them to experiment with the pot as an art form rather than just as a useful object. In the first instance the techniques to be mastered were quite complicated. To avoid the stress caused by firing the damp clay it was necessary to mix finely crushed rock into the paste. Then it was formed into thin sausage-like coils which were placed one on top of the other to build up the walls of the vessel. Paddles were used to firm and flatten both inside and outside of the pot. Before firing designs were incised around the top, near to the rim. Some of these were an arrangement of a simple repetitive pattern of lines, while others bear the imprint of what appears to be either the imprint of cloth or of fishnet. The use of these materials would suggest a fairly advanced knowledge of the use of natural fibres.

Nowadays a society is prone to be judged by the achievements of its technology. We often do not count the very short time that European types of society are distant from the semi-primitive. When the first whites came to Hudson's Bay they were able to make their voyages because of a metal manufacturing technology. But they had actually arrived at this stage of development only a short time before. With this fact in mind the diversity of technical learning of the people under consideration should be judged.

Wood and Wasnick have prepared a paper which examines the various ceramic forms found at South Indian Lake and with good supporting argument advance theories for the use of the varied

types. It should be noted that many of the finds were associated with each other in a number of sites, so there is fairly clear indication of a widespread cultural level. [9]

Flat vessels bearing resemblance to salt pans and drying pans were considered. Although the authors are not able to offer clear conclusions as to their use note should be taken that these are two distinctly different and recognizable forms.

Cooking vessels, either conical or globular in form are designated as being for use in boiling food. Some numbers of these have been reçovered and reconstructed; they are between seven to twelve inches in height and seven to nine inches across. This is a vessel of good size and must have required considerable skill, both in the shaping and in the firing.

The most interesting type discussed is the oil lamp. The writers put forward the hypothesis that the idea was derived from the Inuit, but that the use was markedly different. Whereas the Inuit used the lamp primarily as a source of heat for cooking with an accompanying light and some warmth, the people of the south Indian Lake used it for different reasons. Living in the woods where there was an abundance of fuel it would appear that their primary reason for the use was to produce light. This would suggest a society which had acquired a good degree of mastery over its environment and had some leisure time at the end of each day.

The quantity and similarity of the materials discovered

leads the authors of this work to state:

> In other words, the resources of the Southern Indian Lake region are, at a general level, sufficiently diverse to allow for the maintenance and stability of the aboriginal subsistence-settlement system even under adverse conditions. To most efficiently exploit the Southern Indian Lake region on a year-round seasonal basis, a degree of familiarity among band members with the region gained over a period of years would be necessary. We would expect a non-transient lake region occupation analogous to the eastern subartic pattern.[10]

The Laurel pottery found at South Indian Lake is identified by archeologists as being the same as that found around the Great Lakes and to some extent is associated with the westward spread of the Algonkian speaking people. One hypothesis laid down in 'The Laurel Culture in Manitoba'[11] is that the arrival of these people at South Indian Lake coincided with the apparent beginning of this form of pottery, and that this tradition endured until the 8th century, after this date it becomes identified with historically-known Cree, Ojibwa and Assiniboine. This too may be offered as some proof of a stable society in the area. Only further archeological activities can tell if similar situations existed in other areas.

Other forms of the Woodland Culture, which unfortunately have not received much attention, are the rock paintings and petroforms. In general it may be said that the arrangement of boulders in a significant shape was practised in the southern part of the present province while paintings appear on the vertical rock walls along the edges of rivers in the shield.

It is unfortunate that in the south many forms may have been displaced by the activities of early agrarian settlers. Even the prolific Tie Creek site on the Winnipeg River which is dealt with at some length in J. Steinbring's detailed report on this area has not survived in its original condition; arrangement of boulders has been altered and some persons have organized their own interpretations. Trappers and others who lived in this isolated region cooperated by discouraging persons whose interest was not strictly scientific and helping those who sought to do serious work on the site. Although some serious interest was shown in 1934, no detailed work started until the 1950's. It is apparent that Steinbring considers that much time must elapse before any firm op nions on the message conveyed by these forms can be made. [12]

In the northern part of the province there are because of the conditions of the terrain fewer rock paintings. Also, during the fur trade period some of these were destroyed. In the area under consideration a great deal of information has been lost where the raising of river levels to provide water for hydro development has inundated several sites.

There are a number of theories concerning these northern rock paintings. Brenda Lipsett seeks to show a similarity between them and those used on birchbark scroll of the Ojibwa Midewiwin Medicine Society. She is seeking to show that they are influenced by Ojibwa and gives no consideration to the Cree.[13] The writer himself has been told by a rather open-minded northern

Cree person that they were made as the result of dreams by the chosen leaders of canoe groups, reflecting the experiences of the group.

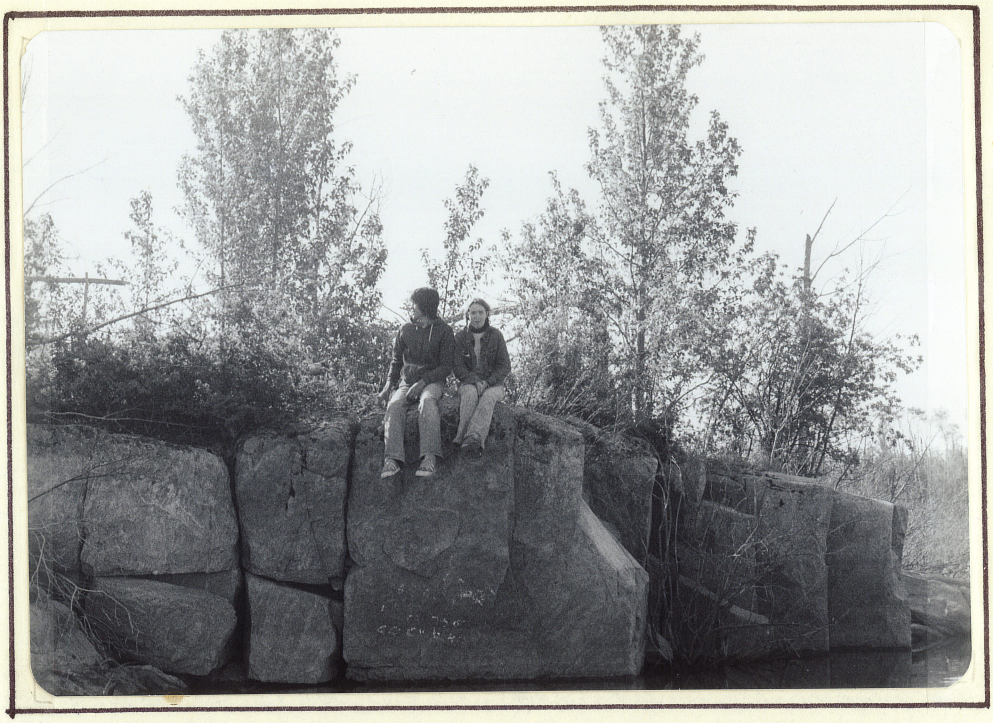
The writer has visited the rock paintings situated to the south-west of Weskusko Provincial Park. They are located on the Grassy River which flows eventually into the Nelson. The site is located on the west bank on a rock face which rises about fifteen feet above the water level and extends about fifty feet in length. The number of figures or shapes is in excess of thirty and most of them are quite clear. There are a number of animal forms--bison, deer or moose and buffalo. Men are shown in a number of active and dramatic poses. There is one picture of a falling tree. One picture appears to be that of a crayfish. Some are obviously symbolic and of these the one in the photo I, page 24 is most interesting. These can be compared with a set in the posession of Mr. Murdo Scribe of the Native Education Branch of the Department of Education. In his pictures, taken from sites on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, there are some which resemble directly those on the Grassy River. The one illustrated appears to strongly resemble one from the Lake Winnipeg site. In addition there are similarities of moose, deer, men and falling trees. However, how does one judge the symbols? Are these to be attributed to Ojibwa Medicine or do they reflect as my informant suggested, a man's thoughts? If so how far are symbols from a widespread universality of recognition and modification to an alphabet?

At a site near Hill Lake, on the Minago River, there is a

I. One of the Grassy River Rock Paintings
(In shadow under overhang)

painting, somewhat faded, of a deer or caribou, photo II, page 26. Below the animal is a human form which is in the prone position. The person who guided me, a former conservation officer, told how he had once lain down in the willows below the site and called to a moose who came to him from the feeding grounds across the river and was " dropped with a single shot without knowing what had hit him ". Had the speaker only duplicated what men some centuries before had done? Was the painting an accurate account of what this pre-literate person had recorded, to point out to others who followed the excellence of the place for hunting? Have rock paintings been regarded rather as works of art when an effort should have been made to seek an interpretation? One or two informants have suggested that in the past there were old men who could read these drawings. When one considers the quick success of the Reverend J. West's syllabic alphabet, produced at Norway House and rapidly spread to many other areas--------Was this not the link which bridged the narrow divide with pre-literacy? West's symbols represented sounds and may not have been too far away from those other symbols which stood for words. All of this is of course pure speculation, but many of the hypotheses regarding other facets of prehistoric northern life are as yet not backed by solid fact and may require years of investigation before they can be substantiated.

Some reference is now necessary to the definitions previously given in order that an asessment of the total progress of northern people, in the period prior to the arrival of the white men, may be made.



Site of Minago River Rock Painting

II. Sketch of Paintings

Culture has been defined as the total of learned activities. Before the new culture arrived native people had completed a mastery of the environment and utilized all the natural resources to a high degree. Vegetative products made an excellent mode of transportation, the canoe. All natural materials such as bone, wood, and stone were used to create a large variety of tools. Wood and animal skins were used as forms of shelter. Clay was formed into vessels which were put to a number of uses. There is evidence from the lamps at South Indian Lake that man may have developed to an extent which allowed spare time for reflection. The rock paintings suggest a strong desire to record happenings and perhaps even abstract ideas. If the technology was at a lower level than that of European races when those people arrived, was it not progressing on very similar lines? In fact a search into the prehistory of those white persons would have shown that their culture had come, not too long before, through the same stages.

For the purpose of this study it has been agreed that civilization has the individual adjusted within his society, that society should be advancded, and there should be no great evidence of barbarism. There is no positive evidence that all men in the north were perfectly within this definition, but certainly many white men so regarded them when they first contacted the native people.

Graham stated:

> Nature has implanted into the rudest savages

> some principles of humanity and association and parental affection, perhaps in a stronger degree than civilised nations are endowed with. The natives of Hudson's Bay are courteous, benevolent, humane, and kind, relieving the necessities of one another to the utmost of their power; whether by council, food or clothing. They frequently take the children of other people and adopt them as their own. They have a strong affection for their offspring. caressing them to a fault, seldom or never correcting them, alleging when they grow up they will know better of themselves.[14]

One may argue positively from archeological evidence that their society was both developed and advanced because of the way they had adapted to the environment and used to a great degree the local materials. Also in the judgement of those who came to this land they were a reasonable people, masters of the skills needed for survival and ready to adapt to the ways of the newcomers, even to the new ideas of the commercial world.

When considering educational situations of the indigenous people one may exclude any ideas which suggest that their learning was one which was controlled by religious ideas, even though each man may have made his daily observances to his particular deity as circumstances demanded. It would appear that life under the thinly populated conditions did not give encouragement for the emergence of a priestly group as did occur with some of the plains residents. There is of course adequate evidence that many men paid respect to sacred objects, there being several well documented records of sacred stones at which offerings were made, but whilst these may well have

been an integrated part of the daily life they cannot be said to be the symbols of any directing religious force.

It would appear that the young learned from their elders the skills necessary to the life-role of the particular sex. This may well be compared to the apprenticeship method.

That much was learned from oral instruction is obvious. Little that had happened in the past was forgotten; even today there are still old people who can tell of events which occurred almost three centuries ago---tales of happenings concerning the first white visitors, and these accurately enough that they can be confirmed by written records. Obviously the process of memorization has been used to a degree that traditions need not have suffered from a lack of a means of a written recording. The comment by Wood and Wasnick in their paper on South Indian Lake which suggests that a common understanding of the area among band members must have been necessary to the establishment of a stable community could well be offered as meaning that there was some universality of education.

Is it also not beyond the bounds of possibility to suggest that as the northern man passed down the rivers of his land he learned of the doings of his fellows from the drawings on the rocky banks?

It might be a fair judgement to say that when the first white traders arrived the local people had a society as equally developed as the newcomers, admitting of course, that as yet no technology in metals had been discovered. The ability

to use metal was perhaps the one skill which really gave the European some superiority.

Chapter IV

White Arrival, Cultural Alteration, Native Partnership

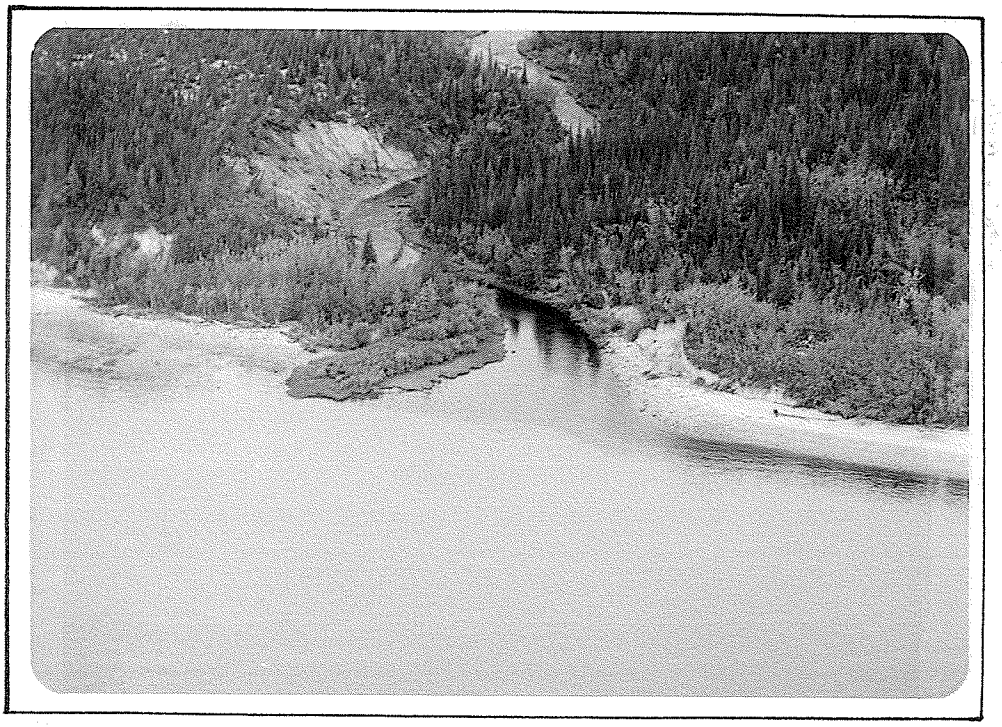
It is unfortunate that few of the present day Manitobans appreciate that for well over two hundred years most of the Indian-White contact occured in the area of the mouths of the Nelson and Hayes Rivers. Few people understand the extent of the fur trade activity which operated from the coasts of the Bay west to the Rockies and north to the Arctic. Even less is known about the fact that, until the pressure of the French and later the Pedlars from the south caused the H.B.C. to open its first great inland post at The Pas, Indians operated the bulk of the trade. Indeed one of the greatest critics of the Company, Arthur Dobbs, accused the traders of " sleeping by the side of a frozen sea " when in the mid seventeenth century he petitioned the British parliament for permission to break the H.B.C.'s monopoly.

The first white man to winter in Manitoba appears to have been the Welshman, Sir Thomas Button, who stayed at Hart's Creek on the north bank of the Nelson River in the winter of 1611-12. His expedition had a twofold task. First it was to search for the unfortunate Captain Henry Hudson who had been abandoned by his crew the previous year. The other purpose was to search for the north-west passage to the riches of the Orient. Button indeed felt that the Nelson River was an opening which would lead to his goal. A map published by Henry Briggs in 1625 is worded clearly in terms which suggest this. [I]

Button, like many of the first white explorers, suffered great hardships. Although he went to great lengths to protect his two ships, covering them around the sides with wood and stones against the pressure of the ice, he could not guard his men from the bitter weather and the inadequate diet of the times. When spring came many had died, including the master of one ship, and it was after him that Button called the river Nelson. There appears to be adequate evidence, both from some of Button's crew who were interviewed after the voyage, and from modern writers who have reviewed the information, to suggest that the exact spot was at Hart's Creek on the north bank of the Nelson, Lat. 57° I', Long. 92° 39. The most eminent of those who have judged that this was the site of the first white wintering in Manitoba was Joseph Burr Tyrrell. Apart from his extensive researches he also had the advantage of having visited and surveyed the banks of the Nelson in 1912 on behalf of the Government of Canada. At this time one of the men in his employ picked up a cannon ball at the mouth of the creek. This might well have been one left by Button with the ship he abandoned. [2]

The writer has had the opportunity to search the north bank of the Nelson from its mouth to Gillam Island as well as reading the material available to Tyrrell and his own report on his survey.

The photo of Harts Creek, No. III, page 33, shows that it is of such a size that determined man might have managed to work a ship of the size of the 'Nonsuch' into its shelter. In addition



III. Harts Creek

I have personal information that the H.B.C. was able to winter a boat about forty feet in length there in the early part of this century.

The next visitor was the Dane Jens Munck. He wintered on the Churchill, some little distance above Prince of Wales Fort, in 1619. He was apparently very ill-prepared for the stay, for out of a total of sixty-three men, only three lived to see the spring of 1620. Of these Munck was one, and with his companions was able to sail the smallest of three ships back to Europe.

Third of the early explorers was Captain Luke Foxe of Hull, England. He had the advantage of having questioned members of Button's crew about their experiences. It is interesting to note that the man who gave him accurate data regarding the wintering place was one Abakuck Prickett who had mutinied against Hudson. Apparently his expertise as a seaman, and Hudson's reputation as an erratic and harsh captain, served to save him from the fate usually meted out to those who committed such serious crimes--------the gallows.

Luke Foxe sailed into the Nelson, visited the place where Button had wintered, and returned home to England that same year. Like his predecessors, we have no evidence from him that he contacted any of the native people.

During this same winter Capt. Thomas James visited and stayed somewhere near to Charlton Island in the Bay which now bears his name. He too, met with nobody in the area, except for Capt. Foxe with whom he dined somewhere off the mouth of the

Nelson. He is notable for the unique manner in which he secured his ship against the pressure of the winter ice. He had holes bored in her so that she sank in shallow water and thus equalized the pressures on the hull.

The first of what may be called the fur trade visits did not occur until 1682. Others visited in the interim but there is no real evidence of direct contact with local people although presents were left at what were apparently native camp sites.

However these early visits, even though they did not bring Europeans face to face with the native people, had a profound effect on the latter's culture. This effect was of course produced by the introduction of iron, left at the place of the wrecked vessels.

When Button abandoned one of his vessels at Hart's Creek he left for the local people a veritable storehouse of goods from what was the beginning of his own technological society.

When Foxe was in the entrance to the Nelson he was looking for timber of size for a main yard, and during this search he found what he assumed to be the remains of Button's ship.

Miller Christy quotes from the Foxe MS details of what he saw:

> Foxe's MS here reads " the relics of a decayed ship, as anchors, cables, a tent covered with old sail cloth, a gun, an iron crow, (and) great store of shot of lead and iron; and that they do think that some have wintered here, for there is a great store of firewood piled up, and

> a place where they think some ship hath lain "
> These of course, were further relics of Button's wintering. C.[3]

To the modern reader it might at first glance appear that the goods left untouched in the almost twenty years after Button's visit were in such quantity as to suggest that local people had not availed themselves of these useful articles. However, we should remember that the person who lived in that place would only avail himself of those simple things which could immediately be adapted to his use to help improve his way of life. The use of many of the relics would not at that time have been apparent to him.

In reference to a landing in latitude 60°22' Foxe in his MS stated:

> Here I found an arrow, the head being made of a nail. I suppose it came from Port Nelson.[4]

This supposition may well have been accurate, since the northern men were well capable of travelling the two hundred miles between the two places, perhaps for the specific purpose of obtaining so small a thing as a highly efficient point for an arrow. There seems little doubt that this deserted ship provided metal for a number of years, since after a considerable passage of time, when Groseilliers visited the site in the 1670's he reported on the extent of ships's articles left there. It is reasonable to attribute to Button, however unwittingly done, the credit for introducing the Cree, and possibly the Chipewyan people, to the potential of iron as a material for daily use.

Some little consideration might be given to another possibility. When James visited Danby Island, near to his wintering place, he reported:

> I went ashore with the boat, for some of the company had told me, they had seen some stakes the last year driven into the ground. When came ashore, whilst some gathered wood, I went to the place; where I found two stakes, drove into the ground a foot and a half, and firebrands where a fire had been made by them. I pulled up the stakes, which were about the bigness of my arm; and they had been cut sharp at the ends, with a hatchet, or some other good iron tool, and driven in as it were with the head of it. They were distant about a stone's throw, from the water side. I could not conceive, to what purpose they should be there set; unless it were for some mark for boats.[5]

Two arguments may be developed from this evidence: That this was the place where Hudson may have landed after being abandoned, and that local people came into posession of the tool which cut the stakes or that trade with the French in the east brought metal tools into the area. In either case the quantity of iron involved would have been small, and the proof is scanty. It appears reasonable to credit Button.

