

NIPIGON TRIP OF 1962

The following is an account and description of a canoe trip from Ely Minnesota to the Hudson's Bay Company Nipigon House on Nipigon Lake in Ontario. The length of the trip was about 500 miles. The crew consisted of Jim Beske from Stillwater, Minnesota, Jerry Roth from Mankato, Minnesota, and Loren Albert from River Falls, Wisconsin. The trip was conceived at the Sommers Canoe Base during the summer of 1962. The Actual departure date was August 27, 1962

The route was north from Ely through the Quetico to Atikokan, Ontario. Atikokan was the only city encountered during the course of the trip. From Atikokan a circle to the west was taken through Dashawa and The Little Turtle River. Earlier considerations of shorter routes such as one through Red Paint were abandoned by suggestion of the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests. The English River was used for 80 miles to Matiawa Lake. From Matiawa the route was easterly across several long lakes. The height of land was crossed east of Kashishibog and Web Creek was entered. Web Creek led to Obonga Lake and the rest of the route was straight forward to Nipigon.

Equipment loaned to us for the trip by the Charles L. Sommers Canoe Base was appreciated very much. We also wish to thank Mr. S.G. Hancock of Steep Rock Iron Mines Ltd. for a tour of the Errington Mine at Atikokan, and Mr. Clifford Watson of the Hudson's Bay Company who showed much hospitality to us at the Nipigon House.

On the following pages is the log of the trip.

Loren Albert

August 26

At 7:30 in the evening the crew was assembled at Sommers Canoe Base. Jerry and Loren came up from Minneapolis during the day. Jim had been at Sommers all season. The size of our crew would be three rather than the original five or six. One of the original members was on the trail and one had left for home in Kansas a few weeks before. We outfitted and packed while listening to tales of the summer events at the base.

August 27

Our picture was taken and we were on the water by 9:30. The trip had an auspicious beginning as we missed the first portage into Wind Lake. The water was high in Moose, Wind, and Basswood and we have hopes that it will be high everywhere. We stopped in to see Rod at Ottawa Island. The portages out of west and Point were very wet. A half mile up from the cliff site on Kahshahpiwi we met Whitey Smith and Dave Armin on their way back from Atikokan. They told us Atikokan had become quite popular this year. There were times when three Charley's boys would manage to meet in Atikokan for a Friday night.

We continued up the Kahshahpiwi Chain and stopped on Carin about 10:00PM. We camped on a large rock on one of the Islands. The wind blew very hard all night.

August 28

After a quick breakfast the canoe was in the water by 7:00 A.M. We used the Heronshaw-Baird route to Keets and then over the Splitrock Falls Portage. Then Across Russell, Sturgeon, Dore, and finally Pickerel. The stream out of Dore with the reeds and beaver dams is always interesting. The bridge on the Deux Rivieres Portage had been rebuilt since the summer of 61.

Pickerel was no more than a long haul at this early part of the trip. By 7:00 P.M. we were across Nym Lake and at the Department of Lands and Forests Headquarters. No sooner had we landed and unloaded the canoe Tom Ogle and Tom Grunwald came by. They were just preparing to leave after a day in Atikokan and return to the base by way of Beaverhouse. We left most of our gear and began to walk to Atikokan. We soon managed to hitch a ride in a pickup truck. Our camp for the next two nights was in an open area next to the Atikokan Ball Park. We were now about 100 miles north of Sommers Canoe Base.

August 29

Atikokan lies directly on top of the Quetico Wilderness canoe country. The highway into Atikokan from Fort William is a dead end and very much isolates the city. The Canadian National Railway passes through from Fort William and follows the Seine River to Rainy Lake. At Rainy Lake the tracks cross over to the United States side of the border until Fort Francis. The railroad was the first penetration of civilization into Ontario West of Lake Superior. It serviced mail stops and small villeges. The major users of the railroad prior to 1940 were fur trappers in the fall and spring, hunters in the spring, and fisherman in the summer. Atikokan was one

of the largest mail stops and the population of the village was a constant 150 during the twenties and thirties.

