

The War Spy Who Wasn't

By Aubrey Fullerton

ON the Main street of Woodport, and in the early afternoon, Hiram Braddy, town councillor, met his fellow councillor, Fletcher Hinkley, and told him a surprising piece of news.

A more unlikely time and place for such news would have been hard to find. Woodport is an easy-going town on the Great Lakes, where one does not expect things to happen; at any rate, no one expected them on that particular day last summer, for it was a quiet, lazy day when human ambition seemed dormant. Councillor Braddy, however, was alert.

"There's one of them war spies right here in Woodport!" he announced excitedly.

"That so?" responded Hinkley, with interest, but not too eagerly. "What's he spyin' on?"

"Come and see. I caught him at it not half an hour ago. Come on!" And Mr. Braddy pulled the interested but unconvinced Hinkley down to the Shore Road, and led him off along the lake-front at a pace that gave no opportunity for words.

The Shore Road was bordered with trees, under cover of which the two coun-

cillors made their way past the wharves and boat-houses to the old shipyard, once the busiest spot in Woodport, but now the most forsaken. Braddy, still leading the way, and still in silence, beckoned his companion into the weather-beaten carpenter shop at the side of the road, and across its empty room to a back window, where they took a stand overlooking the yard.

With a satisfaction he did not attempt to conceal, Councillor Braddy then pointed to a pile of boards, not a hundred feet away, on which sat a man dressed in gray. Braddy's manner indicated that this was the spy, and Hinkley, following his leader's example, fixed his eyes upon him.

The man in gray was apparently doing nothing. He did not move, and sat with bowed head. If he was a spy, he was a very inactive and unobserving one. Braddy suggested, however, in a whisper, that he might have seen them coming down the road and might therefore now be on his guard: but wait.

To watchful eyes, came at length a partial reward. The spy arose, as if waking from a reverie, walked a little toward the shop, picked up a stick, broke it in two, and smelled it. There seemed to be a fragrance about it that he liked, for his inhalations were long and loud, and the sound of them reached even the watchers in the shop. Presently he moved still nearer, and with another stick scraped away the surface chips at his feet, now and then picking up the fresher chips he thus uncovered, and smelling them. Finally he took out a pocket knife and whittled a piece of spruce edging, pausing every few minutes to smell the new wood.

to-morrow night, and if he ain't a spy we may be able to get a license fee out of him anyway."

Councillor Hinkley agreed to let the matter stand at that, leaving it to his fellow-official to continue investigations at his own will. If Hi's suspicions were correct, he said, it would be doing a public service for him to run the spy down.

At the Council meeting on Thursday night, Mr. Braddy stated the case officially and reported progress in the gathering of evidence. He had called at the hotel and examined the register, on which the stranger had signed as John Ormond, Winnipeg. But that was quite possibly a blind. The hotel people said he kept pretty much to himself, and they couldn't tell what he had come for. He had been at the shipyard again that day, turning over the chips, and searching for something that seemed hard to find.

Mr. Braddy claimed that this behavior on the part of an entire stranger in the town was extremely suspicious. The other members of the Council were not so seriously impressed, for Mr. Braddy was known among his fellow townsmen as over-curious and imaginative; but they advised him to keep up his detective work, which he already had so well in hand, and appointed Hinkley and one other councillor to act with him as a special vigilance committee.

The case developed nicely during the next two or three days, slackening somewhat on Sunday, when nothing noteworthy occurred beyond the attendance of the stranger at church, with a spruce



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German troops resting "somewhere on the Russian front"

This strange procedure went on for a quarter-hour or more, and the watching councillors beheld as men astonished the unusual spectacle of a grown man playing with chips. When they had seen enough, they quietly withdrew, and went back up the Shore Road.

"Seems to me," said Hinkley, as they got into ambush of the trees again, "that that back there ain't a spy so much as just an overgrown chip-bug."

"That may be all you can make of it," retorted Braddy, "but I tell you he's a spy, and up to some devilment right here in our midst. He's been at that game all day. Up at Birch Lodge, y'know, I've got a clear view right down on the shipyard, and this morning I saw a light-suited fellow walkin' around in it, but I couldn't make out from a distance what he was doing, and I hadn't time to come and see till after dinner. When I come by the yard, there he was again, and I hid behind a tree and watched him. He was nosin' and smellin' as if his life depended on it. Then I came on and got hold of you, and now you've seen him too."

"Yes, Hi, I've seen him, and I'll admit he's kind of interesting," Hinkley replied, "but he don't act like a spy. Did you think he was another of them bridle-busters come up from Maine?"

"I don't know what he is in partic'lar, but he's suspicious in general. Looks to me as if he might be a German, and y' never know what they're up to."

"What'll you do about it, Hi?"

"Find out—that's what. I'm goin' to watch him, and see what this perfume-huntin' means. I'll report to Council

lath for a walking-stick. But the climax came on Monday.

Early that morning, the gray-suited man was on the move, heading up to Mr. Braddy's end of the town, and sampling chips wherever he found them. He now carried a hatchet, with which he cut or split the larger pieces, and a wicker basket. Declining to talk with the townspeople whom he met, he avoided the more public places, and pursued his chip hunt in ways apart, and alone.

About the middle of the afternoon, Mr. Braddy, who also had been on the move all day, hurriedly summoned his two helpers, and led them to the mill-pond hill, where, behind a screen of bushes, they could look directly down upon the old Woodport sawmill.

There, in the mill-yard, was the man in gray, at a new game. He had built a fire of birch bark, stray pieces of which lay scattered about, and was now sitting before it on a box.

"For the land's sake!" exclaimed Hinkley. "He surely ain't cold."

"No, he's experimentin' for something," said Mr. Braddy. "See him now—there he goes—puttin' on more bark, then drinkin' in the smell."

"Setting fires is risky," declared the third councillor. "First thing we'll know, he'll be firing the town and sitting by to smell it."

"No, that ain't it," returned Mr. Braddy. "The way I work it out, he's either a spy just tryin' to throw us off his scent, or one of them science men findin' out new mixtures of somethin' or other. There's more'n smell behind it."