On the next visit, that of Munck, less consideration is necessary. The evidence is rather more definite. Nicolas Jeremie, stationed at the French Fort Bourbon on the Hayes River from 1694 to 1714 relates:

> Next summer when the natives reached this place, they were much astonished to see so many dead bodies, the more so that they had never seen men of that kind before. Terror-stricken, at first they ran away, not knowing what to make of such a sight. Then, when fear had given way to curiosity, they went back thinking they would secure the richest spoils that ever been obtained.

> Unfortunately there was powder, and knowing nothing of its properties or its power, they foolishly set fire to it, with the result that they were all killed, and the house and everything in it were all burnt up. So the others who came later got nothing except the nails and pieces of iron, which they gathered up from the ashes of the conflagration. [6]

This comment is, of course, one from another culture. The expression "----nothing except the nails and pieces of iron,---", if considered in its true context does not properly state the true impact on the local people. The very first visit, then the appreciation of the potential of these new materials could have occured quite close together. All that was required was that one man, seeking to test the nature of a metal object, struck it against a familiar material, stone. Senses sharpened by the need to appreciate all that fortune allowed would soon have realized that this substance had properties superior to stone but, like it, could be shaped by grinding. Thus the manufacture of a simple knife could have followed as a natural occurance.

This period, which judged in terms of actual face to face meetings might be called pre-contact was an important one. The knowledge gained was about the products of the European technological world. If we add this achievement to the others previously considered under the headings of culture, civilization and education it is possible to form the opinion that the people around Hudson's Bay were more prepared for the impact of the white culture than its bearers realized.

In 1682 the Nelson-Hayes area was dramatically affected

by what may be called the first true fur trade activity in that place. This was important not only because it exposed the native people to all the complications of the world of commerce but also because they were at the same subject to the influences of two great, competing nations, France and England.

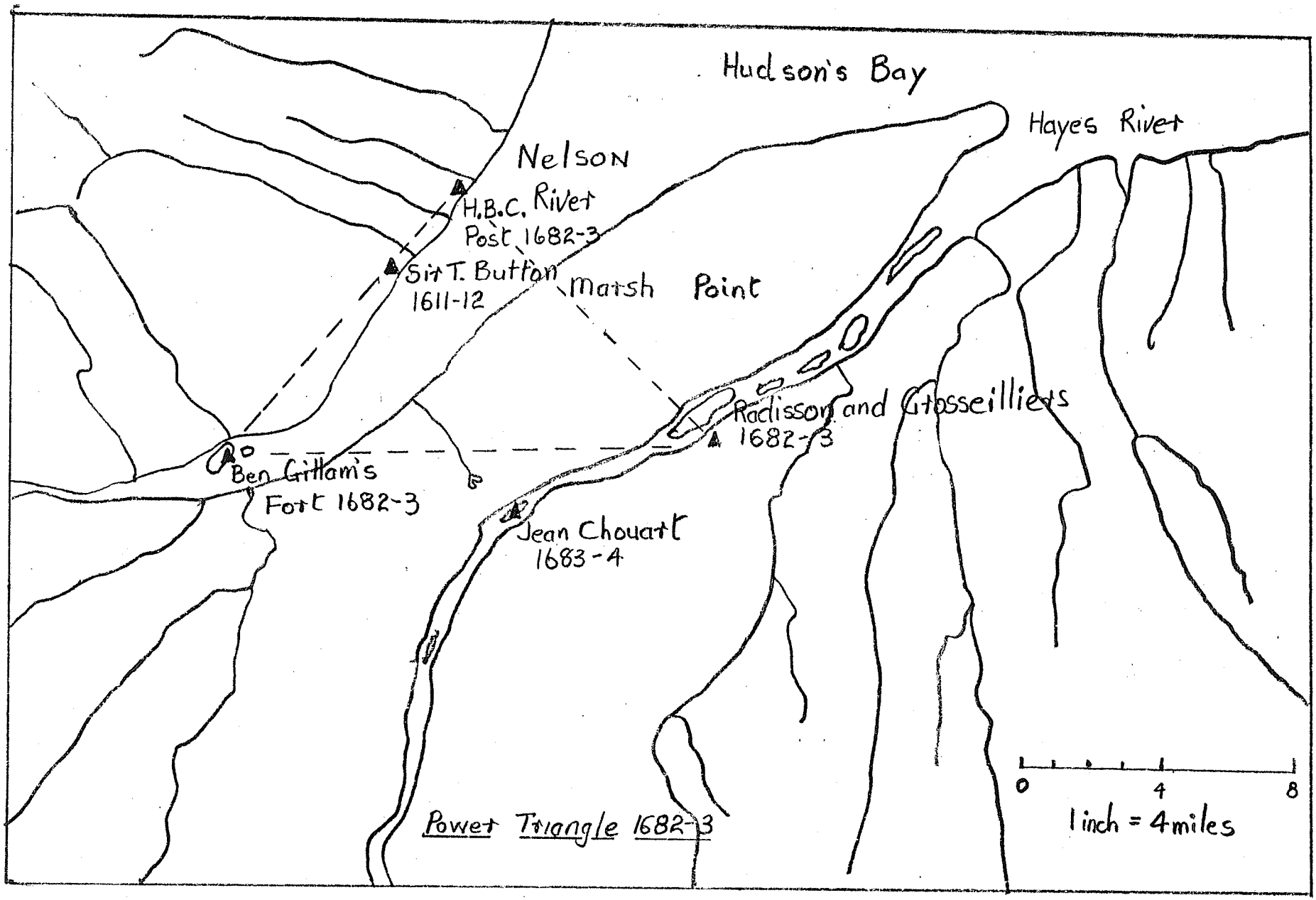
This first contact fur trade visit was a three pronged one. First to arrive were the redoubtable explorers from Quebec, Radisson and Groseilliers, who had played leading parts in the Honorable Company's establishment of its first post, Rupert House, in 1668. Now, dissatisfied with that employer, they represented the King of France. While Groseilliers built a house near Fishing Island, some little way up the Hayes, Radisson and his nephew Chouart journeyed some distance upstream to make successful contact with the local people.

When Radisson returned from this journey he was made aware of the presence of another group of Europeans when he heard the sound of guns being fired. Crossing over Marsh Point to the Nelson he came across a party of men under the command of Benjamin Gillam of Massachusetts. This man was the son of Zachariah Gillam who had piloted the first H.B.C. ship, "The Nonsuch", to Rupert House. By the standards of those days he was regarded by both English and French as a pirate or interloper. Radisson found that Ben Gillam had brought his ship "The Batchelor's De light" to the north-east end of the present Gillam Island and there had built himself a house. The eloquent Radisson was able to persuade Gillam that he had a French force which vastly out-

numbered that of the younger man. Gillam agreed to restrict his activities and to stay on the island.

Radisson left Gillam Island and proceeded downstream on the Nelson intending to go around Marsh Point into the Hayes. To his surprise he encountered yet another ship, "The Prince Rupert" under command of his old comrade Captain Zachariah Gillam, who was still representing the H.B.C. He adopted the same tactics as he had with Benjamin and was quite successful in convincing Governor Bridgar of the H.B.C. that he not only had command of a superior force but also had strong allies among the Indian people. This latter claim, in view of his having been a captive among Indians as a youth, convinced them that they too should not be overly active in their approaches to the native people. They built a house at Root Creek and there wintered. In October Gillam was lost with some of his men when his ship became ice-bound and was blown out into the Bay in a gale. This left the entire H.B.C. operation under the care of Bridgar. He, according to history, spent too much time in consuming the supplies of alcohol, so his party became a rather ineffectual one.

The map C, page 41, shows what may be termed the "Power Triangle of the Nelson-Hayes Rivers, 1682-3". However it would be only honest to admit that most of the directing came from the apex on the Hayes. Radisson because of his previous stay with the Indians as a youth, when he had doubtless assimilated some of their attitudes, was more equipped to deal with them and to move in the environment in which they lived. When he made con-


Hudson's Bay
Hayes River
Nelson
H.B.C. River Post 1682-3
Sir T. Button 1611-12
Marsh Point
Radisson and Groseilliers 1682-3
Ben Gillam's Fort 1682-3
Jean Chouart 1683-4
Power Triangle 1682-3
0
4
8
1 inch = 4 miles

tact with native persons he did so not just as a trader but also as a friend who showed mutual respect. He describes in his diary how he called the man whom he first met father, and that man accepted him as a son. [7] Thus he had great advantages over the other parties.

When spring arrived in 1683 Radisson found himself in an unfortunate situation. He had not prepared his ships for the harshness of the winter as had Ben Gillam. When a sudden thaw caused a great flow of water on the Hayes his ships, with the bottoms of the hulls frozen in the icey river bed, were split in two as the waters raised the top portions up. Radisson was able to cannibalize the two vessels, but the product was leaky and not suitable for a long sea voyage to Quebec. To solve the problem of transportation he sent a number of his prisoners on this ship the "Ste. Anne" to the H.B.C. post at Rupert House in James Bay. He took the "Batchelor's Delight", with Ben Gillam and Captain Bridgar as prisoners to Quebec. His nephew Chouart was left on Rainbow Island to safeguard the furs which had been traded with Indian people but could not be accomodated on the ship.

When Radisson arrived at Quebec he found that his conduct had displeased the Governor. The Englishmen were set free and allowed to return home. So annoyed was Radisson at his treatment that he left the French service and again took up employment with the H.B.C. When he returned to Hayes River again he took over the onetime French post and convinced his nephew to

hand over the furs to English company.

The stage was now set for an era of steady fur trading which was to last until the doors of York Factory closed for the last time in 1957. For almost three hundred years this post and its other large companions at Churchill, Albany River, Nelson House, The Pas and Norway House, as well as a large number of smaller posts kept up a practically unbroken record of trade with Chipewyans, Cree, Assiniboine, Ojibway and Blackfoot tribes. All of these peoples were much affected by the goods and the customs of this new society which had come to their country.

The extent to which over-wintering by five or six parties of Europeans accelerated the development of the culture of the area deserves examination.

The introduction of iron, both from the wrecks of ships and from trading was probably the most dramatic factor. The necessity of spending many hours in the chipping of flint was now abolished. Though this itself was important the concept of trade on a large scale was probably the greatest factor involved. Where previously trade with other tribes had probably been on the basis of simple barter the idea of exchange in quantity now became the means of trade. Other ideas which are the equivalent of premiums came into play when in the preliminary negotiations presents were offered to establish good relations. Many of the goods were of a kind which had never been seen by the local people before and often created situations which, like the iron tool,

reduced the basic labour needed to subsist. The gun, with its powder and shot, made hunting much easier and of course introduced the idea of mass killing for trade supplies. One of the most important ideas, which was to be a powerful factor in the fur trade until the two great companies, the N.W.Co. and the H.B.C. amalgamated in 1820, was the idea of competition. How puzzled must have been the Cree who went to trade with Groseilliers in 1684 when he discovered that this man now spoke for the very company against which he had made war in 1682?

As well as giving thought to the speeding-up of the development of the Indian culture one should acknowledge that some degree of suppression also occured. From the earliest time there is evidence of the implanting of European names upon the original native ones. Many of us do not appreciate that when we look at a standard map produced by the Surveys and Mapping Branch, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources we are regarding a collection of names selected for suitability by the Geographic Board, but which bear in many cases little resemblance to the true course of history. Many of the names in the area were originally given to honour some Royal personage, a member of the H.B.C. Board of Governors or a prominent person who visited the north. Often little regard was paid to the original native name, except that it sometimes appeared in mutilated form.

On the implanting of a second language upon the mother tongue Gue says:

> Language is one of our most deep-seated

> learnings, and at the same time carrying a maximum of emotional freight.
>
> Is it any wonder that some people have difficulty in learning a second language? It is in effect asking them to leave their mother, their family, their security. [8]

What must have been the effect of this change upon the man who so often paddled a river which he had known since childhood by a particularly descriptive name first heard from the lips of his grandfather?

Button called the river Nelson after the dead sailing-master of his abandoned ship. Grosseilliers renamed it after his royal leader, Bourbon. La Pothérie states:

> The first river we met with after the Danish when going south, is the Poarinagou, or Bourbon, discovered by Groseilliers. [9]

In a short period of time, from 1611-1684, a great weight of change had been laid upon the culture, and most of this in the last three years. How long had the local people taken to acquire civilization, culture and education? How necessarily slow had progress been in the harsh environment, suddenly knowledge of many new things had to be assimilated at a tremendous rate!

The years from 1684, when Radisson once again changed his allegiance and returned as representative of the H.B.C., to 1714 when Britain and France signed the Peace of Utrecht, must have exposed the native person to a very puzzling experiance with two other cultures. This period saw an unbroken conflict between the French and the British for the control of the rich

commerce of the Bay. All this in addition to the need to understand the new trade and technological ideas!

When Radisson returned in 1684 and persuaded his nephew to surrender the furs to his new employer he was accompanied by one John Abraham who built a post at Walker's Point on the south bank of the Nelson, opposite to Sir T. Button's wintering place. Subsequently he moved to the Hayes to take charge of the newly built York Fort, named in honour of the Duke of York, (later James II), who was Governor of the Company. This post was located about seven miles upstream on the north bank and was the first of four buildings of that name to be close to this spot. The last to be built did not close its doors till 1957. Around the time when Radisson was returning to England a French expedition led by M. de la Martiniére came to attempt to recapture the post for France. According to Pére Silvy's account John Abraham and his men were living in a tent near the unfinished fort. The two parties exchanged compliments and assessed each others strength. They agreed to live in peace. Obviously, since it was now the middle of September, this was because of the necessity of making preparations for winter survival. However, a day or so later the Frenchman discovered that his rival was well fortified and, since he refused to dismount his cannon, attacked him. This attack was unsuccessful and La Martiniére retired to French Creek, then called Gargousse, on the opposite side of the Hayes and about two miles below York Fort. Here he built "three houses and a fort....made of logs and defended by

two bastions and a salient angle". [10]

Unquestionably these incidents must have been viewed by native people with great perplexity. Here were these men who were possessed of such a great store of wonderful goods which they were prepared to exchange for what the local hunter may well have considered an easily obtained animal skin. Was this man also aware of the use to which the whiteman would put these skins? Or was he himself so being attracted by the adornments of the European way of life that he could consider this use a normal one?

Be this as it may, he must have gazed with wonder at the violence involved. And, subsequent to the bombardment of York Fort, he would have seen the prodigious efforts made by the French to work their ship into French Creek. Today it is a hard task, even near to high tide, to navigate a sixteen foot boat through the rocks which the ice action has strung across the creek mouth. Even allowing for the fact that the land has risen, possibly a metre or two in the last three hundred years, it is difficult to conclude that in 1684 the problems of moving even a small sailing ship were not great. The Indian, faced by any physical obstacle, would have normally carried his craft or, if the portage were a long one, abandoned it and built a replacement later. Thus a new lesson in the attachment to the value of material goods was learned.

During the winter and spring of this year there was much activity to interest the local observer. The English destroyed the post left by Chouart on Rainbow Island, which La Martiniére

had also occupied for a short while. The French also moved to another post, near to Radisson's 1682 position, opposite Fishing Island. When we consider the movements that went on during one winter and think about the hardships that must have been endured in this desolate spot we may be amazed at the effort put forth. Consider how the first-hand viewing must have affected the local observer! Also he must have realized the potential of the fur trade where white men possessed with powerful weapons struggled to gain the skins which only he, the Indian, could supply.

It is not proper for the purpose of this study to write in detail about all the actions between the French and the English, but since the two parties competed for the attentions of the Indian hunters from the time they both entered Hudson's Bay until the conquering of New France by the English in 1760, some of the more dramatic situations must be considered, at least in brief.

In 1686 a French force came overland to the bottom of the Bay and captured the posts of Moose, Albany and Rupert. This left the English with only one major post, York. Obviously the influence of this latter post must have been weakened. In charge of the French forces was Le Moyne d'Iberville, who successfully resisted English attempts to recover the lost posts in 1688 and 1689. He himself was beaten off when he tried to conquer York Fort in 1690. This redoubtable leader tried again in 1694 and was at last, if only for a brief period, successful. Again cultural influences were at work. York Fort became Fort Bourbon, and

Hayes River was named Riviere Ste. Therese after the saint on whose feast-day the victory had occured. Jeremie, to whom we are indebted for very detailed accounts of the happenings of more than twenty years described the building at York Fort:

> The fort had four bastions, forming a square of thirty feet, in which was a large warehouse of two stories. The trading store was in one of these bastions, another served as a supply store, and the other two were used as guard houses to hold the garrison. The whole was built of wood. In line with the first palisade were two bastions, in one of which the officers lodged, the other serving as a kitchen and forge for the garrison. Between these two bastions was a kind of half moon space in which were eight guns throwing an eight pound ball, which commanded the river side. Below this half moon space was a platform, at the level of the water, which held six pieces of cannon. No cannon was mounted on the side of the wood; (Meaning the rear of the fort) all the cannon and swivel guns were on the bastions. There were altogether in the fort which had only two palisades of upright logs, thirty two cannon and fourteen swivel guns. There were fifty three men in the fort. [11]

To this day most of the older Cree people in the settlements upstream speak of "Kiche Waskahikun" or the Big House. It would be a hopeless task to try to date when this usage first came into being but it could have been from the very first time of building.

This French occupation was short lived, because the English retook the fort in 1696. They were not to enjoy occupation for long because d'Iberville tried again in 1697 in command of four ships. Unfortunately his ship, the "Pelican", became separated from the others in Hudson's Straits. While he was waiting at the mouth of the river now named Hayes three very adequately

armed English men-of-war appeared. The "Hampshire" carried 52 guns, the "Dering" 30 and the "Hudson's Bay" 32. One enemy ship overturned, one fled and another was wrecked and, like d'Iberville's ship, ran aground. The latter apparently landed on the south side of Nelson River near to where Abraham's post of 1684 had been. The commander was able to get his men off on rafts along with some of his arms and then attack York Fort from the rear. So the writers have suggested that Indians helped in this move. It has not been possible to find any concrete proof of this, but in view of the relatively short stay of the French at York Fort it would seem very likely that they must at least have sought guidance across Marsh Point, which in many places is impassable on foot. There appears to have been only one track, a very wet one going from the south bank of the Nelson to the rear of York Fort. The accompanying aerial photo, No. 4, page 51, which shows clearly one of the numerous lines indicating how recently in geological times the land has been uplifted, also gives evidence of the very wet nature of the land. To cross this area would have needed all the help which could be obtained.

From this date until 1714 the post, once again named Fort Bourbon, was in French hands. They constructed one more fort, Phelipeaux, upstream near to the Radisson site of 1682, as a place of retreat in case they were again attacked by the English. This was abandoned in 1712.