A transformation of Atikokan took place because of Canadian efforts to locate new sources of iron ore for the World War II effort. Entries in log books of voyageurs over two hundred years ago made reference to the fact that heavy red colored rock lined the South shore of Steep Rock Lake. A Canadian Geological Survey in 1897 established the fact that the ore did contain iron. The material was found to be float ore, a premium quality iron ore. The belief was that iron deposits existed under the lake. In 1938 Julian Cross, Port Arthur professor of mineralogy turned professor, began core drilling from the ice. Immediate success was encountered when the first test drill cut iron ore. Four major deposits were found under the Lake and the ore quality was found to be comparable with the best in the United States. The problem was that the iron lies under 300 feet of water and under an additional 300 feet of overburden mud and silt.

In 1943 a major campaign was begun to reach the ore deposits on the bottom of the lake because of a report that the United States might not have enough iron to last through an extended war. In addition to this 85% of the iron ore carriers from South America were being sunk by submarines.

The Seine River had to be diverted away from Steep Rock Lake. Finlayson Lake directly north of Steep Rock was lowered 134 feet by a tunnel and a prepared route was made for the Seine into Finlayson. The Seine was diverted four miles off its course and was no longer part of Steep Rock Lake. Fourteen 24 inch electric pumps were mounted on barges in Steep Rock Lake and began to pump out the lake which measured approximately five miles in length and one mile in width. By May 9, 1944 the surface of the lake had sunk by 80 feet. The overburden proved to be glacial silt and boulders. The removal procedure was high pressure water jets which could reduce the silt to slurry. The material was then pumped out by some of the world's largest dredges built and floated at the site. By May of 1945 open mining of iron ore began. The task of uncovering the entire ore fields with dredges was not completed until 1962. At the present time both open pit and underground mining is carried out.

Needless to say the mines have created the city of Atikokan, which now has a population of 5000. Atikokan today is a city surrounded by wilderness in all directions for hundreds of miles. The only way to penetrate most of the wilderness is by canoe or airplane.

Today was to be our layover day in Atikokan and a rest because two of us had been away from canoeing for a year. During the morning we had some groceries to buy and arranged to have our canoe carried by truck to our camp at the ball park. We visited the Hudson's Bay Company store and the bank to have our currency converted to Canadian money. While at the bank we managed to become involved in a conversation with a pretty cashier concerning the difference between Canadian and U.S. money.

In the afternoon a very fine tour of the mines was scheduled for us by Mr. S.G. Hancock, assistant general manager of the Steep

Rock Mines. We were dressed in miners clothes and boots, and given helmet lamps. Our mining engineer guide took us down to the 900 foot, 1100 foot, and 1300 foot levels in the mine. We walked for what seemed like several miles through tunnels, and climbed ladders from level to level. Perhaps the most interesting thing we saw in the underground portion of the mine was the rock crusher. We were taken up a ladder through a vertical tunnel which opened into a large room. The rock crusher was an enormous piece of machinery which had a conveyer belt leading into it. Rocks several feet in diameter would enter the machine on the belt with the accompanying sound of a deep rumble. The material which leaves the machine is gravel ready for shipment. The tour included a ride through the open pit area of the mine and a stop by a machine shop where Euclid trucks were being repaired. One dredge was still sitting on the bottom of the lake. The pump impellers of the machines are strong enough to send rocks of considerable size up the exhaust hose. Rocks which are too large for the pump are ground up by the teeth of the dredge. Mr. Hancock told us the entire dredge had been sold to a company in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The next item of activity for our day of rest was a steak dinner in the Steep Rock Hotel. We went back to our tent in time to see the fifth inning and the rest of the game. We finished the day with a glass of ale at the hotel.

August 30

The first order of business for the day was breakfast at Lee's Chinese Restaurant. We departed Atikokan at 8:00 A.M. and proceeded down the Atikokan River to the Seine. There were two portages around rapids. We left the Seine and turned north up the Eye River. Several short rapids forced us to portage. At this point we began to imagine that canocks in the vicinity were hiding our portages on us and establishing obstacles, such as logs across perfect landings. However these portages were short and easy, even if it was necessary to take to the brush.

Our portage method was as efficient as we could make it. The bow man would jump out and lift the food pack out of the canoe. The middle man would get out, take the paddles and slip into the straps of the food pack. The bow man would then take the personal pack and tent and be off. The stern man would then flip the canoe on his shoulders and walk across. Upon reaching the end of the portage the canoe would be set in the water, the packs put in the proper places, and we would be off.

Dinner time came in Eye Lake on a rock about half way up on the east shore. All morning the country differed slightly from the Quetico. There were many more poplar and birch trees than pine. Also the ground seemed to have a soil cover, rather than the "green stone" topography which we are accustomed to.

At the end of Eye Lake we came upon a logging camp. The saw was built under a shed very close to the water. Up from the lake were several houses made from planed lumber. Most of the buildings were little more than sheds except for one which was painted white, had a fence around it, and even had a lawn. The shutters and other trim were painted red. We began the portage and several large dogs, apparently half wolf, ran down to us and growled at our heels. A French-Canadian man came out of the house and called the dogs off.

We paused in front of his house, just described, and inquired about the way to Dashawa Lake. He pointed to a trail and at the same time suggested we pick out one of the huts for the evening. We declined because we were not satisfied with our progress for the day. His indian wife came to the door and watched us depart. The dogs followed us for awhile setting up a clamor that was hard on the ears.

Dashawa turned out to be a very beautiful lake. The shore line was a dark red color. The water was very calm and a dock was waiting for us at the end of the portage. After leaning heavily on the paddles for three hours we were near the other end of the lake and found a good place to camp on a grassy meadow. Supper was prepared consisting of potatoes with corned beef, pudding, and coffee. We placed the cooking fire between two fallen logs for the convenience of having a place to sit and to lie the contents of the packs.

August 31

We left the campsite at 8:00 in a heavy fog. Soon after entering the Little Turtle River we plotted a short cut consisting of two portages which would eliminate 15 miles of paddling. Bow Lake is a bow with a cross shaped lake in the center of it. The idea was to portage into the cross shaped lake and again into the other side of Bow. The first trail seemed to be a portage but actually was a Moose trail. The trail turned to swamp but we were able to cut a fairly good trail in a short time. The second portage out of the cross shaped lake at the location shown on the map turned out to be a Beaver Trail. Upon reaching a rise some distance from the water we set the canoe and gear down and looked for Bow Lake. We could not find the lake so we returned to the canoe and portaged back into the cross shaped lake. Our next alternative was to proceed to the north end of the lake and cut a portage to a large bay on Bow. This we did and while blazing the trail a portage trail was found. It looked very old and very seldom used so we went through to Bow and cut out most of the windfalls. Once across we emptied the water from our boots and took time for a lunch break. For future travelers in this area we would be inclined to suggest paddling around the Bow.

The country now consisted of large rolling hills with more pines. Once out of Bow five small lakes were crossed and then came Sparkle. Sparkle is ten miles long and we needed only to cross two thirds of it. The next lake is Gulliver. Our goal for the day was Cloven. The portages were much better here and the last two came up just before sunset.

Cloven is an island filled lake but with few obvious campsites. The banks and shores drop down to the water and the level ground is ten feet up from the water. Toward the north part of the lake we did manage to find a ledge next to one of the banks which allowed us to step out and get the canoe and gear up on top.

The next day would bring us to the English River which we were impatient to see. We had heard about the English River for several years. Guides from the Owakonze Canoe Base use the English River to get north in short periods of time.

Today there had been no wind but there was cloud cover. In the evening the sun came out for a half hour before setting hinting that tomorrow may be a fine day.

September 1

We were up early today only to see fog so thick that it was difficult to see around the campsite. Cloven was behind us by 7:30 A.M. and we entered Dam Brook. The name comes from the fact that there is an old logging dam there. The brook would take us into Upper Scotch Lake which is the headwaters of the English River. If we were to have named the brook it would be called damn Brook. The distance on the map that we needed to take the brook was only five or six miles. However there were so many loops and turns that the distance must have been three times as far. To get through the brook we needed to pull over logs, use the paddles for poles, and pull on clumps of grass. Upon leaving the brook we entered a open area but it was completely taken over by reeds. The reeds blocked out the view except for hills several miles away. Finally upon entering Lower Scotch the English River came into view and also the Canadian Ranger cabin on a sand beach. The English River was also a winding channel but much wider and easier to navigate. Several miles down the river we stopped at an old trappers cabin to find a board for the front seat of the canoe. The webbing in the seat was ripping. Several hours later we came out of the wilderness momentarily to pass under the Canadian Pacific Railroad tracks and the Trans-Canada highway. A store and resort called Browns is located on the road here and we stopped in to pick up a fresh supply of honey, sugar, and bread.