It would appear that Cree and Assiniboine people who came to trade at the fort were subject to the vagaries of trade in

IV. Beach Lines on Marsh Point

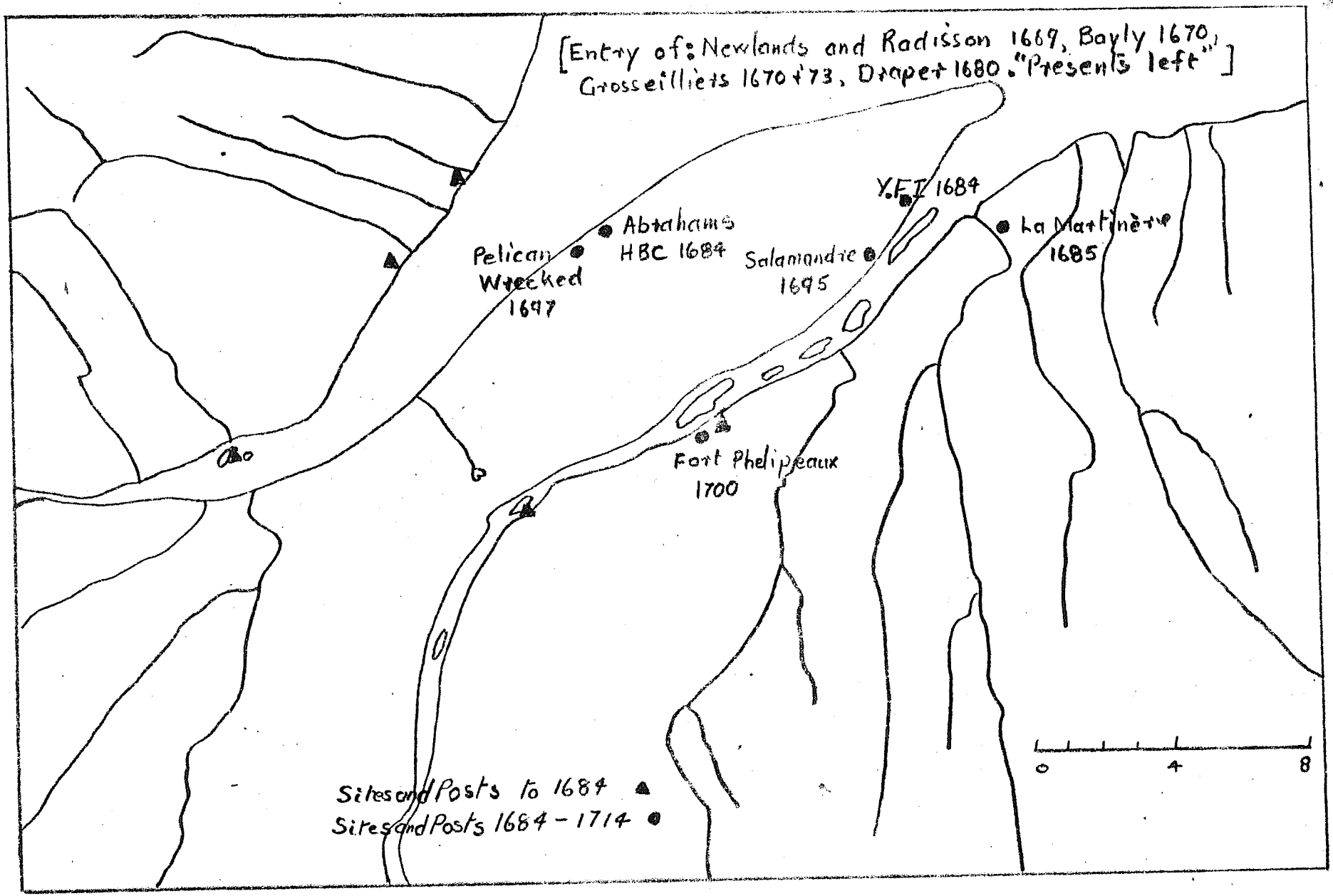
the same way as the modern urban dweller is to the competition between the multi-nationals. In addition, superimposed on a limited area of riverside camping sites were the greater cleared areas of the European encampments. Unlike the local people, who moved more often and were inured to the cold, the newcomers constructed what were by Indian standards vast dwellings and heated these with wood. Later evidence shows that they so stripped the land around the fort that they were obliged to send men some distance upstream every summer to cut and raft wood down to the fort to store for the winter. A description of the woodpile at the Prince of Wales Fort at Churchill some forty years later is "a pile of wood for a winter's firing for Prince of Wales Fort that measured upwards of seventy yards round". [12]

The map D, page 53, shows how the posts and sites which influenced the local people had grown in number from five in 1684 to eleven by 1712. The action around these posts had increased almost immeasurably.

The involvement and dependance of the native population with the traders and their goods is clearly illustrated by Jeremie. During the years 1708-9 when the supply ship failed to arrive a desperate situation developed:

> As a result, many of them died of hunger,
> for they had lost their skill with the bow
> since the Europeans supplied them with firearms. [13]

Engaged as both sides were in competitive enterprise it is obvious that their remarks on local people would be slanted by the trade relations:


[Entry of: Newlands and Radisson 1669, Bayly 1670, Grosseilliers 1670 & 73, Draper 1680. "Presents left"]
Y.F.T. 1684
Abrahams HBC 1684
Pelican Wrecked 1697
Salamandre 1695
La Martinère 1685
Fort Phelipeaux 1700
0
4
8
Sites and Posts to 1684
Sites and Posts 1684 - 1714

D.

> The humanity and courtliness of these people are in marked contrast with the wildness and barbarism of the Eskimos. Indeed all the people with whom we trade in the whole bay always treat the French as their fathers and protectors. The same attachment is not always shown towards the English. They say they are too deceitful and that they never tell the truth and this they do not like. 14

In 1712 when the French were sore pressed for food because of the non-arrival of their ships a party of men was sent upstream to hunt and was treacherously attacked and seven were killed. Some historians have chosen to suggest that the French provoked the attack by seducing away Cree women.

Jeremie's indignation, whatever the cause shows the other side of the coin:

> These barbarians, hungry for goods, came to Fort Phelipeaux where they found nobody, and everything they came across they plundered and ravaged. Eleven hundreds of powder, which I had not had time to get taken to Fort Bourbon, was carried away by them and it was all we had left. 15

Did these native persons not carry out an action which European standards would have condoned in the extremity of one of their struggles, had the need been equally as great? In another sense were they not also victims of commercialism?

The involvement of the native people with the competitive aspect of the fur trade was only one pressure upon their culture. There were others which were more personal and require examination of the careers of individual traders.

Since the Cree and their associates, the Assiniboine and Chipewa were in a stage of pre-literacy until syllabics were developed in the nineteenth century all records prior to that

time were set down by white men, and very few of these did so without some bias. Indeed, it is still popular to teach about La Verendrye, Kelsey, Henday, Radisson and Hearne without any mention of Indian companions who performed any part in the explorations other than that of mere followers. Of the foregoing men only Hearne paid any real tribute to the man who led him to the Coppermine River.

Henry Kelsey, whose chief claim to fame is usually recorded in history books as being the first white man to see the buffalo, was undoubtedly intrepid and extremely active in exploring the country. His career on the Bay began in 1684 when he came to Abraham's post at Walker's Point on the Nelson. He saw much of the action between the English and the French, being himself captured in 1694 and then again present when York Factory was finally returned to the English in 1714. Thus he was well qualified to express opinion on Bayside situations. Indeed he not only was concerned with events on the Hayes and his famous journey to the west, for he also acted as master of some of the company's ships and made overland journeys to the north. Unfortunately he chose to write in a form of rather crude rhyme and there have been many different theories offered regarding descriptions of routes taken and experiences undergone. As perhaps seems fit for a man who demonstrated much initiative he uses the first person pronoun frequently. Anything which others have recorded about him is also not entirely clear. Until the discovery of his personal papers, and their

publication in 1929, much distorted information existed about him. Joseph Robson, a disgruntled ex-employee of the H.B.C. who testified at a House of Commons committee on the Company's interest in inland exploration, profited by some of this uncertainty. He had Kelsey running away from a harsh governor of York Fort, making his famous journey to the west and returning with an Indian wife whom the governor refused to allow into the fort.[16] This statement was woven by Agnes Laut in her book in colourful terms "Indian wife, and all the trumpery of an Indian family".[17]

In his papers Kelsey does give one statement making some direct comment on the natives contribution to the success of trade activities on the Bay. In a letter to the Governor of Churchill Factory in 1719 he advises:

> Be sure you follow ye Compies Order in that affair, for I am very sure they have done me all the prejudice lies in their power by fals asspersions concerning the Indians and had it not bin for ym it would have been very hard wth us this winter for they have killed near 100 deer.....18

This is one of the more early and solid pieces of evidence illustrating how a very experienced H.B.C. man valued the expertise of the Indians.

One other very interesting item of information which we learn from the Kelsey Papers is about the first of the fur trade offspring of whom the writer has solid proof. This was the son of Guyer (Geyer) who commanded at York Fort in 1696, an interim year between French occupation. In his papers

Kelsey comments..... " Ye Indians all went away except Guyer's child ". [19]

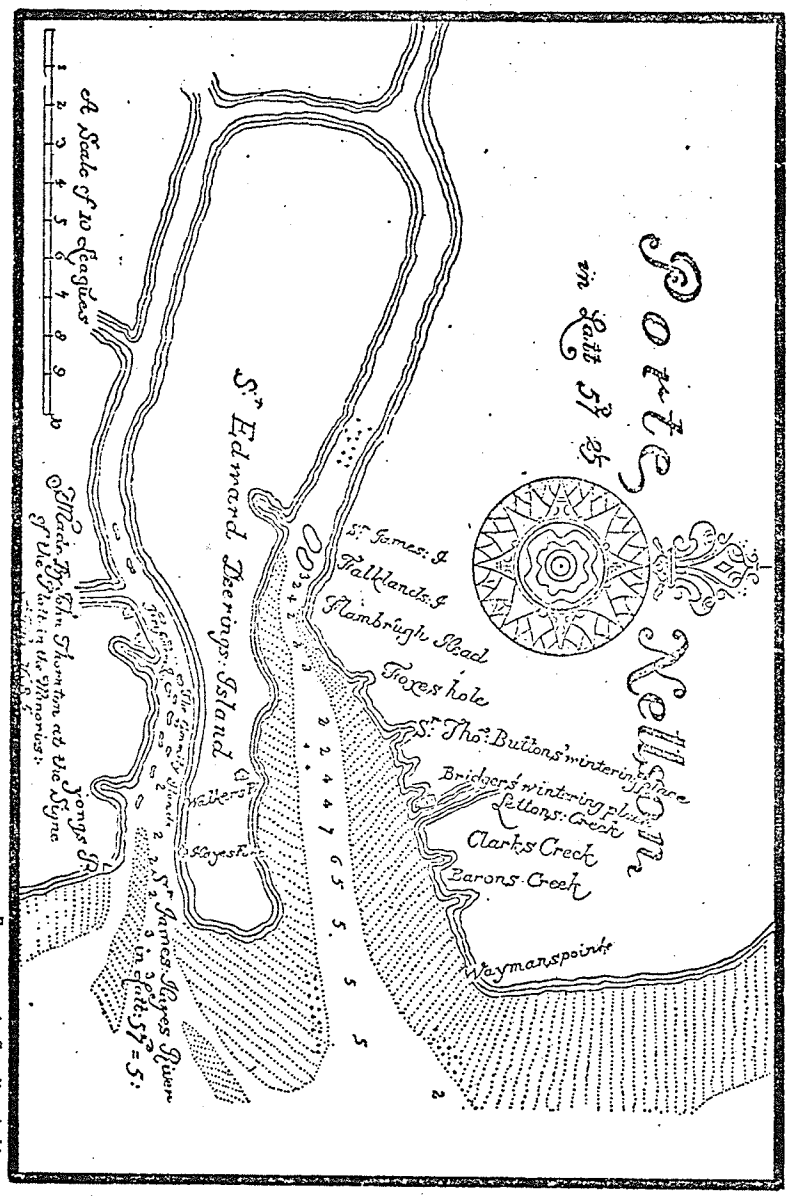
Although Kelsey had little to say about the part the Indians played in assisting him on his journeys, perhaps because he was preoccupied with recording his observations of the new country, we know he must have behaved in a way which gained their admiration, for they called him "Little Giant" or Misstopasish in their own tongue. That he was as one of them in the sharing of the rigors of their harsh land is obvious from his account of his journey of almost 300 miles to the north west of Churchill in 1689. He was accompanied by one " Thomas Savage " who apparently was not too capable as a guide nor was as reckless in regard to his personal safety as Kelsey. Apparently he called his leader a fool for his lack of personal concern. Kelsey himself states that when they were on the return journey and had to build a raft to cross a river he was forced to put their possessions and the boy on it while he himself swam in the icey water. Perhaps because he was ahead of his time in terms of his desire to explore inland, and also because he was prepared to live with the Indians as one of them, we are not able to read the truth of his times as he might have written about them. Possibly it was necessary for him to be discreet, for some reason he wrote a few lines, the transliteration of which is uncertain, with the comment, as a " pleasant fancy of old time.....because counsel is kept best in one single Breast ". [20]

However clouded the accounts of Kelsey's explorations may

be it seems fair to assume that he received great help from the local people, a help which could not be adequately recored because only one party had reached the stage of literacy.

Two pieces of negative evidence which show the depth of English ignorance can be seen in the accompanying maps. The first (map E, page 59), the Thornton map of 1685, shows most of the land shapes quite correctly around the mouths of the Nelson and Hayes rivers. All of the creeks on the north side of the Nelson can be easily compared with more modern maps, as can those on the south side of the Hayes, but when one examines further upstream on the Nelson similarity is not so evident. About ten miles up from Gillam Island a large creek running north-south cuts between the two rivers creating a large " Sir Edward Deering's Island ". The idea of this piece of land having at some time been separated near to the eight mile portage from opposite Rainbow Island to the south bank of the Nelson across from Gillam Island seems logical. But the creek shown is about thirty miles from the mouth of the Nelson and in a position which would place it about the area of Deer Island, which is well over two miles long. There is no sign of this island on the Thornton map. One may question how much the fur traders knew of the land in the immediate vicinity of York Fort and how much they relied on the native people for guiding and information in their own area.

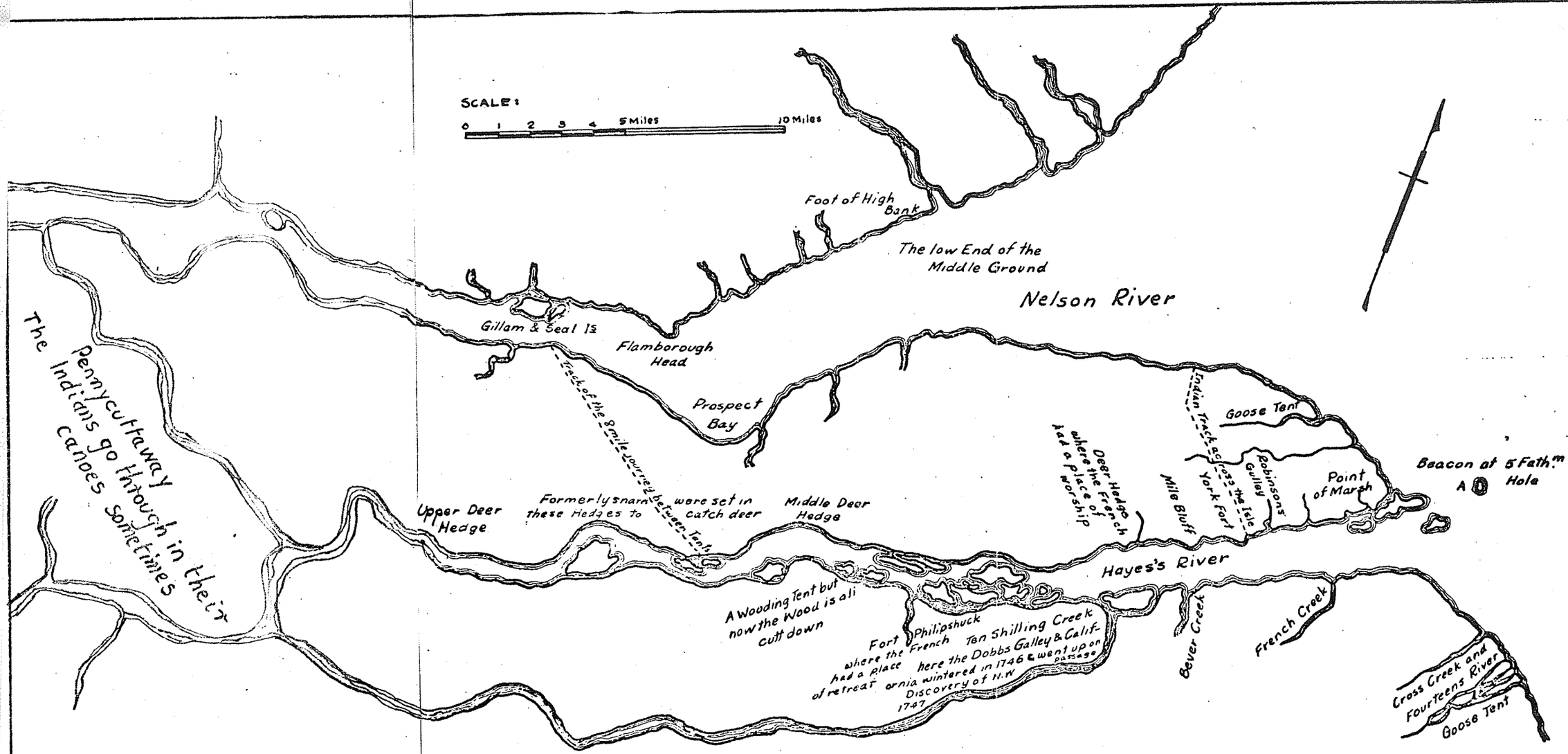
An examination of the map by Joseph Robson,(map F, page 60) shows an other, and in view of its later date, 1745, a different but equally outstanding error. This shows Pennycutaway, (Pun-



THORNTON'S MAP OF PORT NELSON IN 1685

From a copy in Canadian Archives

E.



AFTER A DRAUGHT OF
NELSON & HAYES'S RIVERS
from
An Account of Six Years Residence on the Hudson's Bay
By Joseph Robson
1752

F.

egutwaeo or Light the Fire River) coming north into the Nelson almost opposite to the direction in which it actually flows south from the Hayes. Thus in a matter of fifty five years Marsh Point has only progressed towards true recognition of its shape in written records in that it now appears as a longer type of island. What makes this situation interesting is that Robson, the man who contributed so much to the construction of Fort Prince Of Wales and at a later date criticized the Company so bitterly, is guilty of such an obvious error. He apparently spent a good deal of time on his survey work and although initially hired as a stonemason, was apparently engaged subsequently with the idea that he would help in assessing the possibilities of inland travel on this river. [21]

If such a man apparently qualified for his job and eager, as his record shows, to outdo others and attempt to influence policy, could be so much in ignorance of the country just near to a great post, how much more so may have been many others of the H.B.C. officers? If they knew so little about the area there could have been only one class of persons who were able to travel with assurance, the Indians.

It is fortunate that the year 1714, when York Fort was finally returned to the H.B.C. from French control, saw the paths of two of the outstanding persons of the entire fur era cross. One, the redoubtable Captain James Knight, served the H.B.C. from 1676 until he died on Marble Island in the north of Hudson's Bay in 1719 or 1720. The other, whose career was

very short, and who must have died at least in her early twenties was Thanadelthur, the Chipewyan Slave Woman. Each of these persons was as strong and determined as any whose achievements have been recorded in the annals of the north.

In 1714, when Knight became governor of the newly recovered post, Thanadelthur arrived at the goose hunter's camp at Ten Shilling Creek just up stream from York Fort on the other side of the Hayes. Her arrival there is an excellent illustration of the stresses put upon the various tribes by the fur trade. She had escaped from a party of Crees who had held her as a slave, at their camp on the north bank of the Nelson, along with a companion. It would appear that at this time the "Southern Indians" were well provided with guns, and since the establishment of a permanent post at Churchill was yet to be, were in a position to exert great pressure on the "Northern Indians". Her companion in misfortune died as a result of the hardships they had endured.

Brought to York she immediately impressed Knight as an extraordinary person:

> She was one of a Very high Spirit and of the firmest Resolution that ever I see in any Body in my Days and of great Courage and forecast... [22]

Her description of the richness of her countrymen's furs, together with her willingness to take Crees into what was at that time a hostile country, appealed greatly to Knight who was anxious to expand trade to the north. If he were able to make peace between the Crees and the Chipewyans Knight knew that his

aim of establishing a post at Churchill would be possible and profitable. Thus the two had much in common. Thanadelthur was at a level different from the other women of her race at that time for, although it appears that usually the women had considerable influence, their chief value in the eyes of their males was their usefulness:

> They served as beasts of burden and their misery, in an endless round of domestic drudgery, was intensified by the harshness of the northern environment. 'What is a woman good for.....she is, only to work and carry our things' a Chipewyan explained to David Thompson. Samuel Hearne observed women carrying up to one hundred and fifty pounds in summer and hauling a much greater weight by sled in winter. 23

How did she manage to attain a unique status? One must conclude that it was simply by great force of character. Here is at least one person of the native peoples to whom unreserved credit was given.

In June of 1715, accompanied by a H.B.C. servant, William Stuart, and a party of Swampy Crees numbering about one hundred and fifty, she set off for her own country. The expedition almost met with disaster. There was much sickness and near starvation crossing the barrens and many of the Crees deserted. A number of dead Chipewyans were found, killed by members of another group of Crees. Yet Thanadelthur was determined to push on and reconcile her countrymen to the idea of making peace with their traditional enemies. Before a group of more than one hundred Chipewyans, who might well have massacred her, she explained the purpose of her visit and even dealt most firmly with those who were

hard to convince. Stuart was free with his admiration:

> She made them all Stand in fear of her
> she Scolded at Some amd pushing of others...
> and forc'd them to ye peace.

Again he expressed his feelings:

> Indeed She has a Divellish Spirit and I
> believe that if thare were but 50 of her
> Country Men of the same Carriage and Resolution
> they would drive all the Northern (Southern)
> Indians in America out of there Country. 24

When on the return to York Fort Thanadeltur told Knight that her countrymen had promised to bring copper to trade with his interest was only exceeded by her story that they had heard from other Indians that gold was to be found to the north. Plans were made for another expedition in 1717 but an extremely hard winter, when fresh meat could not be obtained, caused sickness among the Chipewyans and on the 5th of February 1717 she died. Her life ended with Knight's bitter comment 'the finest Weather wee have had any Day this Season but the most Melancholys't by the Loss of her'. 25

Unquestionably this unique tribute is the best paid to any woman of the fur trade. How many others, women or men deserved but did not receive their due? Do we owe the record of this remarkable woman's achievements to the fact that the indomitable Knight recognized in her attitude the same degree of resolution which he himself possessed? On leave in England he set off on his last great journey, to the north of the Bay seeking the North West Passage, gold, copper, and hoping to start a whale industry. He left in June of 1719 and was never again seen by any white man.