The English River after leaving the highway turned out to be a proper river with some current and not too many bends. The country had changed again and the ground had soil again. The trees here are Poplar, Birch, and some hardwoods. Several sets of rapids came up, some of which could be shot and others required a portage. The third portage was approached just before dark and was preceded by a stretch of rapids. We decided the rapids could be shot so I got out of the canoe to lighten the load. Down stream a log reached out over the water and made an ideal place to get back into the canoe. However the bark stripped off the log and I ended up in the water. We made camp at the portage just across the way and I was dry by the fire before supper was ready. This meal consisted of spanish rice and pudding.

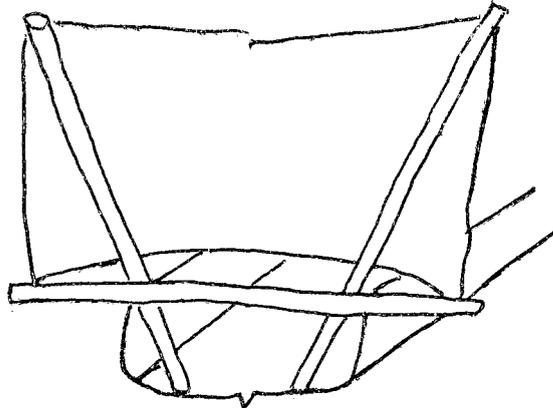
The night was cold and condensed moisture made everything wet inside the tent. Tomorrow is the day we have been waiting for because with some luck a good south wind will allow us to sail to the top of the English River. Today is the sixth day on the trail including the day we did not travel.

September 2

A cold and foggy morning. The next portage was marked on the map as being 46 chains long. It was difficult to find because it began several hundred yards upstream from the rapids. On this portage the canoe carrier slipped and fell with the canoe. The canoe fell on a stump with two sharp prongs sticking up, each of which went through the side of the canoe. The repair job took place on the end of the portage. Ambroid, chips of wood, and sawdust were used to fix the canoe. While waiting for the glue to dry a kettle of lemonade was made and Jerry took the opportunity to shave and sew a rip in his shirt.

A few hours later we found the blueberries at their best. They were too good to resist and a half hour was spent eating them.

At Selwyn Lake the River opens up considerably and a south wind did exist so a sail was put up. The mackshift sail was well made and 64 square feet of ground cloth put up. The lower spar supporting the bottom of the sail only projected a foot or so over the gunnels. This prevented the spar from dipping into the water with every list of the canoe. The top of the sail was supported by two masts tied to the side of the canoe at the yoke. The top of the masts were tied to the stern of the canoe with a rope.



Lumber for our sail came from a nearby stand of Birch. The stern man used his paddle as a rudder and stood by to cut the ropes to let the sail down if something went wrong. The middle man sat with his legs bracing the masts. The bow man sat in the bottom of the canoe with the map and navigated because the sail blocked the view for the other two. The sail worked well for ten or twelve miles. The wind was adequate to billow it out well and our speed was quite a bit faster than paddling. However at the first narrows the wind died out and even blew us backwards at times. Unfortunately we had to take the sail down.

An hour after dismantling the sail we found the indian paintings on the east side of the river. They were quite good. The color was the dark red and the usual hand prints, ecentric moose, and others were there.

Later in the afternoon we stopped at another patch of blueberries. The size and quantity was again amazing considering the time of year.

There is an unmarked portage at the top of the English River. The obstacle is a stretch of rapids and falls. We landed at a large blaze on the right side of the river and followed what seemed a normal portage trail. The canocks had fooled us again as the trail soon gave out to brush. We kept going and followed the sound of the rapids. Soon it became apparent that we could take a high route along the top of a hill overlooking the river or continue down to a low route that went along the river. Jim took the high route and Lren and Jerry took the canoe down toward the water. The canoe was difficult to maneuver because of thick brush, fallen trees, and rough terrain. We put the canoe back in the water and walked it down the rapids until a falls was reached. At the falls we loaded up again and continued to walk. By this time it was almost

dusk and Jim was nowhere to be seen. We shouted several times but received no answer. In another half hour the sound of the rapids began to quiet down leading us to believe we were near the end of them. Jim had reached the other end and had started back for us. When we met he had a trail cut and blazed for the last hundred yards.

We loaded the canoe and found an excellent campsite just across the lake. Everything was there, a level rock ledge, firewood, and a good spot for the tent. The Lake is Palette which means we are ready to start east to Nipigon. Up until now our effort has been only to get north. Supper was cooked and some time spent sitting around the fire drinking coffee, watching the northern lights, and remarking about the days progress.

September 3

This was a lazy morning. We slept in and did not get up until 10:00 A.M. The temperature was very warm and there was no wind. Upon setting out to cross the lake it was easy to see why the day was warm. A storm was coming. The temperature suddenly plummeted down and a strong wind came out of the east, all within a few minutes time. The wind and waves were strong enough to cause us to lose headway. Then the wind changed to the north and the rains came. We could now make progress with three paddlers and by quartering the waves, but the rains completely soaked us with or without raincoats. We managed to reach the end of the lake just as the storm was ending, but the canoe had shipped six inches of water.

At the end of the lake the canoe was walked up a small length of fast water. We passed the canoe from one person to the other but Jim slipped on a rock and fell up to his waist in water. He then gave up any notion of keeping dry and jumped in the water to pull the canoe up stream all by himself.

We crossed a pond and came to another portage. In the middle of the portage was a small cabin with smoke coming out of the chimney! A couple occupied the cabin and were from Chipewa Falls, Wisconsin. The cabin was owned by the Wisconsin Fish and Game Club. They could see how wet we were and invited us in for a cup of coffee. Their stove did not have the output that we would have liked.

We left the cabin in an hour not very much drier or warmer. After passing through the narrows between Palette and Shikag it seemed a sail might work for us. We quickly cut some small poles and erected a poncho sail. As soon as it was lashed up the wind died out. This being the second sad sailing experience of the trip we decided we would not sail again until an all day gale came up from the west. We soon made a lunch stop on the point of a peninsula jutting down from the north shore of Shikag. Today we built a fire at noontime and cooked eggs which the people in the cabin had given to us.

At 6:00 P.M. a cabin was sighted off the starboard bow and since it seemed we were approaching the arctic circle the temptation was too strong to resist. It was a quite new trappers cabin with a stove. The walls were made from peeled logs and the roof was earth. A window was once covered with cellophane but we soon had it covered with a poncho and a fire going in the stove. After an enjoyable

supper the tent was laid on the floor and we turned in. The cabin was not yet provided with bunks. A comfortable night was spent here because a fire was kept going all night.

The size of the cabin was about ten by fifteen feet. A small doghouse was built just outside the door for the trapper's dog. It was a clean well kept cabin compared to many. It is common to find trappers cabins which are anything but clean and have piles of cans and garbage in front of the doors accounting for several winters disposal. Sometimes the cabins are not finished the first season and they spend the winter in the partially erected frame with a canvas roof. Trapping in this country is a difficult life to lead. They come just before the fall freeze and are completely on their own until spring.

September 4

An early start and intentions of traveling a good many miles is the keynote of the day. A portage came up between Shikag and Metionga, the first one for 18 miles. The next lake was Brightsands where a pontoon plane found us and circled overhead for several minutes. From Brightsands the route was through the narrow fingers of Sparkling Lake to Kashishabog. We saw three moose today. We paddled quietly to within 50 feet of a cow moose before she saw us and thundered into the woods. Also today there were several portages which were not on the map. An error in the map sent us off course and cost an hours time.

The day was cold, cloudy, and rainy. Camp for the evening was made on the west shore of Kashishibog next to a water falls. The estimated distance traveled was 40 miles and 15 portages. Each lake was surrounded with low rock hills covered with pine trees. The area still looks exactly like the Quetico except that the lakes are larger.