In 1721 Kelsey had evidence from Eskimos that Knight had perished on Marble Island and almost fifty years later Hearne found the remains of his houses and his ships. After Thanadelthur's death in 1717 Knight purchased another slave who took Richard Norton to make further contacts with the Chipewyans, but in 1718 Knight went to England and apparently no one else saw fit to record her activities.

In 1715 occured another Indian "first" which has been given little credit in history, particularly when regarded in the light of today's events. One Captain Swan, a Cree, came to Knight at York Fort telling of a lake beyond the headwaters of the Churchill, on the banks of which was found "Gum of Pitch". In 1719 he again visited and this time gave to Henry Kelsey a sample of that pitch from what we now call the Athabasca Tar Sands.[26] Certainly this Indian, who was sufficiently advanced in the practices of the European trade ways that he had been awarded the honorary title of "Captain", and probably the ornate coat that went with that title, knew enough about commercialism that he sensed the value of this black substance?

If during the period after 1714 the H.B.C. was the sole agency which affected the way of life of those people around the Bay, and by the native trade routes those out to the prairies, this state was not to last for too long. Already in the 1720's the forts at the lower end of the Bay were on occasion visited by French traders from Quebec, who whilst they declared that they were acting independently, were suspected of spying for the French authorities.

Before many years had passed there were French posts at Rainy Lake and by 1739 La Verendrye was at the present day Portage La Prairie. By 1741 there was a French post at the mouth of the Mossey River where it flows into Lake Winnipegosis and another at Cedar Lake. Thus a new group of people were very directly exposed to open competition for their goods. In retaliation the H.B.C. had to move against the men who were cutting the lifeline of the tribes who came from the west to trade at York Fort. They began to send men west on long journeys of exploration and contact. Previously the H.B.C. had only had direct contact with those Indians who chose to make the canoe trip to York Fort. By contrast the French had closer contact with the Indians, particularly those of the plains. Their trading policy differed considerably from that of the English who sought, as in the northward travels of Thanadelthur and Stewart, to reconcile different tribes and encouraged them to trade peacefully. By the French practice of interfering with tribal balances, supplying weapons for war rather than hunting, many Indians became involved in needless conflict:

> On August 8, 1728, Macklish, now Governor at York, wrote the committee: "It is much to be wished for, that your Honours could prevent the French from encouraging (the Assiniboins). Nay several of the French goes yearly with the Poits to warr with most of our Indians here". 27

That the Assiniboines were fully affected by the trade struggle is obvious in Macklish's further remark for it is well known that the Assiniboines often accompanied plains Cree on the journey to the Bay. He continued:

> Here came at least 40 canoes of Indians this summer most of them Cloathed in french Cloathing that they traded with the french last summer. They likewuse brought several strong French Kettles & some french powder in their Horns, which they upbraided us with Comparing with ours. 28

Further evidence of the French habit of playing politics as well as trading is suggested by the massacre at Fort St. Charles in the Lake of the Woods area in 1736. It has been suggested that the killings were the result of the French arming the local Crees, and the fact that the eldest son, Jean-Baptiste La Verendrye, had led them in attacks against the plains Sioux. [29]

During this period from the 1730's until the British general, Wolfe, was victor over the French there was a constant threat to the lines of fur trade communications. It was not until 1748 that there appears even a small move to change the dependancy on the Indian as a middle man who brought the prairie fur down the rivers.

In 1748 the H.B.C. ventured up the Nelson about twenty miles and established a trading post, Flamboro House, there. Actually they did so in fear of the French moving upstream behind York Fort. However the documents connected with this post show that it attracted enough trade that it might almost, despite the claims put forward for better known houses, have been dubbed the first post inland from the "Frozen Sea". Another good reason for examining its history is that it involves good examples of attitudes towards Indian peoples.

The building itself must have created some wonder by the local people. By any standards for an inland post it was quite sophisticated. Situated opposite Flamboro Head it had a stockade some seventy three feet across and a two storey house divided into several rooms equipped with stoves made of brick, probably brought as ship's ballast from England. There were signs of permanence; a map of the time shows a lime kiln, brewing tent, look-out tower, and gardens in which lettuce and collard greens were planted on both sides of the creek near to which the fort was situated. [30]

One York Fort Journal attests to the fact that about three hundred trees were cut down in the early stages of construction.[31] The writer can give evidence to the difficulties which must have been encountered in the building, having himself spent a great deal of time in searching for the remains, struggling through a mass of fallen trees and tangled brush, plodding across swamp and beating off the hordes of insects.

The first master of the house was John Hughes, reported in journals as proficient in Indian languages. [32] He also was different from many other traders who spoke often in impersonal language about Indian people; expressions such as, " This afternoon two Indians traded some deer meat " occuring very often. Hughes talks of " Five Indian families Sneas, Shannapish, Archiwich, Takasan, Sockatchowan ". " Mockamanathin, his brother and families ". Muskatucky and his brother going to the Great Stone up Hay' River ". [33] The latter reference may either be to a large

stone at the junction of the Hayes and Gods Rivers or perhaps to the 'Painted Stone', an object of Indian reverence. In either case the knowledge of situations well upstream suggests communication of a high standard with the local people.

In contrast James Isham writes of Samuel Skrimsher:

> Its to be observed Mr Skrimsher got a hurt across the face and foot by a drunken Indian before he left the house to go to the Goose Tent, by a firebrand. John Hughes writes me word he complained every day till his death, and that he and several more does think it was the cause of his death. 34

Isham did nothing to gain justice or revenge for this act and it appears that Skrimsher had the reputation of being a very surly individual. By the standards of those times, and considering that the Company thought itself to be the sole dispenser of justice, the fact that no effort was made to punish the Indian involved shows great tolerance on Isham's part. Perhaps it too was caused by his being very involved with the local people by ties of marriage. E.E. Rich tells us that he had an Indian family and that on his death at York Fort in 1761, after almost thirty years service in the Bay, he left all his money to his Metis son, Charles Price Isham. 35

It is interesting to note that in the same year one Wappisis and his two sons were hanged at Fort Albany for shooting three H.B.C. men, two of whom had undoubtedly seduced and detained two of the Indians' wives. Obviously the natives were open to rather divergent standards of justice!

While these two foregoing incidents were happening the ex-

plorer Anthony Henday came down to York Factory at the head of twenty canoes of Blackfoot Indians. The most prevalent image of Henday is one created by a painting reproduced frequently in school texts used at the upper elementary level. This shows him striding up the centre approach of a Blackfoot tented village. [36] The impression is of a great white leader, followed of course by Indians. The reality, without any need to detract from Henday's initiative and courage, is somewhat different.

According to Clifford Wilson he " set out with some Plains Cree who were returning to the interior ". [37] But Morton gives what sounds like a more valid explanation:

> Henday received Instructions from Isham in the formal manner customary with the Company. He was to go with a trusty Indian named Conawapa for his companion, and to proceed with the captain of the band, Attichosish, who had undertaken to conduct him to safely to his country and as far as the Earchithinues (Blackfeet), who had not yet come to traffic at the fort. 38

Rather than being Indians who were going back to their own country, those named were most likely 'Home Guard' or persons more or less regularly employed around York Fort who could have been the backbone of any inland expeditions. Indeed in Wilson's biography there is a comment that Henday realized how Indian economy was more complicated than the H.B.C. had appreciated and that he became aware of their middleman position in the fur trade.

One point which shows how dependant were many H.B.C. men on native help, and in this case Henday in particular, was the aid given by their country wives. In a copy of his journal (the

original has not survived), made soon after his trip he states on 27 December 1754:

> Killed moose. Indians very angry, Archithinues would kill us. I asked old man how I should get wolves skins to carry to the Fort. He made me little answer; but am informed by my bedfellow that we shall trade from the Archithinues in the spring of the year; for the sake of the woman shall take no notice at present. 39

There are other references to advice given him by this girl, who shared the larger part of a year of his life, which indicate clearly how she helped him judge the climate for negotiations with these newly met people. Another reason for giving credit to his wife for the reliance he must have put on her opinion is the fact that the expedition was accompanied by Wapennessew, who is often quoted in H.B.C. journals as an associate of Thomas Corey, an independant trader whom the Company regarded as a thorn in their side. That he was able to avoid conflict with this man speaks well for his companion's diplomacy. It is indeed unfortunate that we must conclude for lack of any evidence that when he reached the eastern edge of the prairies on his return journey his temporary wife was left to rejoin her people. Was she then regarded as the castoff of the whiteman?

In addition to making contact with Indians who lived far inland Henday also observed that the French were very active, particularly at Paskoyac (The Pas). Here the Indians who were accompanying him back to York Fort were persuaded by the French to trade part of the furs and Henday was helpless in face of the competitive element of his own culture.

As a result of his report the Company began to make regular efforts to send men into the interior. It must be noted however, that so secure were his companions on the bayside that they knew all about the country that laughter greeted his statement that the Archithinues rode horses.

In the decade or so after his first journey Henday made others in company with white men. The names of Batt, Lutit, Pink, Allen, Smith, Tomison and Dearing appear as H.B.C. leaders into the interior. The last named of these went with Attickoshish, who had been one of Henday's companions, in 1766. Thus we have here some evidence of long service by Indian guides or leaders.

If the H.B.C. had found any satisfaction in the defeat of the French and the passing of the control of Canada as it was then recognized to the English, it was short lived. The gradual closing of the French posts around 1760 was succeeded by the coming of the Pedlars. These men not only followed the old routes of the French traders but extended them to reach untouched country to the north. This forced the H.B.C. not only to extend its efforts to the west but also to the north.

As a result of these efforts the Churchill Fort post became more important as a base and began what at times was an almost unprofitable rivalry with York. From the northern post began a most significant journey, that of Samuel Hearne to the Coppermine River.

In 1770 Samuel Hearne set off from Churchill to seek the legendary coppermine, with which in the minds of the English was

coupled the idea of striking gold. On his journey he was robbed of all his possessions by a band of 'Northern Indians', doubtless Chipewyans, and forced to turn back to his base. On the way he met and was assisted by the great Matonabbee who later offered to be his guide on another venture. Hearne appears to be one of the few writers of his time who set down events impartially and gave credit to the right person. He was as scathing in his condemnation of the habits of the Metis governor of Fort Churchill, Moses Norton, as he was lavish in his admiration of the man who became his close companion in his adventures, Matonabbee. His description of the former is concise and harsh:

> Mr Norton was an Indian; he was born at Prince of Wales's Fort, but had been in England nine years, and considering the small sum which was expended in his education, had made some progress in literature. At his return to Hudson's Bay he entered into all the abominable vices of his countrymen. He kept for his own use five or six of the finest Indian girls which he could select; and notwithstanding his own uncommon propensity to the fair sex, took every means in his power to prevent any European from having intercourse with the women of the country..... 40

Of Matonabbee he holds a very different, and it would appear, equally honest view:

> It is impossible for any man to have been more punctual in the performance of a promise than he was; his scrupulous adherance to truth and honesty would have done honour to the most enlightened and devout Christian, while his benevolence and universal humanity to all the human race, according to his abilities and manner of life, could not be exceeded by the most illustrious personage now on record; and to add to his other good qualities, he was the only Indian I ever saw, except one, who was not guilty of backbiting and slandering his neighbours.

Further in describing his friend's character he says:

> He was remarkably fond of Spanish wines, though he never drank to excess; and as he would not partake of spirituous liquors, however fine in quality or plainly mixed, he was always master of himself. As no man is exempt from frailties, it is natural to suppose that as a man he had his share; but the greatest with which I can charge him, is jealousy, and that sometimes carried him beyond the bounds of humanity. 41

In judging the honesty of Hearne's assessment of Matonabbee's character it should be noted that he does not overlook the infamous massacre of the Eskimoes at Bloody Falls during the Coppermine journey. He feels that the Indian leader was forced against his wishes to agree to the attack and offers some evidence of Matonabbee having previously been on friendly terms with these people. In addition he quotes Matonabbee's view on women as they operated in the Chipewyan society:

> Women were made for labour; one of them can carry or haul as much as two men can do. They also pitch our tents, make and mend our clothing, keep us warm at night; and, in fact, there is no such thing as travelling any considerable distance, or for any length of time, in this country, without their assistance. Women though they do every thing, are maintained at a trifling expence; for as they always stand cook, the very licking of their fingers in scarce times, is sufficient for their subsistance. 42

Despite Hearne's own opinion of the mildness and virtue of the Northern Indian women, his high regard for Matonabbee's character in general apparently offset any misgivings he might have about the use of women as labourers.

There is further proof that this Chipewyan stood out amongst men in this very harsh environment. Even on the barrens he main-

tained six wives and apparently was a good provider. His personal standards were undoubtedly unusual in either European or North American societies at that time, for when in 1782 Samuel Hearne surrendered the great but very undermanned Fort Churchill to Admiral La Perouse, he was so shocked by the apparent weakness of his white friend that he hanged himself. In proof of his efficiency as a survivor in that terrain, and his ability to provide, is the fact that the next winter all of his six wives and four of his chidren starved to death.

We are fortunate that Hearne gave us such a detailed and fair report on this man.

Other situations which illustrate that Hearne regarded the native people as individuals are shown when he made another of his great travels, this time to the west to open Cumberland House in 1774-75. He mentions the names of Mesinekishac, Shawcawponnesscum, Neeshuewappeyathin, Pattecowwow, and Mekathinnue as leading Indians and it is evident that he entrusted work of some responsibility to them. [43]

As previously noted, the drive to the interior created some competition between Churchill and York and this of course increased with the establishment of the house at The Pas.

It would appear that the Company was now entering a period when it was more openly acknowledging the services of its Indian workers, not only do they appear by their individual names, but the existence of one class of persons which had hithertofore been hidden was now being openly discussed; the Indian women as consorts of the

whites. Where only a few years earlier Isham had labouriously repenned Henday's journal to exclude mention of his 'bedfellow' they now appear quite frequently in journals, not only as wives but also as recognized workers.

In 1794 Malcom Ross, a trader who spent over twenty years in the area, left Churchill accompanied by David Thompson, and their 'pilot' was an Indian woman who guided them by Deers Lake to the Athepescow. Later references in the journal show that the guide back to Churchill on this round trip of over 800 miles was also a woman. [44]

An earlier correspondence, written to the London Committee in 1769 by W. Richards who, to judge by the tone of his opinions, was probably just returned from the Bay, gave advice on the qualities required by inland traders:

> Should your honours think fit to send anybody inland they should be people that know the language and disposition of the natives, without which there can be no expectations from them. The natives has but very mean opinion of them that does not know the language and can't converse with them, but those that can tell the nature of things their disposition is greatly respected by them, which sorry I am to say has not been the case with Mr Martin..... 45

Then follows a description of the brutal treatment accorded the Indians by the master at Henley House.

It appears that in the interim much had been learned, for on the journeys upstream of the Churchill many remarks about the native people occur.

Much of the fur trade correspondence is couched in terms which display an inter-dependance between all levels of employees

of the H.B.C., be they Indian, Metis or European.

In 1794 Thomas Stayner was proceeding in company with Mr Auld and four men to meet with George Charles and Mr Linklater at South Indian Lake:

> proceeded 130 miles when we upset in a rapid with two men, and a bad fall in sight below, drove considerable distance below the currant, none could swim but held the boat, in spite of all but for the timely assistance of Okemow Equan with his small canoe we must have perished, poor fellow I shall never forget how anxious he was for our safety. The tracking line caught on a stone and enabled him to take us one at a time to shore. 46

This particular Indian name appears several times in H.B.C. documents, all in the same area and as late as 1808. Possibly it is the same man?

Indian people became intimately involved in the technical changes of the Company. At the end of the eighteenth century wooden boats were substituted for the canoes. It is possible that the idea came about because of the desire to compete on more equal terms with the Pedlars who came out of the north with Indian manufactured canoes which were much above the size used by native people, being up to forty feet in length. Although the better known York boat is reputed to have originated with the influx of Orkneymen into the trade, those built at Churchill were designated "batteaux", or "wooden canoes". In 1794 William Auld made the first trial of a flat bottomed boat up the Seal River but was unsuccessful because his pilot deserted.

In 1798 Thomas Stayner accompanied by George Charles went 500 miles up the Churchill River system in twenty six working days and

returned in fourteen despite tottering ice on the banks; he speaks of "novice Indian rowers". [47] This is especially interesting since we customarily think of the brawny Orkney rowers.

If in the past, as in the cases of Henday's "bedfellow", and the Indian wife of the great factor James Isham it was necessary to observe discreet silence from those at home, now problems which arose out of these association could not be hidden. William Auld of Churchill wrote to London:

> There is this further thing to be considered too, that many servants either who retire to their country or die here, do not at all provide for their children, partly from incapacity, partly from there being no regular establishment and partly probably from indifferance. The consequence is that they must regularly and invariably be a weight on the factories, at least during childhood, and thus your property is at last dissipated in unknown quantities. 48

A common example of one of the lesser officers of the company who married a "country wife" is that of Joseph Spence of Harra in the Orkneys. He began his service at Churchill in 1794, when he was twenty five years of age, and appears to have left the country in after 1813. That supreme mapmaker, Peter Fidler, at Wathannaycummow Falls at the north end of South Indian Lake. (The Missi Falls of the present Hydro Diversion of the Churchill?) wrote:

> at the portage we found a number of Jepowyans who had been down at Churchill to trade------also Mr Spenses woman and Children here. In the reach N by E we found two boats with five men each with Mr Joseph Spense, they have (?) days on their journey up. 49

In 1793 Malcolm Ross at York Factory received permission to

send his son home to England by the Hudson's Bay ship Prince of Wales. [50]

Joseph Charles, son of the veteran traveller of the Churchill River system, George Charles, was buried in the graveyard at York Factory. His true status "A native of Hudson's Bay" is shown on the tombstone in the photograph No. V, page 80.

At the same time as Joseph Spence was active a James Spence appears as "2nd Interpreter, Residence Hudson's Bay".

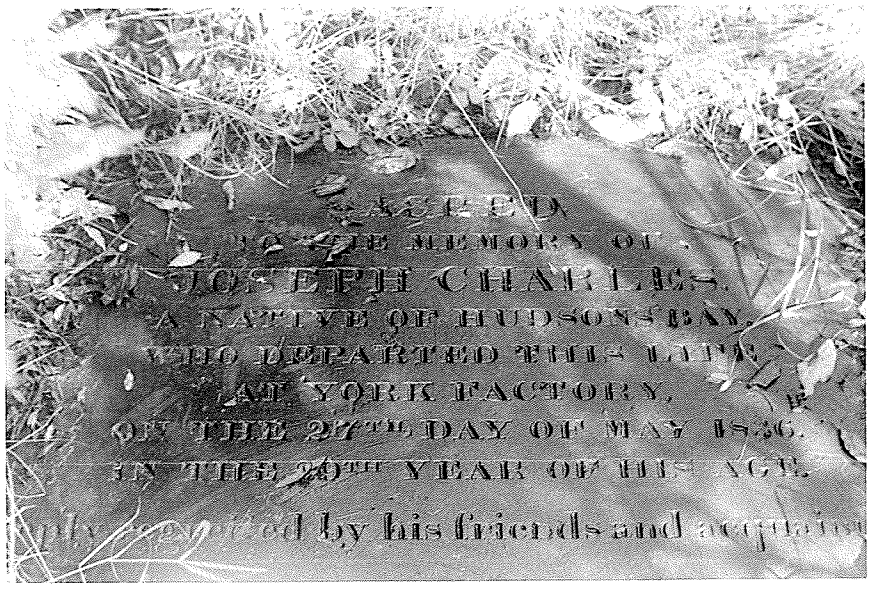
Clearly a class of person was emerging which consisted of people with some claim to an European background in culture, yet who had a distinctive place of birth.

If the Indian and the Metis were gaining recognition as members, fully recognized, of the fur trade family, the integration was not entirely a one way affair. Many traders became quite intimately involved with the Indian cultural attitudes to life. Malcolm Ross during service at Nelson House Post recorded:

> He told me that his eldest son Ecapemauetan was no more that an Indian called Pinno who had been an associate during the winter in the time of one of their decampments had stopped behind with the deceased when at a nigh distance he discharged his gun being load with a ball which entered the back of his head and came out between his eyes the reason gived for this wilfull murder wase the deceased having some time before taken a woman from the survivor. I am very sorry to add that the Honable Company will loose by the above atrosity the deceased being a young man who wase entirely attached to their Honours Traders. 51

The affair was not yet over for the next day he recounts:

> Arrived at the place where the Indians were, found them all very despondent after having got what Furs they had they began to drink when



V 'A Native of Hudson's Bay'

> according to the predominant custom of their superstitious Religion they began to cut their skin and flesh in various which I was so fare from being able to prevent that I wase even with reluctance obliged to perform some of the cruel ceremonies on them. 52

Obviously he was well involved for yet a day later he:

> Left the Indians------according to their custom having thrown away all their necessary articles wase obliged to leave my blankets also what other articles I had along with me they had also lodged Furs and every other article belonging to the deceased with the body which I wase sorry to hear. 53

Other involvements were more complicated and concerned both the local people and the H.B. servants in conflict with men of the new N.W. Company which grew from an amalgamation of some of the Pedlars from Montreal in 1784. By the time the H.B.C. men were actively pressing up the Churchill the "Canadians", as they were often referred to, were well established on the river their lowermost post being on South Indian Lake. Thus the natives of this area were exposed, perhaps for the first time to men of cultures other than the English and Scotch.

In 1809 Joseph Spence, at a time when he was accompanied by George Charles and Peter Fidler in the South Indian Lake area told how an Indian women and a lad came to report that there were three women at the tent, near starving, with their husbands dead. They had eaten their beaver skins and leather goods. Other men visited, but were not hunting because of the deaths of their relatives, "throwing away their goods as is their custom, obliged to supply them". 54 These visitors kept their sleds hidden in the bush for fear of the French who had debauched the wife of one Indian. Jo-

seph Spence restored the wife. Ultimately both trading groups seem to have been involved in plundering the Indians's sled, getting about twenty Made Beaver each for all the trouble.

Charles Holmes reported from South Indian Lake in 1810 that an Indian reported that he had only traded with the Canadians because he was forced and that he would leave them "if Holmes would give him debt". One Chastelaine of the N.W. Company who was engaged in keeping the Indians away from the H.B.C. became involved in an acrimonious discussion with Holmes over the gentlemanness of their actions. The result was, that before the Indian people, Chastelaine threatened Holmes with his pistol and had his nose bloodied for this action.

History often holds the H.B.C. responsible for giving the Crees guns with which they drove the Chipewyans north. It appears that the dividing line between their territories was the Churchill. As trade became more active inland there is some evidence that the Northern Indians crossed this line. However it is apparent that the old enmity which Thanadelthur and Stewart sought to smooth over still existed.

In 1796 Malcolm Ross, out from Churchill on his way to Fairford House on the upper part of the Churchill River, came across eight canoes of Chipewyans not far from the Burntwood Carrying Place where the river of that name leaves the Nelson. It is interesting to note that their canoes were reported to be "as large as the Canadians". Had there been sufficient influence to put these northern Indians, not as accustomed as the Crees to the

canoe, into the canoe freighting business? These men were given drink and presents to show that no partiality existed because some of their people had been recently killed by South Indian Lake Indians who were close to the Hudson's Bay traders. Ross reports:

> Those is the meanest I have yet seen amongst all the tribes of Indians I have been with. They have the forthright of the brute creation. They think that whenever they see goods it ought to be given whether they have anything to be given or not. 55

The Indian Debts for 1794 at South Indian Lake contains a list of names which all seem to be northern. 56

Joseph Spence at the same post in 1799 wrote that in an emergency involving shortages of supplies only "Nadanelquy, (a northern Indian), would go with a packet, but the others were afraid of Southward Indians" (Cree). 57

Whilst the period around the turn of the eighteenth century has much to show around Churchill this area was in what might be termed a pioneer fur trading situation. It never arrived at any sophistication of the transportation of goods and people which developed along the main arteries leading from York Factory to the west and south. On this route the influence of the European was felt in a much more definite manner. It is proposed to examine some of the situations which the Indian person in this area was exposed to.

If from examination of the Churchill River area we get the impression that all was well within that part of the fur trade family which involved the H.B.C. and its native partners, certainly a different situation appeared on the main route to the west and

south. Here the Indian person had arrived at a greater stage of reliance on the goods which now passed in such large quantities to the interior. Also, the responsible officers now came upstream in person. Such actions lessened the power of the inland traders and those who served under them. These latter were now more often in lasting liaisons with their Indian country wives and as a result more offspring were moving to positions in the service of the Company. In previous times they had too often had to move into the ways of their mothers and be adopted back into the tribe when deserted by the father who had returned to England. The average Indian who worked in the trade appeared to have lost much of his value as a transporter of goods if not as a hunter. He was frequently displaced by the white York Boat man who was not only skilled with the oars, but could sail the boat on the lakes. The use of the canoe began to diminish. Perhaps the greatest inroads on his culture were being made by alcohol. Where previously the H.B.C. had made quite honest attempts to prevent over-supply of liquor to the native people they had gradually altered this policy in face of the competition with the N.W.Co.

As evidence of the above statements we find that such notables as Joseph Colen who was Chief Factor at York for over fifteen years and the famous mapmakers and surveyors, David Thompson and Peter Fidler, passed that way often. There are numerous reports of the "batteaux" which replaced the canoe on the Hayes.

Settled family situations in which there was a mixture of both parents' cultures affecting the children in their formative

years came to be more common. For a number of years William Sinclair was a Chief Factor stationed at Oxford House, here he planted garden seeds, grew grain and even ran a small dairy herd with animals imported from the Orkneys. His wife was Nahovway, a daughter of Moses Norton who had been the Chief at Churchill. According to D. Geneva Lent, Sinclair:

> had seen to it that the explicity written orders issued each year from the Company's headquarters at York Factory were strictly obeyed. The master of any Company post was expected to teach his children a rigid code of ethics. He was to give them some elementary education in "the three R's" In the precise words of the edict "children are expected to converse in the language of the father; be taught the catechism, and short bedtime prayers, as well as the essential rules of decency, cleanliness and moral propriety". 58

And of the mother she says:

> James mother exerted, in her own way, a strong influence on his life.....She dressed James, for example, like the men and other boys at the post, in the practical part-Indian part-European garments that were common..... For young James protection, Nahovway saw that he was taught at an early age to handle a gun like a man. 59

This is very obviously a different situation from that of the country wife who had been deserted or supported only meagrely not too long before.

A similar and related situation existed at Rock Depot on the Hayes. Here lived from 1808 Thomas Bunn and his wife Phoebe, daughter of William Sinclair and Nahovway. They had a family of five. Phoebe died at Red River in 1848 and her husband in 1853. It would appear that they had retired to the settlement to end

their long marriage in retirement there.

The mapmaker David Thompson had originally entered the service of the H.B.C. in 1784 and then served with the N.W.Co. from 1797-1812. He married Charlotte, Métis daughter of Patrick Small and a northern Cree woman of Ile a la Crosse, in 1799. Their long marriage, which produced sixteen children, ended when they were in their eighties. It is interesting to note that Patrick left this country permanently in 1791 and that there does not appear to be any record of what happened to his wife. [60]

The other mapmaker, Peter Fidler, married Mary, a Cree Girl, "a la facon du pays' in 1795. It was not until the Rev. James West came to Norway House in 1822 that they were able to be married according to Peter's religious beliefs. [61] There were eleven surviving children of this marriage, and some of the boys were very active in the fur trade in the Lake Manitoba and Assiniboine River area in the 1820's. Mary was at Red River in 1826 when she died, three years after Peter departed at Fort Dauphin. There is good evidence that she was well provided for by Peter before he died.

If the impression has been created that there had occured a very radical change in every man's approach to the problems which arose from contracting a country marriage, this should be corrected. Whilst the man of moderate standing in the fur trade companies' ranks might have advanced sufficiently that the idea of retiring in this land was attractive, even if it meant spending his remaining days in what might not have been the higher levels of the social

structure, this was not so for his superior. A number of the more prominent leaders have very bad records in this respect. Sylvia Van Kirk in her highly specialized researches on this subject tells us:

> a practice which was dubbed 'turning off' arose, by which the retiring husband endeavoured to assure that his spouse was under the protection of, or became the country wife of another fur trader. Such had been the fate of the kind-hearted washerwoman Betsey, who when Letitia Hargrave encountered her at York Factory in 1840, was not sure whether her last protector had been her fourth 'husband' or her fifth. (The quotation marks are mine.) 62

George Simpson, who may well be termed an aristocrat of the fur trade, in rank at least if not in actions, was a conspicious example of this type of arrangment, in which he appears to have acted with callous brutality. He was appointed Deputy Governor of the combined N.W.Co. and H.B.C. in 1821 and virtually controlled the whole organization by 1826. In this position he had unrivalled opportunity to select as temporary mates those young women who most attracted him. Indeed he 'married' Betsey Sinclair, daughter of the previously mentioned Chief Factor Sinclair, in 1821, and she bore him a daughter in 1822. This child was one of those baptized by the Rev. James West, H.B.C. chaplain on his visit to York Factory. Apparently Simpson was not present at the event. When he left on tour just after, his true feelings became apparent when he wrote to his close friend Chief Factor McTavish:

> My Family concerns I leave entirely to your kind management, if you can dispose of the lady it will be satisfactory as she is an unnecessary and expensive appendage, I see no sense in keep-

> ing a woman without enjoying her charms which my present rambling life does not permit me to do.... 63

Soon after he left Betsey was married to a clerk, Robert Miles, and they had five children. Simpson contracted at least two other similar forms of liasions before he eventually was legally married to a woman much his junior in Britain in 1830.

His friend McTavish followed a similar pattern, and both offended the officers of the fur trade who had formed marriages which were permanent from the time of their formation, and with country ladies. Furthermore, in the society of the day, they attempted to keep their spouses apart from social contact with the other officers where the wives were Métis.

The whole of this situation was complicated by the fact that Indian society had by this time become culturally fragmented by the replacement of Indians in many situations of leadership in the fur trade and their own developing dependance on the things of the white culture. It was not possible for the unwanted ex-wife to return to her own people as often happened in earlier days. Now she might be so obviously Métis that she was no longer acceptable, and her children who had grown up under the care of the white father had acquired so much of his culture that they might almost be regarded as foreigners. Although the Company endeavoured to require that any departing father make provision for his offspring it could not compensate for the cultural turmoil into which these children were launched in times which were rapidly changing.

Of these commodities which most affected the Indian way of

life liquor has rightly been adjudged the worst. Comments such as "Indians drunk and fighting" "Little Bear, drunk, cut off his wife's nose" "After trading the women usually hide all the weapons so that the men, drunk, shall do no harm" were very common when all Indians visited coastal factories to trade. Later, when traders went inland comments became "Could not proceed today, Indians all drunk". The note "Traded furs for brandy" is so common in H.B.C. documents as to make for monotony in reading in many journals.

David Thompson was particularly sensitive about this matter. Faithfully married to a part Indian wife, the father of several children, he was rather strict and abstemious. He also judged the Indian way of life by comparative standards, judging them by the behaviour of the many tribes he met, assessing them as human beings and regretting the unpleasant occurances which occured to them in the trade. He also experienced their kindness and said in 1789, when he fell sick and was unable to travel:

> I became emaciated till the berries became ripe, when the kindhearted Indian women brought me plenty of berries for my support; this was pure charity. 64

On the subject of liquor he observed:

> but the ships sometimes bring out several hundred gallons of vile spirits called English Brandy. 65

Also he saw how most of the Company's servants had little regard for Indian beliefs when these did not suit the needs of the fur trade. Crossing the divide which separates the two portions of the Echimanish River, east of the present Norway House, he recorded:

> On a short carrying place by which we crossed this ridge, the Indians, time out of mind had placed a Manito Stone in shape like a cobbler's lap stone (a stone like a doughnut or dish) but of three times its size, painted with red ochre, to which they make some trifling offerings; but the Stone and offerings were kicked about by our tolerant people. 66

It was of course during the early part of the nineteenth century that the Selkirk Settlers came to York Factory to begin their travels south to Red River. They were the spearpoint of a steady entry of white agrarian settlers who appeared at a time when activities south of the present border with the U.S. were beginning to change the focus of trade activities and their attendant transportation routes.

Unable to stay at York Factory for the winter of 1811-12 because of shortage of accomodation, they were sent to a spot upstream on the Nelson just opposite the site of Gillam's fort, on the north bank of the river, photo VI, page 91. A traditional caribou crossing place where the Crees had always hunted, this area was now the abode of Orkneymen and Irishmen. When the two groups disagreed around the New Year of 1812, one party moved half a mile downstream, opposite to Seal Island, and built a new cabin there. In the spring they built their boats on North Seal Creek about two miles upstream. The writer has discovered the earth walls of the main house in a depression behind the banks of the river, the foundation of the cabin and remains of its chimney; and on North Seal Creek part of the wall of a sod hut. It is well recorded that the settlers found no caribou and had to be supplied from York. The

VI Sites of:
Ben Gillam's Fort [Foreground]
Selkirk Settler's Wintering Place
[Background]

thought comes to mind.....How did the local people feel when they saw a very different white person, not a fur trader and obviously lacking any of the skills necessary for northern survival, occupying another of their cultural areas? If the remains of their buildings are discernable today, after such a long period of time, how great must have been the impact of their construction on the local people?

The intrusions of another world followed one after the other as the Hayes and Nelson Rivers ceased to be highways of the fur trade alone. Further Selkirk Settlers followed, including women. Franklin used York as his starting place for his ill-fated arctic explorations. Now the mainly utilitarian trade goods were not the only cargoes carried in the York boats, silverware, china, glassware and even articles of furniture were carried south to Red River. Another type of society was beginning to displace the fur trade one. Perhaps one of the most drastic changes happened when the two great companies became one and many of the country born officers were pensioned off to live in the south. With them of course went their families, and for the younger generation who remained in the north a contact with education was lost, for it was the half- breed sons of the country traders who were most often educated since they possessed skills valuable to the future of the trade system. The ruthlessness with which they were displaced is seen in Governor Simpson's Character Book:

> Robert Miles About 40 years of age. The best clerk in the Country as regards Penmanship and Knowledge of Accounts, but

> his Education does not qualify him for anything beyond the Mechanical operations of a counting house.....
>
> Brisbois Chs. A Canadian about 38 years of age, has been 15 years in the Service. Is a tolerable Trader but not active; deficient in Education and does not speak English.....
>
> Davies William. A half breed from the Southern Department. About 24 years of age, has been 7 years in the service; neither a good Clerk nor Trader.....
>
> McKay Wm A half breed. About 42 years of age 21 years in the Service.....Nine out of ten of those half breeds are little better than Interpreters, deficient in Education.....
>
> Thomas Charles A half breed from the Southern Shores of the Bay. About 40 years of age..... ....entirely an 'Eye Servant' and can do nothing well if left to himself..... 67

Some of the feelings of this all-powerful man are summed up in his letter to his friend McTavish, in which he commented about Chief Factor Colin Robertson:

> Robertson brought his bit of Brown with him to the Settlement this Spring in hopes that she would pick up a few English manners before visiting the civilized world; but it would not do.... I told him distinctly that the thing was impossible which mortified him exceedingly. 68

This very prejudiced comment referred to Robertson's bringing his Metis wife Theresa Chalifoux into the upper social levels of the Red River Settlement. Although little seems to have been recorded on this aspect of Simpson's activities he must have cut a merciless swath through the ranks, both by the way in which he officially separated those whom he deemed efficient and in the manner in which social barriers which he and his associates set up

ostracized on racial grounds.

Letitia Hargrave, who was at York about ten years after some or the later entries in Simpson's book were made, appears to deal rather more impartially with people, both Indian and others. She sees clearly into situations where the wives of ranking officers give themselves airs, yet appreciates the humblest suggestion of kindness from any lowly Indian servant. From her we get some good appreciation of how social divisions operated:

> The state of society seems shocking. Some people educate and make gentlemen of part of their family and leave the other savage. I had heard of Mr. Bird at Red River and his dandified sons. One day while the boats were here a common half breed came in to get orders for the provisions for his boatmen. Mr. H. called him Mr. Bird to my amazement. This was one who had not been educated and while his father and brothers are Nobility at the Colony, he is a voyageur and sat a table with the house servants here. Dr McLoughlin, one of our grandees at a great expense gave 2 of his sons a regular education in England and keeps the 3rd a common Indian. 69

In a similar manner she tells us about the religious confusion which becomes more apparent about this time when the opening of communications brings in the conflicting calls of different faiths. She contrasts how Roman Catholic priests lived a life of privitation while the married men of other callings made great demands on the Company for the comforts to which they feel they were entitled.

Other remarks also tell us that apparently only two Indians between York and Norway House could speak the English language. A footnote to page 113 of her Letters, by a visitor to Norway

House, states that Peter Jacobs taught his students to recite prayers in English, with perfect intonation and pause, but all of them understood not one word of the language. [70]

She is scandalized at the happenings at the Red River Academy under Rev. Macullums:

> They say that Mr. MacCallums school is going to wreck. Children who have had duck, geese and venison 3 times a day are supposed to suffer from breakfasts of milk and water with dry bread, severe floggings, confinements after any fault and the total want of the following meal. The boys and girls are constantly fainting but MacCallum wont change his system.....Then if the mothers are not legally married they are not allowed to see the children. This may be all very right, but it is fearfully cruel for the poor unfortunate mothers did not know that there was any distinction and it is only within the last few years that any one was so married. 71

This gives startling evidence of a social change occuring with incredible rapidity. Barely forty years before the Company was striving, for what were purely economic reasons, to persuade men who undertook country marriages to sign documents stating that they would enter into what were considered valid marriages in the European style, as soon as they were able. Now those who had not adapted to the changed demands of social standards were considered outside the normal limits of society.

It would of course be totally unfair to lay all the blame for change upon one man alone. The forces which drove many Britons to come to Canada in the middle years of the nineteenth century were largely those of the Industrial Revolution and its oppression of the common man. However, since the H.B.C. still controlled the

major part of Rupert's Land until Confederation, the man who set most of its policies for over thirty years must bear some responsibility. George Simpson, possessed of incredible energy, travelled the length and breadth of his fur trade empire in the only way possible, the way in which his traders had always moved, that terribly hard way through rapids and over portages. He knew its routes and the people who used them. He understood the conventions of the country parts well, as witness his not too discreet use of them when he wished to dispose of his country wives. His Character Book displays at least some inclination to regard the Metis trader as an inferior in terms of education and the ways of the more developed society which was moving in. If he so looked down on the Metis person in the trade, and sought to replace him and his less educated white counterpart with more efficient traders, this policy must also have passed down the chain of command to the man at the bottom, the ordinary Indian.

In the interests of good business an old partnership was ending. The men of the country were being allowed to drop into a second class position.

Charles Tuttle, who accompanied the Hudson's Bay Expedition of 1884 gave indication of the Métis and Indian status at the H.B. posts at that time when he described a situation at Churchill:

> The half breed population of Churchill, less than forty souls, dwell, with a few exceptions, in a long, low building, owned by the Company, in which they are sort of tenants at will. In the best sense of the term they are nothing more or less than slaves. They are called servants. The name, perhaps, suits their condition and circumstances best. There is gen-

> erally a sort of engagement or agreement between the men and the Company. They are engaged for periods of from three to five years, at stipends ranging from one pound to two pounds ten shillings a month, and are always paid in merchandise at Hudson's Bay Company prices----prices that are never complained of because there is not the slightest advantage in complaining, but which are large enough to make up for the infrequency of purchases. They live and die in the service of the Company, enjoy but few privileges, few comforts, and have no opportunities of learning anything about the world in which they live. 72

He mentioned the Chipewyans:

> ...but in the summer months they generally lounge about the Hudson's Bay posts, or in their own miserable villages, idle, hungry, lazy and very dirty. 73

If he was critical of their status he had some approval for their religious activities, since he found many persons able to read the Testaments written in their own language in syllabics.

Although the Company had from the earliest times made attempts to have traders educate Indian people in what was considered a Christian way, it had often frowned on any activity which concerned secular education of a higher kind, probably because any Indian who became educated in the days before the amalgamation could have been an embarrassment to it. Now that the situation was opening up to permit of the entry of many persons who were not Company servants it had less control. Into the vacuum thus left by the Company's abrogation of responsibility for the less educated Indians and Metis moved the various churches. The Anglican Church had missions at many of the larger posts after 1820 and the Methodists after 1840. There was now an influence between the Indians and the commercial groups which had played such a large part in their lives.

Practical problems arose as well as social ones. In 1885 a band of York Factory Crees left and established themselves at Split Lake which had long been recognized as a hunting place of first importance.

The writer's researches into the H.B.C.'s documents suggest that after the 1830's a different note crept into reports of even the smaller posts. The crisp businesslike comments do not admit of the inclusion of the many small observations of daily life which had previously given such colourful views of people and their struggles.

One document to which the writer had had access is that of the Anglican church at Split Lake. This is the preachers' records from 1899-1930. It indicates a great degree of suffering and confusion in entries for April-May 1900:

> I was not able to preach on Easter Sunday as Mr Swain who interprets for me was ill. They are all very sick at present. Joseph was hardly able to preach and was not able to sing.
>
> On Tuesday the Chief's son died. He had been suffering from consumption since Xmas.
>
> Some of those who came for Easter had to be taken away on sled's.
>
> Wm. Kitchekesik's boy was buried last week.
>
> I have been notified by the Chief that owing to the suffering and want that exist here he intends moving his band to Cross Portage--about three days from here. 74

All of these comments are written on a single page!

Generally speaking the first half of this century saw a gradual retreat from the area on the coast of the Bay where the lives of the Cree people had been so interwoven with the fur trade. However, yet other events must be considered which had great effect

upon their culture. These effects came from that advance of technology into the North, the railroad.