Establishing a camp became a routine each night. One of us would start a fire and put pots of water on to boil for cooking. The pots are always covered with a layer of soap suds first. This makes the task of removing the carbon from the fire an easy matter. Usually the oven would be set up next to the fire to bake a cake. One of us would look for a patch of moss to set up the tent. The tent is a seven foot wall, more than large enough for all three of us. The tent is set up with two cross poles on each end. There is never a need to drive stakes for the tent. Sticks are set on the ground and held down with rocks. The tent ropes are then tied to the sticks. The ground cloth is put down and the sleeping bags laid down. The third person would unpack the food pack and begin to cook supper. After supper we would wash dishes and sit by the fire eating cake and discuss the day's events.

September 5

The day began with, "soft warm beams of sunlight floating into the door of the tent". This is an exaggeration and is a phrase we made up yeaterday describing how we would like to wake up. However the morning was warmer and it was a welcome change. We proceeded across an island filled Kashishabog Lake and entered a series of small lakes. Soon to come is the height of land. In this case the height of land is the ridge around the Great Lakes which separates the watersheds.

On our present side of the height the lakes and streams drain to the Rainey River and to Lake Winnipeg, and then to Hudson's Bay. On the other side of the height the water drains to the Great Lakes, and to the Atlantic Ocean. Several hundred miles south there is another height of land which marks the boundary of the Mississippi watershed. To the northwest is still another which divides the Hudson's Bay watershed with the Arctic Ocean watershed. There are two more on the continent. The Rocky mountains form a Pacific watershed and the Appalachian mountains form an Atlantic watershed.

Past Kashishabog a choice was made between two routes across the height of land. We chose the northern route because the map showed more open water and a 156 chain portage was bypassed. The northern route was through Leigh Lake, Wig Creek, and Puddy Lake.

The portage into the lake preceding Leigh was poor and had not been used for years. We began to wonder about the rest of the route ahead of us, but since the choice was made we decided to continue on. The next portage into Leigh Lake is the height of land portage. Up to now the lakes and streams contained less and less water as we progressed. After the next portage the route would be down hill and the movement of water would increase. The 60 chain portage was well blazed at first but the trail was not good. We suspected the canocks were playing games with us again. Finally the trail ended at the edge of a great swamp. The swamp extended to the left and right as far as the eye could see. The nearest solid ground directly across the swamp was a hundred yards away. The canoe and packs were immediately deposited on the ground and a brief conference held. The conclusion was that we should part company. Jerry elected to walk along the left shore of the swamp and look for a way across. Jim and Loren took the ax and saw and started across the swamp at that point. At times we waded in hip deep water but usually could walk on top of the muskeg or jump from clump to clump of the stuff. We called back and fourth to Jerry for a while but he was soon out of hearing range. Upon crossing the swamp we looked for a continuation of the portage but could find nothing. We gave up and began to cut our own. We proceeded to Leigh Lake by compass.

In cutting a portage every tree, rock, and turn must be judged by the difficulty it will impose upon the canoe carrier. The canoe is 17 feet long and the trail must allow for manoeuvring and adequate room for turns. For an adequate portage, logs need to be cleared away, trees cut down, brush cleared, and branches from nearby trees trimmed.

In a half hour we intersected the original portage but it was so poor that we continued to cut our own. Shortly Leigh was reached and a path cut down to the lake to a place where the canoe would be easy to load. We returned to the gear and met Jerry walking our trail, he had not found a better way. The canoe was soon in Leigh Lake and after a lunch break we continued on to the next portage.

The next few portages into Wig Lake were good. Wig creek turned out to be very interesting. It is a narrow waterway with high colored rock cliffs on both sides. The water in the creek was very deep and probably teeming with fish. We made camp on the creek on a large flat rock.

Our suppers consisted of dehydrated potatoes, rice, or macaroni. Each of these could be cooked with canned meats and various spices for seasoning. Breakfasts consisted of oatmeal or other cooked cereals. Also dehydrated fruits, coffee, cocoa, and cakes or puddings were part of the menu. The food pack contained all the groceries and the kettles. At the start of the trip it weighed about 120 pounds. However each day it becomes lighter. All cooking and drinking water comes directly from the lakes and streams and needs no boiling or other purification. The water has never been polluted and is pure.