Not long after Confederation western interests began to lobby at Ottawa for a grain port on Hudson's Bay. When the line reached The Pas there was intense pressure on the government to extend it to the Bay. Much controversy raged over the choice of ports, Churchill or Nelson. Finally the decision was to go to Nelson. It would seem certain that those who advised the minister in Ottawa were guilty either of deliberate bias or had not surveyed with any accuracy. Certainly, probably in keeping with the attitudes of the times, no one seems to have taken the trouble to read history, nor to consult with Indian people. The latter had degenerated to no better than hewers of wood and drawers of water. Any Indian could have told them that in years of low water the Nelson at low tide is a boulder strewn plain with a mere gully of water running down the middle. Hearing the proposal to float gravel and timber from upstream down to the proposed site of the port, opposite to the old position of Abraham's H.B.C. post of 1686, he could have pointed out that at the upper end of Gillam Island even a canoe would have had to be handled carefully, so shallow is the water.

However the decision was to proceed at the Port Nelson site. While a party landed from the sea in the summer of 1912 and set about clearing land and building log houses other crews were at work on the track. Those on the north shore of Nelson River cleared an area about one mile along the bank and half a mile back from the shore. Numerous buildings were constructed, including one of the

first radio station in North America. Diesel generators supplied light for the townsite. Within the townsite were approximately thirty miles of narrow gauge construction track. The dredge "Port Nelson" was towed from Halifax and finally assembled on the beach. As the steel came up from The Pas more equipment came by this route and was taken down a tote road on what was to be the main track route parallel to the river. All of this of course came through the ancestral home of the Crees, close to the routes up which they had guided Henday, Hearne, Turnor and Fidler. As many as sixty men of one survey party moved through Split Lake.

After some two years of work, trouble developed. The river-side wharves silted up and it became obvious that no ships could ever approach them. In a desperate effort an island near to the main channel was timbered round and fill put inside the enclosure. A three quarter mile bridge was constructed to connect the island to the shore. For its time the whole work was a triumph of technology.

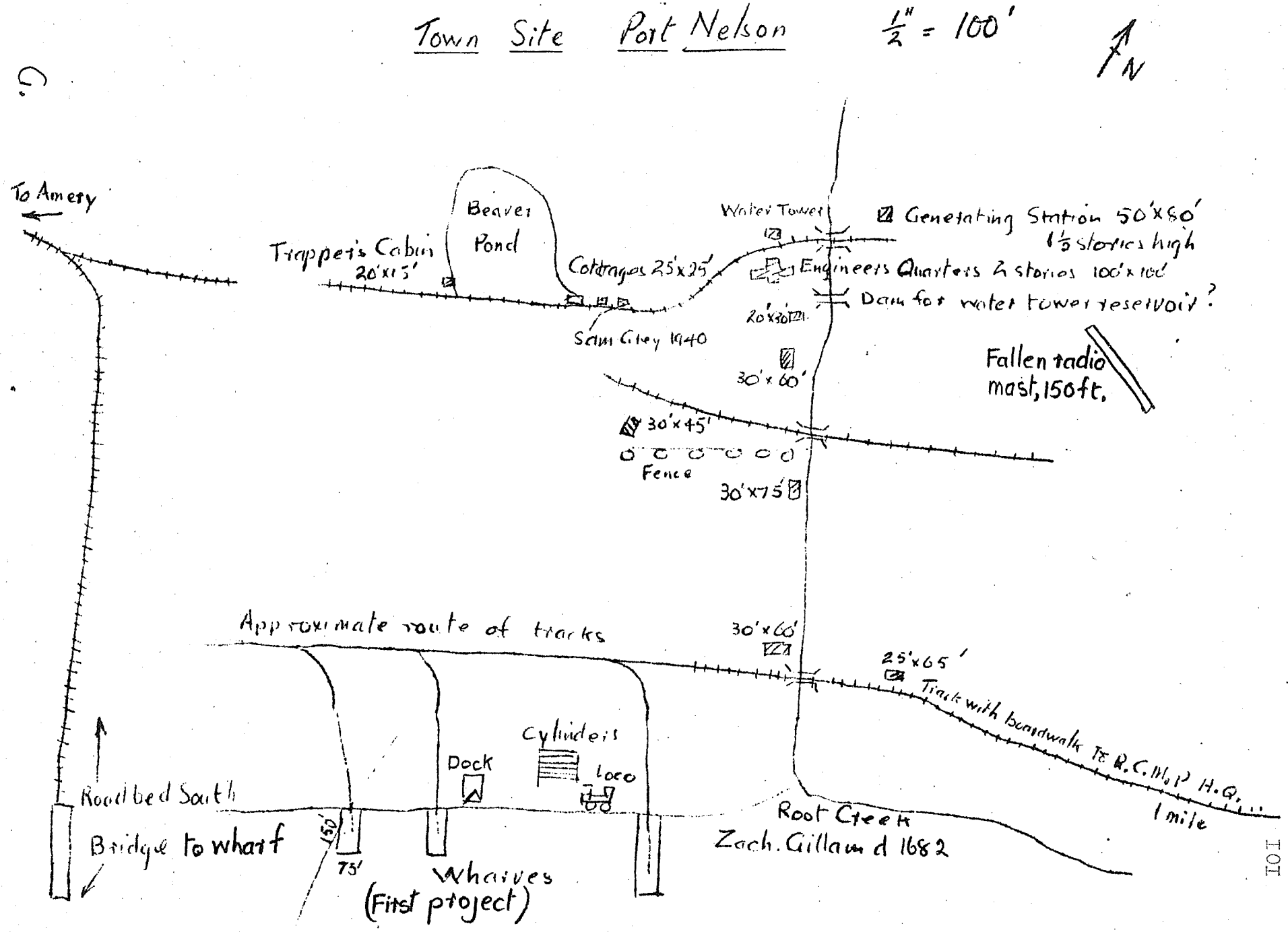
In 1917 the shortage of steel and men, occasioned by World War I, brought the project to what was then considered a temporary halt. Eventually the work was restarted in 1927, but the railroad was turned north to the present port of Churchill.

The attached sketch-plans of the site, G and H, pages 101 and 102, from recent observations, and photo No. VII, page 103, of Manitoba's great ghost town show the extent of the work.

An important point of interest is that since the project was closed hurriedly in time of war, there are few clear records of

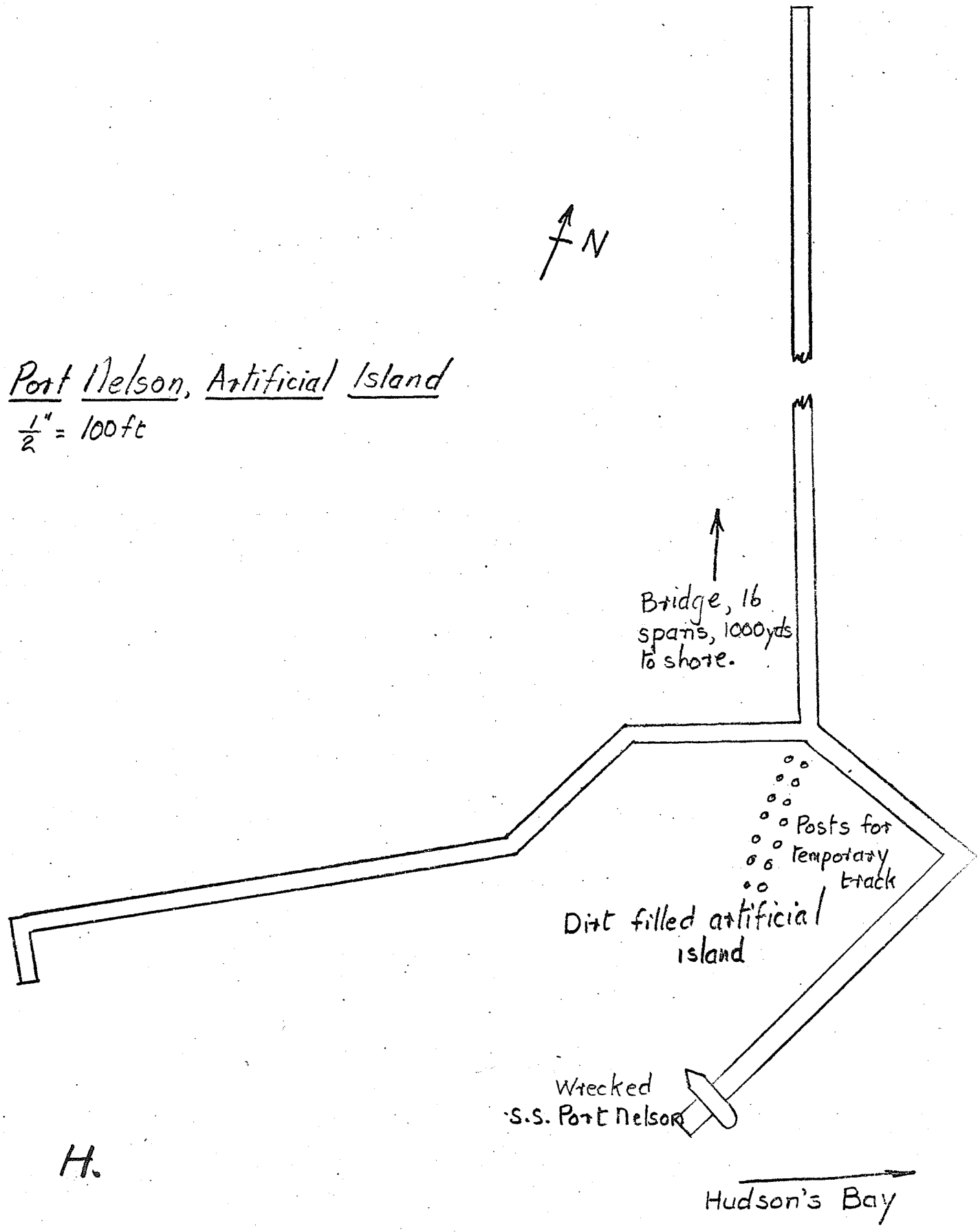
Town Site Port Nelson

1/2" = 100'



C.

101

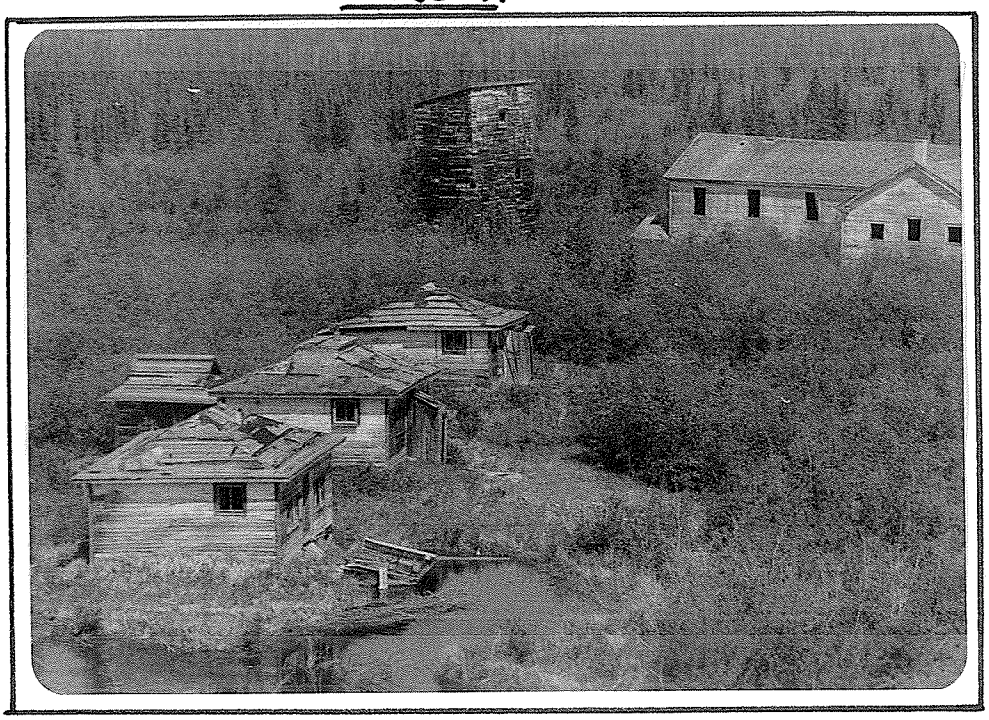


Port Nelson, Artificial Island

$\frac{1}{2}$" = 100ft

H.

Bridge, Island Wharf and S.S. Port Nelson



VII. Cottages, Water Tower and Administration Building

what occured and little research has been done. However some of the older Cree People who lived in the area remember clearly many details of those days and some of this will be discussed in the next chapter.

The writer has had some access to a few papers still remaining at the site and they reveal a little of what the native people experienced and attitudes of the larger society to them.

The R.N.W.M.P. post was established at York Factory in 1911 and transferred to Nelson in 1912. At the peak of its operations it had a strength of one Superintendent, two Sergeants, one Corporal and Seven Constables. After construction closed it continued for the protection of property and those Indians who remained to trap there, finally ceasing activities with a strength of two constables in 1934.

Native people were very active in assisting the Force as guides in many operations. Sometimes the impact of technology was very traumatic for them:

> On November 13, 1913, Constable C.F. Rogers Reg. No. 5526, accompanied by Indian "Bluecoat" and an employed native "Willybuck" left Churchill with two trains of dogs on patrol to Port Nelson. On arrival at Nelson, "Bluecoat" became afraid of the large number of white men, left Nelson without warning and returned to Churchill by himself. 75

The next year "Willybuck" is reported as guiding Supt. Demers from Churchill to Nelson.

Another incident recorded was tragic in nature. Constable D. Macdonell and Special Constable Ned Nassan were drowned on or about April 19, 1931 near Fourteen River while returning to York

Factory from patrol to Severn River. The bodies were recovered more than a week later. Sgt. Malloy,i/c the post, had to travel eighty miles over the unfinished roadbed to Amery on the C.N. line to hand over the constable's body to a relative at The Pas. He then returned, according to correspondance found at the old police post, walking for four and one half days along the old track, assisted of course by an Indian guide. An interesting comment is found in a letter from the Venerable Archdeacon Richard Faries at York Factory, to Sgt. Malloy:

> Mr Harding is worrying about the delayed return of your men. Indians are supposed to have seen two men and a dog team on the ice twenty miles from here last Sunday. I would not listen to these rumors. As natives (sic!) are inclined to start such stories when they know people are getting anxious about some person or persons. 76

The clergyman himself was a Metis educated in England.

When the project closed down Indian people stayed there as trappers and of course met with some bad times. The police acted on behalf of the Indian Agents and were responsible for day to day assistance with minor health problems and issue of emergency rations to those short of food. One list for June 1930 shows the issue of twenty pounds of flour, two pounds of tallow and one pound of tea to the heads of nineteen families.

Once again it would appear that a sizeable portion of the local population had been left in a vacuum after the collapse of a white-generated project.

After the close of Nelson a number of the people who had lived there moved closer to the railroad track between Gillam and Churchill

with the hope of employment and help from the dominant society. Many were able to continue a part-trapping livelihood, supplemented by labouring work as it became available. When World War II began there was extra demand for manpower on the track and a number of men became regularly employed there. Because of their willingness to live in relatively substandard housing in remote spots a number have risen to be foremen of track maintenance gangs.

When York Factory, the Kichewaskahikun or Great House of the Crees, closed in 1954, local people went to Churchill, Shamattawa, Gillam and to a new settlement at York Landing in the Split Lake area. Thus was fragmented a band of people whose association with the H.B.C. had lasted for close to three hundred years.

The final chapter of these peoples' contacts with a dominant society began when the sleepy Bayline village of Gillam grew from a population of about three hundred to almost four thousand in the space of a few months when Manitoba Hydro began work on the first of its major hydro dams in 1969.

Since in the following chapter many situations will be examined where the demands of electrical technology have run counter to the cultural progress of the northern people, comments on the practical activities of Hydro will be kept until then. The only point to be made now is that this period of contact is an ongoing one and its effects may not be fully appreciated and proper evaluation made until some time in the future.

In summation it may be said that the main effects of the fur trade activities in the Nelson-Hayes areas were:

a. Introduction of metal, industrial produced goods, and the gun. The use of the gun for commercial killing of animals. The use of the gun in warfare over trade competition.

b. Introduction of commercially produced goods and the creation of a reliance on these.

c. A partnership between Indian and White with either one playing a leading part at different times, but with the Indian too often not getting the full credit for his efforts and expertise.

d. Social effects which changed the status of the Indian woman considerably, often creating a great deal of confusion. From the relationships between White traders and Indian women the creation of the Metis race. Changes in language and descriptions of various sites. Changes in personal names by the superimposition of European names, purely for convenience. Creation of a dependance on liquor and the bad effects resulting from its consumption.

e. Ecological effects of great cutting of wood and changing of game migration patterns by over-killing.

f. Disregard for the basic religious beliefs of the local people and the imposition of the Christian religion upon them.

g. Ultimate dispersion from their traditional home for the native people---leaving "Kichewaskahikun".

h. Experience of the impact of two new technologies, steam and electricity, the latter still in progress.

The next chapter will consider how much remains of the old traditions and what memories there are of events of the last three hundred years.

Chapter V

Culture - Suppression and Recollection

This chapter will attempt to draw together some of the happenings of the past with the memories which still linger. One significant point which should be stressed at this juncture is that most of the information which will be used in this section came from persons who were at least middle-aged. The younger generation have little knowledge of the past of their culture. The writer has had the experience of using a younger person as an interpreter who had little understanding of the matter under discussion and ultimately finding that he could better communicate by using the older person's very limited knowledge of English, along with his own minute contact with the Cree language, consisting largely of place-names, accompanied by a few maps and sketches. This gulf between generations is an important factor to be considered later.

The material will be considered, as far as possible, under the divisions mentioned at the end of the last chapter.

a. One of the best recollections of how the Cree were attracted into the white commercialism comes from South Indian Lake. This story also introduces a woman who might well be, if there had been a literate person present, another Thanadelthur.

The story is that when the first white traders came to the lake all the Crees were, with the exception of one woman, so afraid that they ran away into the bush. When they finally summoned up the courage to come back they were astonished. The brave wo-

man who had stayed to face these strange men now owned one of the traders' wonderful weapons, a gun. She had been shown how to use it while her male companions cowered in the bush. In addition, all the furs as well as the bows and arrows which her fellows had dropped in their haste had gone; and in their place were presents of trade goods. [1]

The writer at the time of this interview discussed with a Cree teacher the possibility of weaving this story in with information culled from H.B.C. sources to make a small book for the local school. The teacher's suggestion for a name for the heroine was Kasoketihet, The one with the Brave Heart, a very well chosen title.

The same informant, who is certainly in his seventies, recalled his father recounting how in the early days of trading at South Indian Lake there were fights between French and British traders. In this same vein an informant at Nelson House related that he had heard that in days gone by the French and H.B.C. traders waited for the hunters to come from the trapline to compete for the buying of furs. [2]

The use of guns for the purpose of killing is also contained in the recollections of the sea fights between the British and French off the shores of the Bay. One of the few pieces of information obtained from a member of the younger generation came from a Metis lad. He told me that when he was tiny his Indian grandmother told him stories about the many bodies of white men who had been washed upon the shores of Hudson's Bay after sea fights. This

was done to scare him so that he would not want to run about outside the house after dark.[3]

Acquaintanceship with old cannon is a more common fact for Cree people of the area than for most whites, since they have often travelled in to the inaccessible place where others have not gone, certainly in more modern times.

Once, in the Goose Camp at Ten Shilling Creek, where a modern facility for those who consider goose killing a sport has replaced the one where H.B.C. men shot to get meat for the long winter, I was told by a Mr. Beardy from York Landing that if transportation were provided he could certainly show me a cannon on a island south of Tatnam Point, about thirty miles away. Cree people also know well the location of cannon stuck in the swamp of Marsh Point. Perhaps some of those dragged across by d'Iberville and his men as they went to take York Fort in 1697?

b. Information on the reliance placed on commercial goods is not very strong, perhaps not surprisingly since they have been a part of Cree life for so long.

However there is some memory of the use of trade goods as presents for rewards. Indeed the use of the word "presents" might perhaps hark back to the original ideas of the culture that these were gifts of gratitude for skins that were similar presents, before material values took a firm hold.

One story told of how the first H.B.C. men came across the ocean with ten York Boats, loaded on their ship. They came up the Churchill, Kichee Seepe, and arrived at Missi Falls about

twenty miles from South Indian Lake. The informant's father remembered the old fences still standing around the site of the post at the north end of the lake.

In the springtime thirty Chipewyans came to trade. The manager did not want to give what they wanted. The Chipewyans became angry and walked away from the store down to the bank of the lake. The manager saw them loading muzzle loaders. He was scared and began to get ready to fight. While this was going on he saw one old Chipewyan standing to one side. As the manager looked through the windows he saw the old man trying to persuade his people not to fight. Eventually he succeeded and they stopped their preparations.