September 6

The morning was very cold and our boots were frozen. Condensed moisture inside the tent completely soaked everything. However a few minutes after the fire was going all was well again.

The entire length of Wig creek is very scenic and very interesting to travel through. By noon we were ready for the portage into Puddy Lake. We landed in the most likely spot for a portage but could not find one. There was just a narrow valley full of boulders. We proceeded across the lake to a hill that was relatively free of trees. Puddy was just over the crest of the hill we figured. We portaged to the top of the hill and continued along a plateau for $\frac{1}{4}$ miles. Very suddenly we were distressed to find our position was at the top of a near vertical cliff and Puddy Lake was 100 feet below us. A half hour of searching revealed no route down. We were told of this portage by correspondence with a trapper at the Gull Bay Indian Reservation the previous winter. He was the only person there who had been in this area and he mentioned no portage. The cliff did lend itself to climbing so the packs were down in short order. The canoe was a different matter however. By use of rope and careful handling we managed to get the canoe down without letting it get away from us. Once down we cast off and looked for a portage but did not find one. The portage was truly a classic.

From Puddy we portaged to Chrome Lake where at one time a tote road from Collins, A Canadian Ranger Station 50 miles to the north, ended. We could see no sign of a road or a mine which we believed once was there. The portage out of Chrome was impossible and we did not attempt to take it. There was a sign on the portage dated some ten years ago and listed some peoples names. The sign said they were from North Platte, Nebraska. Upon returning to Puddy there was another portage through a 20 foot opening in the trees cut for $\frac{1}{4}$ mile or so. On the portage were piles of dirt and trenches. It appeared that prospectors had worked here at one time.

The rest of the portages into Obonga Lake were not good. They were full of handfalls and irregular shaped rocks. The last portage into Obonga could not be found. We blamed the canocks again. We cut our own portage along a stream to a pothole on the stream. Then by a stroke of luck a good trail was found on the north side of the pothole. We made the walk in the dark with flashlights and reached Obonga by 10:00 P.M.

Even at night it was easy to see that the local geology had changed. The shores of the lake consisted of round boulders six to twelve inches in diameter. The ground away from the shore was level and

covered with brush.

The trapper correspondent mentioned a cabin a few miles up the lake from us. We paddled to the location but found the roof caved in. We then picked out a point of land and made it do as a campsite. A spot in the bushes was cleared for the tent. The fireplace was made on the boulders right next to the water.

September 7

The original intention was to proceed south from Obonga to the Kaiashk River and downstream to our destination. However the stream to the Kaiashk was only shown on the map as a line and no portages were marked. Not knowing what the route had in store for us in the way of surprises, and since we were tired of trail blazing, we abandoned the route. Instead we elected to stay on Obonga and reach Nipigon via three large lakes, Kopka, Pishidgi, and Wabinosh.

Obonga is a large lake two miles and twenty miles long. Several high hills came into view. They were similar to the hills on Rose Lake located on the U.S. Canadian border. The portage into Kopka Lake was over a ridge. The trail required some cutting. On the north shore of Kopka Lake in a clearing were several large abandoned Indian lodges. Each seemed large enough to hold many families.

In the rapids between Kopka and Pishidgi we were surprised to find a dirt road and a wood bridge across the river. Near the bridge was a truck with USAF painted on the door. Further downstream several men were fishing. They were American Air Force personnel stationed at a radar base located at Armstrong, Ontario, 40 miles to the north. The road was new and therefore not on the map.

Next came Pishidgi Lake and the Kopka River. The river was wide and had a strong current. Once across the bottom of Wabinosh we took the last portage into Lake Nipigon, at last. It was an excellent portage and came out on an inlet on Wabinosh Bay of Nipigon. We could not see much of the lake yet. Forty feet out from shore was a large freight canoe with three Indians in it. In the center of the canoe was a man about 45 years old. The other two were youths of about 20. The lad in the stern was having a good time laughing at us, why I don't know. Perhaps we were looking a bit shabby after so many days in the bush. We loaded our canoe and rushed off without speaking to them. They were loading timber into their canoe. Apparently they had cut it on Wabinosh Lake and let it float down the rapids.