The next day the H.B.C. man began to load his goods in a York Boat, getting ready to leave. He told the old Chipewyan that he would like to reward him, but the latter was afraid of his fellows. These Chipewyans left and the manager told the old one that if he went to a certain place in the bush he would see a sign that pointed to goods that had been left for him.

The old man did as he had been told. From a long way off he saw something covered up in the bush. When he got there he lifted the cover and found tobacco, tea, guns and powder. The old man was now rich and did not want to leave and rejoin his people. He stayed in that spot and lived off the supplies for five years!

The aggressive nature of the "Northern Indians" of H.B.C. document reports, the giving of "presents" and the traditional trade supplies that were so valued are here made very clear.

Further to this another story tells that when the H.B.C. man was on his way back to Churchill he met a group of Indians who were very poor, having hardly any clothes to cover themselves, but who had many furs to trade. He exchanged trade goods for these and both he and the Indians were happy with the exchange.

c. It has not been possible to obtain much direct evidence of partnership in trade although some is inherent in the stories heard. One direct piece of evidence comes from Mr. Charles Dysart at South Indian Lake. He heard from his wife's father how in the early 1800's, when trade to the west was expanding, an Edmonton Factor and several Orkneymen were drowned at Missi Falls because they ignored the advice of local men on how to deal with the rapids.[4]

Traces of very bygone days were found in an interview with Alex Chapman of York Landing. It was he, incidentally, who sighted the unfortunate Constable Macdonnel and Special Constable Ned Massan as they made their way along the coast ice towards York Factory in 1931, not long before they died. He was aged 94 in 1975. In his time he had been the stern oarsman in a York boat on trips from York Factory to Shamattawa, in charge of two boats, and had been paid $50 per trip with a $25 bonus for good work.[5] One of the problems which occured when fully evaluating this interview is that use was made of a grandson as interpreter. Subsequent listening to tapes of the meeting by a native Cree person met with problems since he found that the younger man actually was having trouble keeping contact with the ideas expressed by Alex.

At the same place some of the people were showed some old

photos, dated 1895, and older people identified one man as being Ole Gray. One piece of evidence, as they saw it, was that his trousers were held up with a piece of rope and this was accepted as proof that he was Ole because he was known to have been a York boat man.

d. In the area of social change, language alteration, change of names of sites and routes, and personal names, there appears a fair amount of recollection. Discussion with Mr. Tom Thomas of South Indian Lake produced the information that when Indian names were being registered at treaty time one of his ancestors who had an Indian name with Thomas before it was so rushed by the person registering the names that he could only manage to get out the first name, this then was officially registered. He also stated that one family whose name in Cree meant mouse got this so mangled in interpretation that it was officially recorded as Moose. When one considers how the fur traders often gave such names as "The Mad Captain" "Leaf the Carpenter" "The Soberman", to Indians whom they frequently saw, that they might, by their own standards, better identify them, it is easy to see how this might have occured at a later date.

This same gentleman offered the information that the Cree name of the Churchill was Manteo Sipi or River of the strangers, but confessed that he did not know the origin. When told that the name came about as the result of local people seeing the dead bodies of the first white men, the Danes who visited under Jens Munk, he became keenly interested and offered much more information.

The Rat River drains from the Churchill into Notigi (Old Lady) Lake. Here he is well aware of a site where lived an old lady who was much respected by passing travellers. Long after her death tobacco was thrown upon the waters to propitiate her spirit lest she cause the waters to become rough.

Mrs. Adele Thomas stated that her father followed the custom of making offerings.

According to Mr. Frank Spence people long ago were so afraid of her powers that they were not willing to point a finger at the place where she lived. He corroborated the idea of the ability to raise the wind and the tobacco being offered. She was known as "Eta kwa ne as" "A scarred heel".

There is a considerable amount of evidence concerning the alteration of names. Once again, as evidence of the rift between generations of the culture, most of this information is only known to older people.

Information concerning rock writing is interesting. According to Mr. Charlie Dysart there was a time when Cree boatmen travelling on the Sand River to Pukatawagen cut messages with hatchets in syllabics on the moss covering the rocks of the river banks. A link between the rock paintings and the progression to their own form of letters?

With respect to the above it is the opinion of Mr. Tom Thomas that paintings were records of what had happened on a journey. They were the expression of ideas by the man who had been chosen as the leader of the group travelling because he had experienced

a very strong dream before the start of the trip.

There is a clear indication that at least the old routes up the Nelson River are well known by their old Cree Names and associations. The writer is indebted to his now-deceased friend Mr. Reggie Ponask, once of York Factory and York Landing for much of the following information.

Sepastic is the name for the channel of the river which runs in front of the entrance to Ten Shilling Creek, upstream from York Factory. The Pennycuttaway of Robson's map is still known correctly as Ponakatoway or Beaver Peeling Sticks. 18 mile Island on the Hayes is more correctly called Wanatakow Ministik or Sand and Gravel Bend Island.

The Mitchiscunashish which appears on Hearne's map of 1776 is the site of the present day Weir River, but should of course be more accurately translated as The Little Fishing Weir. Further up the Nelson should be Matita Powestick, later called, according to Turnor, Hellgate Canyon. Few people now know it by any other name than Lower Limestone Rapids. Above this, at the site of Upper Limestone Dam, is the place where Henday must have portaged across the river of that name. This is known to the Cree as Petata a Seepe, a translation of which should be omitted, since it refers rather crudely to the rather unsanitary personal habits of some of the travellers who passed that historic route. In the bank of the river, as it curves round a little island on the north side, is a deeply cut footpath leading to the water. Reading of Hearne's journal of his passage to establish Cumberland House very clearly

indicates that it was up this path that he travelled. The path has been so worn by the feet of countless travellers and scoured out by the spring snows melting that it is cut several feet down into the bank. Unhappily the island below is of rock suitable for fill for a dam and by now the blades and tracks of the bulldozers may well have obliterated a track that could have been in use for thousands of years. How does the old canoeman who once used this path feel? There are still some of them living in Gillam.

Upstream one passes Niscamin Powestik or, as Hearne translated, Indian Gooseberry Falls, now known as Long Spruce Rapids, the site of the latest power dam to be completed. A few miles above the C.N. bridge spans the Nelson. Below it flow Kettle Rapids, better known to the oldtime Cree as Wesaukijak Askiki. Here it is that hard rocks which became lodged in low spots in the limestone bedrock twisted in the current until they hollowed out a basin, and themselves often became round like cannonballs. Here, it was reported, in York Boat days, the Indians would heat rocks and drop them into a waterfilled hole until the water boiled. [6]

Now, above Kettle Dam is Stevenson's Lake, a man-made one almost two miles across and stretching upstream over ten miles as far as Gull Rapids. Below Gull Rapids that shape which appears named Moose Equatt or Moose's Nose on Hearne's map has gone under the water, as has the portage which Fidler marked on the north side of Gull Rapids.

Above this it is but a few miles to Hearne's Tatassquiough, now on the map as Split Lake but still called in that community

by its original name.

It is possible to examine many other name changes in the further stretch of the Nelson as far as its entry into Lake Winnipeg. Indeed this matter alone could well be the basis of a singular study. How many people, including many younger Indians, are aware of the extent of the change?

Scattered along the length of the rivers are those particular marks of the boatmen who wished to celebrate some important event....the Lobstick trees. This tree usually stood alone where it might be easily seen. The main trunk was stripped of its branches except for a portion at the top. The legal wife Frances, of Governor Simpson, had one made for her when she accompanied her husband to York Factory. Lobstick trees should be found on the south side of the Nelson near to the site of Abraham's post, on top of Flamborough on the north side, further up at Mitchiscunashish and about five miles south of York Landing. According to information they were still in existance recently. [7]

One particular placename over which the writer had a considerable discussion with a Cree person is about the site on the Minago River a few miles upstream above the Jenpeg road. This place is marked on the provincial canoe route map as Apisti moosis neepoyin or Where the Deer Stands. This refers to the rock painting. Cree opinion appears to be that it should be Atik ka ne pa wit or The Place of the Caribou. [8] This comment is not offered as authoratative but rather as argumentative, to show that there actually exists, if one is prepared to search and listen, an active

interest in the old culture.

e. It has proved a little difficult to garner much information about the changes wrought on the ecology. These appear to be accepted as one of the facts of life which accompany change. Within the writer's experience there has been only one comment worthy of note. This concerns life on the lower Nelson, at a time when the port was under construction. The speaker told of the attitude towards the polar bear, once shot indiscriminantly by the whiteman but now the object of rather expensive protection. The statement was to the effect that the polar bear was little threat if left well alone, certainly not to be shot at for fun and only killed in case of dire need, for dog food. This idea came from one who had been born on the side of a small lake south of York Factory, had lived at Port Nelson, worked on C.N. track and lived to see the effects of technology on Gillam. The same person told how when he was a child his father used to cut down many small willows in the place where rabbits abounded, to attract them to stay there, so that they could be harvested as required. [9] One could contrast this example of economy with the reckless waste on our great modern projects.

f. Although the Christian religion would appear to have had some effects upon the culture very early (Note that according to Hearne the great Mattonnabee was puzzled by its beliefs), and was well settled in one hundred and fifty years ago, with services in the venacular for the Indians, fragments of the old religion appear to have survived. In fact the writer found that there was a ready

response to discreet, private inquiries about this matter. Many northern people appear to have reconciled the two beliefs.

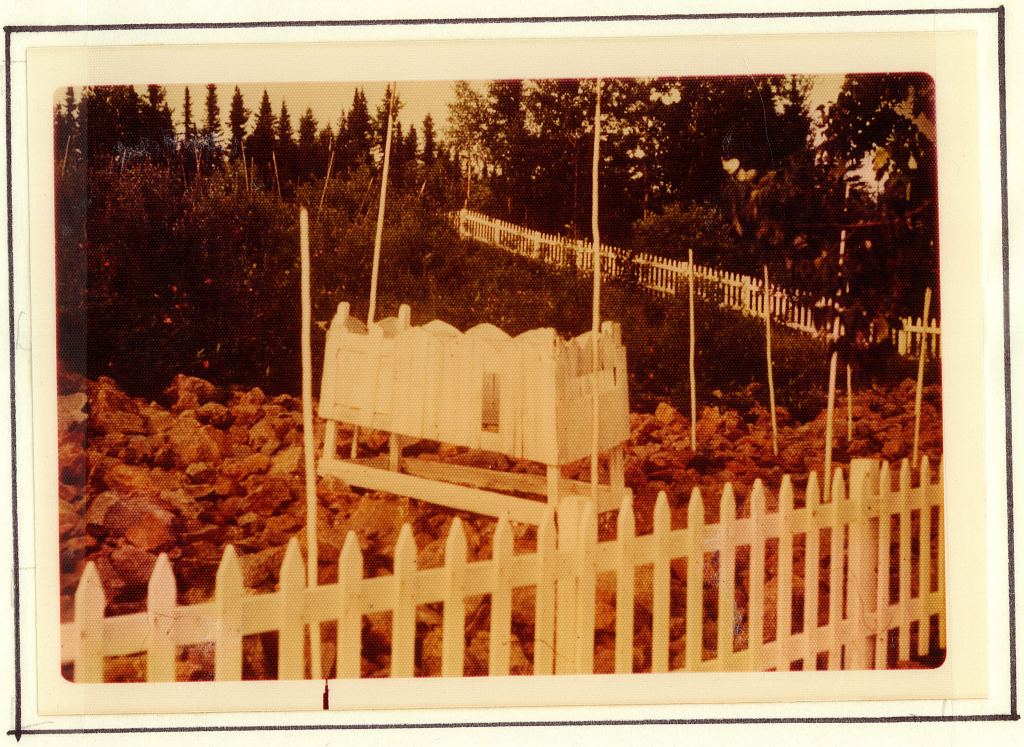
At both York Landing and South Indian Lakes, where a Christian faith has been practised for at least one hundred years many graves carry poles at the corners with strips of cloth on them to scare off the evil spirits or the Witigo, photo No. VIII, page 120. Of the marks of the old religion, the stones at which the traveller made his offering there is at least some recollection. At the south end of South Indian Lake there was once a stone at which offerings were made. Now unfortunately, the flooding of the lake has submerged it. Peter Fidler, who mapped the length of the Churchill in 1802-3, said of it:

> The Opachuanau signifies s strong rapid in a narrow between two lakes and the rapid there is best on the right side. The Ratt's Stone is a large rock that an Indian of that name used every time he passed it, lay upon it some trifle as an offering to his god. 10

According to Mr. Frank Spence the women of the settlement used to sit on top of the rock to await the return of their menfolk from journeys.

Mrs. Adele Thomas stated that at one time there were a thimble and a pair of scissors left on the top as some kind of offering. One Solomon Beardy stated that when he was a young man his wife's grandmother found an old crumbled thimble on top of this stone. He was of the opinion that at one time there had been paintings on the base of the rock.

Evidence of the manner in which Christian persons failed to



VIII. South Indian Lake Cemetary

come close to the people came in a statement that a priest had been there for a long time and, when he left, was probably still unaware of the fact that his congregation had nicknamed him 'crooked shoulder plate'.

Peter Fidler also mentioned that there was a 'Tobacco Stone' at the portage at Gull Rapids.

Two sites at Footprint Lake in Nelson House Reserve are objects of considerable value in the Cree Culture. One is the chair stone in which Wesaukijak is supposed to have sat, the other the well known footprints. The writer has had the opportunity to inspect both of these and to talk to people about them.

Whilst there can be little doubt that the shapes in the rocks came about by accidents of nature they do bear a remarkable resemblance to shapes of the human form. If the writer could project himself back several hundred years, as a man living in this harsh northern climate he would, with that sharpness of the eye possessed by those living close to nature, have viewed these rather unusual shapes with awe and respect. Had he no logical explanation, would he not have been prepared to accept them as the work of his god? Did not that most famous of all playwrights attribute the strange events which occured at Macbeth's castle during an eclipse of the sun to spirits from another world?

At the time of the writer's visit the waters had already risen because of the flooding of the South Indian Lake-Rat-Burntwood-Nelson River systems and the chair stone was underwater, but unquestionably the shape is all that it is supposed to be.

The footprints are even more interesting, at the time of the visit they were still on site and unspoilt. Subsequently, and really too late, efforts were made to remove the portion of rock on which they were situated. Because of the problems of working under water, blasting was employed and the whole mass which was to be removed was ultimately recovered in pieces.

Information was given that there had been at one time lines below the footprints and that these had been paintings which pictured Wesaukijak's doings. [11]

A most interesting fable was told about this relic of Cree mythology.

Wesaukijak's footprints, (Ote kis ke win) are on the rock on the side of the Burntwood. He sat on a rock on the other side of the river one day. Where he sat can be seen the imprint of his body. This is the Chairstone. (Assinee ke ta pu win). He saw two beautiful girls on the other side and wanted to reach them but could not. So he called on the help of a mink. The mink took Wesaukijak's penis and carried it across to the girls. [12]

One of the interesting situations about the Cree attachment to religion is the information that when the Rev. R. Faries went from York Factory up the Hayes he had to cross Marsh Point at the eight mile portage just opposite Gillam Island, in order to proceed up the Nelson, to such places as York Landing. When he was accompanied by his wife the Cree boatmen used to carry the lady in a boat on this rather wet passage. Thus, through the medium of religion, was the nineteenth century position of the lapsed part-

nership reinforced. 13

g. It is possible to fine a fair amount of evidence of past recollections of Kichewashikun (York Factory) and its area from middle to older aged Cree persons. Very many of them have ancestors buried in the graveyard to the east of the present York Factory building. The church itself is now situated to the west of the factory building, having been removed in the 1930's because of the erosion of the river banks. Unfortunately, it has been the subject of much vandalism. At the graveyard itself, a set of wood-reinforced steps and a handrail lead to a bridge across a small creek and then to the path which leads to the area of the site of the main settlement. One can well imagine how, around the turn of the century, families of Indian and Métis filed down this path on the way to the Sunday service. The men would have been clad rather uncomfortably in formal European clothes of the day, dark suit, high wing collars and rather narrow black ties. Indeed people have shown me such photos of departed relatives. How well had clothes helped to effect the cultural transition?

Many of the sites of early white history are well known. Both the approximate place where Radisson and Grosseiliers had their post in 1682 and La Martiniére's wintering place of 1686 are called 'French Site'.

In 1975 the writer was shown a place almost opposite Port Nelson where the informant's father had told him that the white men had a fort 'very, very long ago'. This could link up with the fact that Abraham had his post here in 1684.

Many tales are told by people in the areas to which the inhabitants of York Factory settlemant left when it was finally abandoned but done is more exciting than that of the Marsh Point treasure. Most older Cree people are convinced that some where in the area there is buried treasure. Whether or not this is based on some warped version of the rather inaccurate European fable that during the French occupation of York Fort the building rang to the sound of the revels of gallants and their ladies may never be known. The writer has yet to be able to interview the man who declares that he knows the true story of the treasure. However it may be, there is demonstrated a clear interest in the legends of the area.

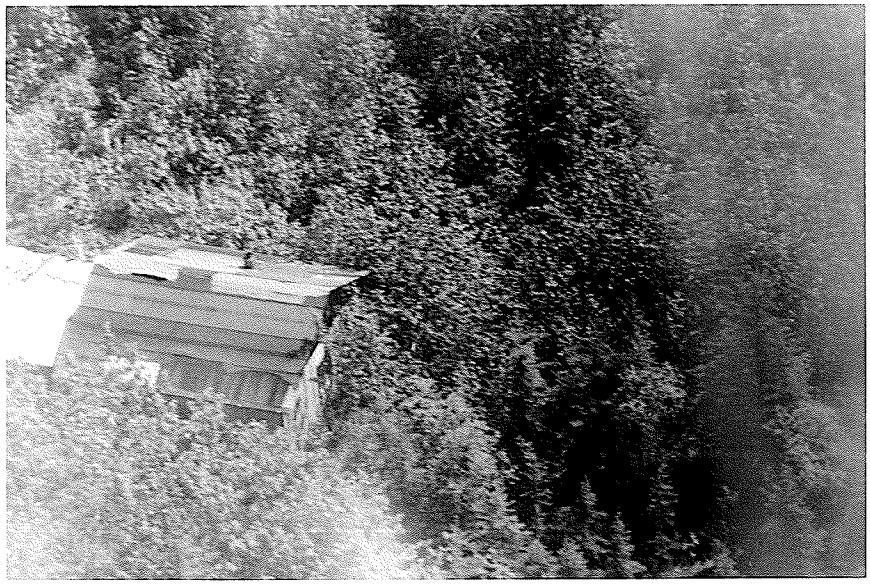
Among the older generation there is still a very strong spiritual attachment to Kichewaskahikun.

h. The effects of the very first technology have, of course, been the subject of consideration from the earlier parts of this work, since it was the white man's iron which changed the lives of the local people. There is apparently little recognition of this in any of the information, except in stories such as that of the Cree woman at South Indian Lake, and the frequent mention of trade goods among which were guns. This may perhaps be taken as evidence of assimilation into the new culture. From the time when the products of industrialism came to Hudson's Bay until the arrival, a very abrupt one, of the products of the technological age, there was little change. The steam and diesel technology at Port Nelson must have had a profound effect on the local people,

but there appears today little sign of the surprise which they must have felt. Those who speak about it must be quite old, and of course many of those who were present are no longer alive, but the general attitude suggests that they rapidly became adapted to the new way of life. One gentleman who lived there related to me that the towers of the radio station were two hundred and fifty feet high. Subsequent research proves him to be correct. [14] Another man told how the police had established shelter houses every ten miles along the roadbed from the port to Gillam. [15]

There is adequate practical evidence that the local people had adapted to the new technology in the settlement of Spence families on the south side of the Nelson near to the site of Abraham's post, as shown in the photo No. IX, page 126. All of this settlement, consisting of some nine of ten dwellings, was made of material from the old port. The walls of the buildings were made of ten inch thick lumber, and are to this day in good condition so that with little work they could be used again. Many tools lying at the site obviously came from across the river. The transporting of lumber across some two miles of the river was an achievement in itself. The writer has been told how, before the port was built, one man got trees from the Spence site and took them over to the Port Nelson side by constructing a hugh raft and sailing it across with the aid of a suitable wind and tide. [16]

If there is evidence of adaptation to earlier technology of the early part of this century, there is unhappily much less in respect to more recent change. It would not be unfair to say that



IX One of the 'Spenceville' houses

the impact of Hydro activities on the native culture had been far greater in a matter of ten years than all of what occured in the preceeding three hundred. Change was not only sudden and unprepared, but extremely widespread. The activities ranged from the north end of Lake Winnipeg to Thompson and east down both the Churchill and Nelson Rivers to the Bay. Anywhere where there was any remaining vestige of the old hunter or fisherman way of life its activities stopped, at least for a time. In some situations complete settlements were relocated. In places such as Gillam the native culture, which had been the largest by far in the community, was abruptly swamped by the white one. Children who had been in the major group in a two or three room school now found themselves a minority in a new monster housing thirty rooms. There was little recognition of their cultural values, indeed for the majority of the time the program was very much middle class white oriented. Indian houses were set apart from others, incredibly poorly built, and like a ghetto from which the children knew they must not leave to play in the area of the white accomodation. The writer had the interesting experience of taking an Indian acquaintance who was foreman of a construction gang into a native careers class to talk about the difficulties of succeeding in the white world. He dealt with the subject, as had been requested, in a very direct way. The shocked look on the students faces, that he should thus speak before a whiteman, spoke volumes. The writer learned more from these few minutes of experience than from hours of study on cross-cultural problems.

As has been previously mentioned, such projects as have wrought much change upon the ecology, but it is certain that the social ostracism which has occured in present times has probably done much more damage than that practised by Sir George Simpson and his cronies.

Chapter VI

Modern Problems

The beginning of what is here titled modern problems really commenced when the first white man set foot on these shores and subjected the native person to the stress of a new culture.

The changes which came about developed in two stages. The first of these was the fur trade era. Here in the early days the Indian was an equal person, a trader in his own right. Then he may have sometimes been an equal partner or actually a leader as the great companies began to press inland. Later, the individual canoe became secondary to the York Boat. When the great companies were amalgamated and the ruthless leadership of George Simpson eliminated the under-educated Métis or Indian, the ordinary man who lived around the Bay lowlands became merely a supplier of furs. Now however, he did not deal with the white man on equal terms, but rather as one who had developed a dependency on the goods of the larger society. Gradually, as exploitation of land in the south began to draw the bulk of the newcomers there, the importance of his trade declined until it was, in the middle of this century, barely profitable for operation as a single commodity business. Then began the period when the northern Indian began to live closer to the modern transportation routes such as the Bayline. Here, although he had to adapt to many new ideas he was still able to carry on some of the traditional activities such as hunting and fishing. There were also some ways in which some of the population might earn extra income-----working on the railroad

track, woodcutting, work at community services such as schools, nursing stations, hospitals, government offices and in some areas mineral exploration and mining.

Thus some part of the population had passed to a fairly stable situation. Although the standard of life may not have been very high, at least there was room for a degree of individualism, and although doubtless directed by white officals, he was not entirely overwhelmed by them.

With the advent of mid-century technology the situation was vastly different. (At this point it should be noted that the advent of steam technology is not included in this statement. Port Nelson was active for too short a period. The coming of the railroad occured over a longer period, 1910 to 1927, and occupied a narrow strip of land only, thus there was time for reasonable adaptation.) The development of Hydro was another matter. It occured abruptly, brought in with all the speed which modern transportation could effect, and it affected dramatically a vast area of the north country.

The writer feels that all of the Hydro projects that were initiated began with the requirements of technology being given first consideration and the human element second thought. This is particularly shocking in that before the commencement of the major project on the Nelson in 1967 the experience with the Easterville Band near Grand Rapids had shown that one could not easily displace native people from a situation where any of the forms of the old way of cultural life were carried on without a great degree of shock.

There appears to be little evidence that any in-depth study was done to ascertain what the wider effects of the project would be on the population. True, great arguments raged between various parties as to the best means of effecting the overall scheme without major ecological damage, and one of the more prominent promises of the election of 1969 was that there would be limitation of the level to which South Indian Lake could be flooded to provide the waters of the Churchill to raise the supply of the Nelson projects. But the main concern was with speedy provision of water.

In 1971, when the Kettle Dam at Gillam had advanced so far that three generating units were in place, it was made public that in order to have enough water for the winter of 1975-76 the Churchill must be diverted and Lake Winnipeg regulated. At this time a Canada-Manitoba Study Agreement for Lake Winnipeg and the Churchill and Nelson Rivers was signed between the two levels of government. The document covers four pages and the only comments apertaining to the native communities is about thirteen lines of a two-column page. These lines are only in general terms and make no specific mention of the original inhabitants.

When the results of the study were released in 1975 they made full reference to the problems which had been, and were about to be, created. There is free admission in the report that community concern was obvious, lifestyles disrupted and that a serious loss to culture could result.

The recommendations at the end of the study advocate that compensations and adjustments be made to native groups affected by

Hydro expansion into their land. Federal and provincial government and agencies are charged to "manifest a respect for cultural differences".

This is an honest appraisal of the responsibilities of a state organization which had encroached on the realm of another and much older culture. Unfortunately it came rather late. Kettle Dam had been complete since 1974, and at this date 1979, Long Spruce has just been finished. During the time since 1967 probably twenty of thirty thousand whites have come from, and returned to the outside world. Yet only a very minimal number of local inhabitants have been given any gainful employment on any projects. Most of these have been in the nature of brush cutting or labouring jobs in connection with Hydro, or some service jobs for local communities. In most cases there has been no signs of any long term possibilities. No provision has been made which would suggest any on-the-job training which might make for future employment. In addition to this, the writer has observed, on return visits to the main Hydro centre, Gillam, that the stratification of society is unchanged.

It does not seem to be a too-sweeping statement to declare that history has repeated itself. As the local people were left in the middle of the eighteenth century, almost as strangers in a trade native to their own country, now, after a century of slow adaptation they are once more in a vacuum of change.

At the moment, when the financial costs of any future Hydro projects are the dominant factors in the overall planning, one

must ask whether in the future timely consideration will be given to any problems involving the native persons?

Chapter VII

Possibility of Solutions

There appears to be no doubt that the best of solutions would be those which come from the native people themselves. The right place to start would be with the younger generation, since a kind of salvage operation is needed before the widening gap with their culture grows so great that it cannot be successfully closed.

Where schools are situated in places such as Shamattawa, Norway House, York Landing, Split Lake, South Indian Lake and Nelson House the possibility of progress could be realized because of less pressure from a majority culture. In most of these places youngsters are being taught some of the old cultural skills concerned with living close to nature. Most of the motivation and much of the teaching seems to have come from the Indian people themselves. This is encouraging since some of the foundations of the old way of life are being re-established.

In the places mentioned above a variety of results are occuring. Where the local band leaders maintain a direct interest in education, and there are apparent possibilities for employment after leaving school, the situation may suggest hope.

The writer recalls a pleasant reaction on a visit to South Indian Lake. Because this has been a viable fishing area for many years, with a good community structure, the people appear happy, despite the problems which have changed their lives and indeed may even be said to threaten the future of the community.

Visitors are welcomed and given a definite feeling of acceptance. There is no sign of the resentment that one might expect to be shown to a member of the larger society from the south, despite the obvious disruptions to which the people have been subjected. However, one should remember that this place has a large number of Métis inhabitants and leadership from a few whites who have married into the community and adopted the local way of life. Also since there has been reasonable, although not year-round, road communication with Leaf Rapids for a few years, contacts with other societies have helped the process of integration.

A similar feeling of hope is experienced at Split Lake, although there is rather less outside contact and less employment available.

Nelson House has a direct road link with Thompson, and at the time of work on the flood controls in 1977 there was a fair degree of employment in the locality. At that time the principal of the school was a local person. It appeared that morale was reasonably good.

York Landing suffers from isolation and its small size. As it contains many of the older persons who once lived at York Factory, and since the writer visited in company with some of their grandchildren the reception was an excellent one. However there were opinions expressed that showed bitterness about lack of employment and the small size of the reserve. [I]

The school is very small, only two teachers being employed. At the time of the visit one was a very recent immigrant, from a

culture foreign to Canada. This person seemed to live in isolation, with little chance of learning either about the local culture or the larger one of the south. Situations like this exist in other places. Even if the communities are larger a barrier to progress is created if the teacher has to carry a double burden. Probably little progress will be made here for sometime.

Norway House has a fine modern school although it too suffers from frequent changes of teachers. The growing population is very much too large for any employment which may be available in the immediate area. There is considerable evidence of alcoholism.

Shamattawa, which the writer has not visited, has an extreme problem with alcoholism and glue sniffing, caused by an isolation which offers little hope of improvement of employment.

It would appear that where the reserve is able to act as a cultural entity, and where there is not too much fragmentation of traditional ideas due to white pressure, there exists a fair degree of hope for the future.

Gillam, which has stood the major impact of the more recent technological intrusion, is in a category apart from all other areas. Here the cultural breakdown and confusion is great. The employment situation is a reasonable one because many of the native persons have found work on the railroad on a permanent basis and others find jobs with the local government authority, particularly during the more intense periods of construction. However, jobs of this kind are limited and there are signs that all the younger persons cannot be absorbed into the small work force.

The school, during the periods of maximum Hydro activity, has about one quarter native population. Although there is sometimes, depending on the availability of teachers, a Cree and Native Studies program, the school as a whole is oriented towards white middle class values, catering markedly for the predominant group.

With such a variety of situations, spread out over an area with difficult communications, there can be no clear cut solution.

If it is possible to plan a basic approach which is common to most areas, the problems to be attacked may be summed up as follows:

A. The cultural gap between young and old.

B. A lack of knowledge, common to both Indian and white communities, about the contributions made to northern history by native people over the last three hundred years.

C. The failure of the white community to accept the native person socially. Few appreciate that their own ignorance of the minor culture is the root of their prejudices against the native persons.

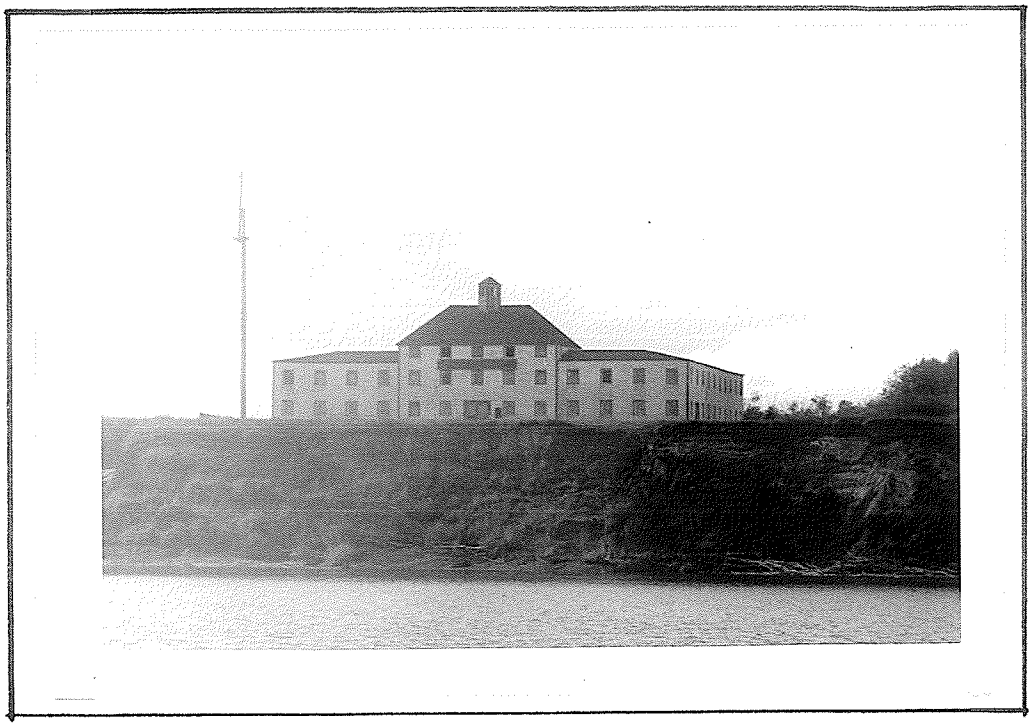
Possibly the above situations have been stated in their ascending order of difficulty of solution. The first may be solved automatically if the second can be remedied. The approach to the last problem will be difficult and much time must be spent before there can be any hope of success.

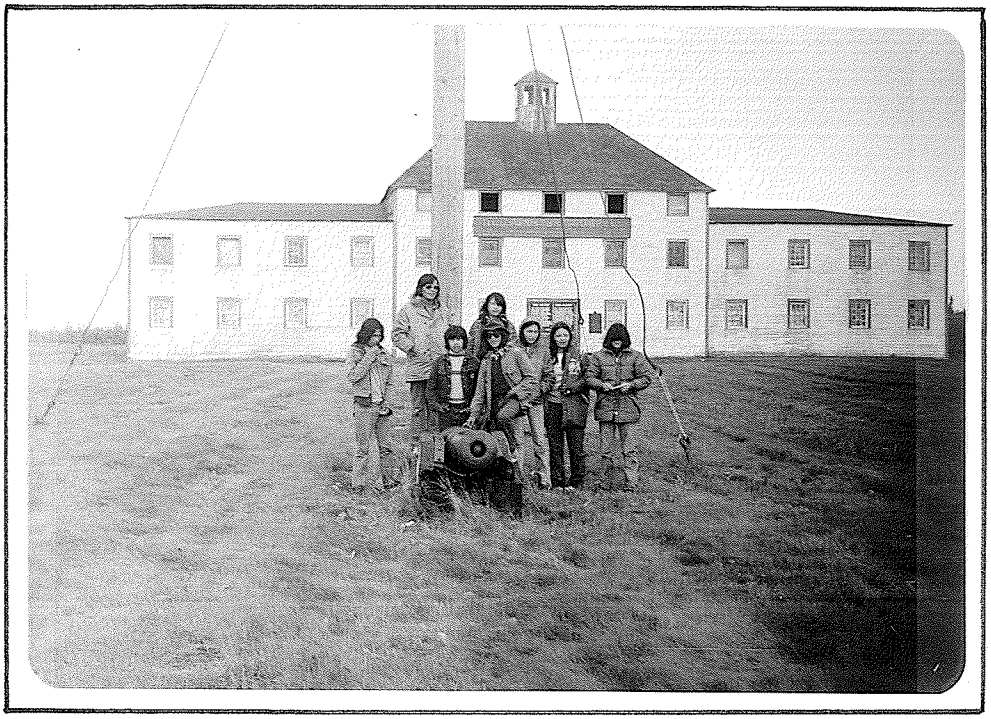
While teaching in Gillam the writer made some attempt to correct the lack of historical knowledge. This took the form of obtaining information from adults and paralleling it with substan-

tiating evidence from documents, much from the H.B.C. Archives, then teaching it to students. Some visits were made to reserves where grandparents who had lived at York Factory now reside. Here the students carried out their own interviews of older persons. Naturally the approach had to be a simple one since upper elementary and junior high students could not be expected to do their own research, nor to have an extensive history background. The results were that information gathered from older persons added authenticity to part of the school program. This, in the zone of cultural conflict in which the students lived, tended to create a link between the older people and the youngsters' educational program.

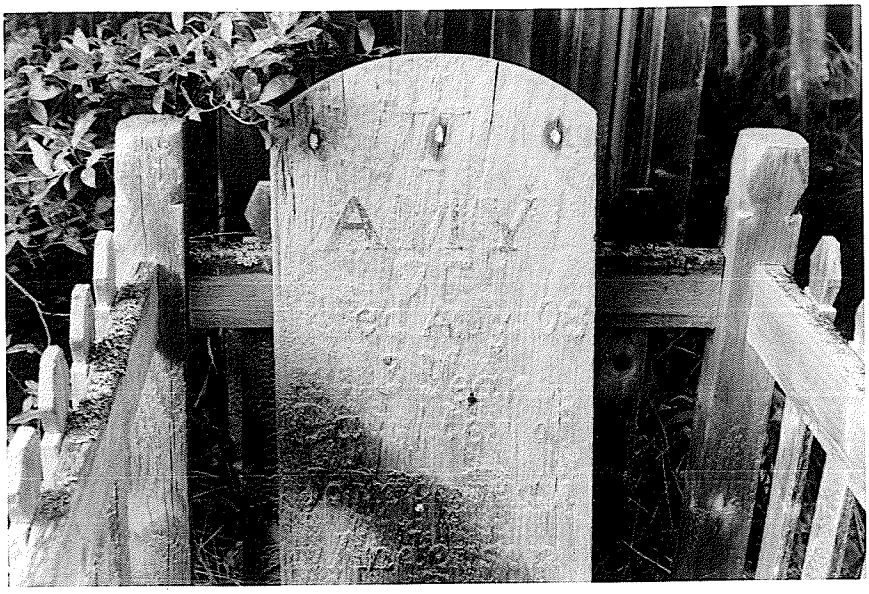
As part of this activity, a group of students was taken on a few days visit to York Factory, photo No. X, page 139. They went there equipped with information about the history of the place, gathered from older relatives. Some were charged with the task of viewing the grave markers of deceased family members in the old graveyard east of York Factory. These markers could themselves be the subject of lessons on local Cree history. See photo No. XI, page 140. Once again a link was replaced in the cultural chain. Grandparents began to see children as representing at least a small part of the life they themselves had once led.

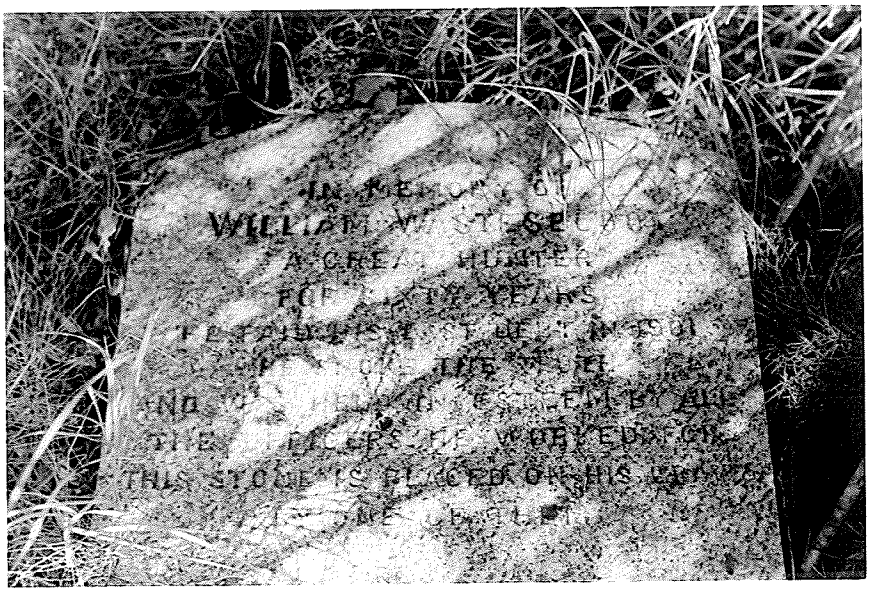
The writer is firmly convinced that any remedial approach which seeks to reunite the young with a lost culture must operate on a very local basis, since the local people have an attachment deeply rooted in their own area.





X York Factory





XI York Factory Graveyard

Although these activities involved only a small number of students, and the costs of transportation were high, the results were worthwhile. Subsequent visits to Gillam have led to meeting persons who participated in these activities and finding that there is a clear recollection of the educational process that was involved.

Do these younger people whose elder generation lived close to nature only a short while ago have themselves to walk on the ground their forefathers trod to appreciate their own cultural history?

Perhaps it is inevitable that this task of helping the younger people should fall to the lot of the schools, but one should not ask too much of educators. Generally educators have not been themselves taught to have any sense of Canadian patriotism and very few have any pride in our province's colourful history. If the educator has not the right orientation, how can he be expected to appreciate the degree of pride which he must attempt to encourage in a person of another culture? Added to this problem is the fact that not every teacher can possibly spend time researching all the necessary documents, particularly those in the H.B.C. Archives.

The writer feels strongly that an effort to introduce a specialized Manitoba history into schools should be made. This would of course include material from fur trade documents, and as such demonstrate the part played by the Indians. It must be done in such a way that the materials can easily be used by the teacher without a great need for extensive study.

Possibly the use of such a course might not only open doors for Indians, but also cure white ignorance.

Even with a carefully prepared approach much time would have to elapse before results would be apparent. An even longer time would have to pass before the deeply ingrained white attitudes could be altered. But surely the Indian culture can be reinforced and the white attitude changed a little?

Unfortunately the schools can only deal with a section of the population which happens to be passing through them at any one time. Can we afford to wait until the present school population has matured into the next adult generation?

How can the problem of the lack of social acceptance be dealt with? Obviously this is a current situation which must be remedied before any great new construction project is begun in the Cree Ancestral homeland. Otherwise their culture will again be depressed by the influx of yet another group of outsiders who have no knowledge of the native ways. Is it too much to suggest that in future all newcomers to northern projects be assisted in learning about the people of that land? Any cost involved might well be saved later by the easing of the strain of community relations and the lessening of the possibility of violence.

Do all northern native persons want complete social acceptance to the degree that they may actually regard themselves as just other members of their particular, larger community? Possibly they would rather walk a little apart and guard their own culture intact. However, is it too much to expect that whites who go to northern communities be prepared to hold open the store door for the Indian lady who carries a parcel of groceries, or give a "Good-day" on the

street?

Perhaps even this simple gesture of social acceptance would bridge a wide cultural gap?

Thus it has been shown that from earliest times the northern Cree people have possessed the skills necessary for success, not only in their own natural environment but also in today's society. If there is a missing element it must be supplied by the larger society.

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CHAPTER VII POSSIBILITY OF SOLUTIONS

I Currently negotiations with the Provincial Government are in progress for the acquisition of land promised under treaty.

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