Upon leaving the bay we got our first look at Nipigon. The first thing of interest was Inner Barn Island and Outer Barn Island. The islands are square shaped red mountains which stand up 800 or 900 feet out of the water. Indeed they do look like giant barns. The next thing to capture our attention was the size of the lake. We could not see the other side. On the mainland across from Inner Barn Island we stopped to cook supper. It seemed to be a calm evening so we decided to continue on after supper. If we were to have a strong wind to contend with on this lake the waves would surely keep us off the water. We passed between Redstone Point and

Jackfish Island. Mt. Royal is located on Jackfish Island and is 1400 feet high. There is a small indian reservation on the island and we began to see their fires. The navigation was not difficult in the dark because we had no trouble picking out the islands. Later in the wind came up and therefore so did the waves. We went as far as we could and still avoid the large stretches of open water. At midnight we made camp on a point past Echo Rock.

The features on Nipigon were named in the eighteenth century by Europeans who traveled the area in search of beaver pelts. They were voyageurs and their method of travel was the canoe. Their presence is evident because of names like, Kelvin Island, Shakespeare Island, Alexandra Island, Alfred Island, Prince of Wales Island, Victoria Island, Britannia, and others. Also west of Nipigon such names as Pangloss Lake, Candide Lake, and Voltaire Lake were apparently named by a literary voyageur.

September 8

The day was windy and the waves were almost too high to travel. We hurried across the open water early in the morning and entered Kaiashk Bay. The Nipigon House of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Gull River Indian Reservation are located on the bay. Once at the entrance to the bay we could see the houses of the reservation but they were several miles away. Once in the bay the wind came out of the north and we were required to go straight into the waves. We needed to bail the canoe all the way across. Upon reaching the village we unloaded the canoe and walked to the Hudson's Bay store. Mr. Clifford Watson, the manager of the store was very good to us. He invited us to his house for supper which was very welcome after so many days of trail cooking. He also arranged for a truck to take us and our gear to Fort William. The pickup truck arrived at 7:00 P.M. and we tied the canoe to it. We arrived in the city of Fort William at 2:00 A.M. after an exhausting ride. Three of us were occupying one front seat of the truck. We took a room at the Y.M.C.A.

September 9

The day was spent in Fort William eating, resting, and sight seeing. We had to wire home for money to buy passage on the train back to the Quetico. The train came at 7:00 P.M. and we loaded the canoe and packs on the baggage car and went to our seats. The train ride was along the Shebandowan River. We got off the train at Kawene and slept in a railroad line shack.

September 10

The first thing required for the morning was a portage to Eva Lake. Then French and Pickerel. For the first time Pickerel was a small lake. The night was spent on Russel Lake in the Ranger Cabin.

September 11

Today we reached the base via the Kahshanpiwi chain. Rod the ranger at Ottawa Island was in Ely but the Canadian Customs man listened to the story of our trip. He claimed he burnt a large pot of chili and threatened to throw it away unless we would like some. It

was not burnt and was very good. The two Wind Lake portages were all that separated us from the base. We took the canoe out of the water for the last time at 9:00 P.M.

September 12

A late rising was had by all. After finally coming around we unpacked, made some minor repairs to the canoe and left for Ely to have supper. We had supper with Jim McDaniel and discussed the possibility of a trip to Hudson's Bay. After supper we departed, by car this time, to St. Paul.

From the trip a conclusion was reached by the three of us. The country to the north and east of the Quetico remains an ideal canoe country. The character of the land is similar to the Quetico except that the lakes are larger, and much less traveled. The area was for the most part a vast mystery until modern aerial-photo-map-making-techniques came into being in the thirties. The country is not suited for agriculture because there is little soil. Industrial development has not taken place even though hydroelectric power resources exist. The Canadian National Tracks, The Canadian Pacific Tracks, and the Trans-Canada Highway all pass through central Ontario. However they only serve to link the industrial east with the rural west. Central Ontario remains today as it was found in the eighteenth century by French and British fur traders and explorers.