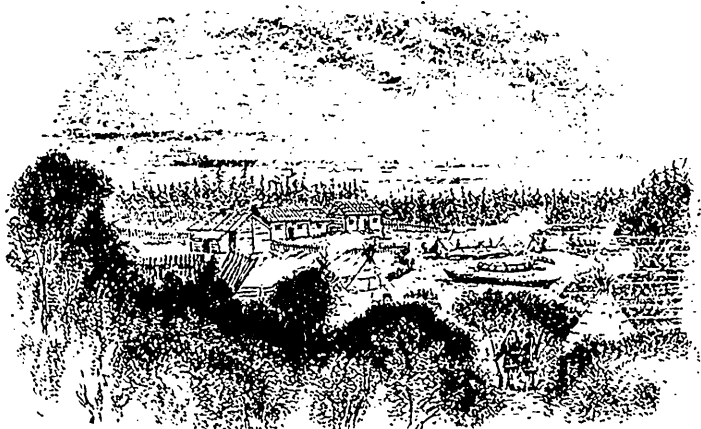




HUDSON'S BAY CO. FORT AT RAT PORTAGE, ON OLD FORT ISLAND, 1857.

Reproduced from a sketch by H. Y. Hind.

by the construction of a canal at Sault Ste. Marie, which was opened to navigation in the summer of 1800, being fifty-five years before the completion of the canal on the American side.

The chief seat of the Northwest Company's enterprise was on the north shore of Lake Superior. A new location for business headquarters was chosen at the mouth of the Kaministiquia River and named Fort William, after William McGillivray, one of the partners of the company. It soon became the most important post north of the great lakes, and at some seasons of the year the number of traders assembled there was not less than 3,000, gathered from all quarters of the Northwest to which the operations of the company had extended.

"Here, in an immense wooden building," to quote Washington Irving, "was the great council hall, as also the banqueting chamber, decorated with Indian arms and accoutrements, and the trophies of the fur trade. The house swarmed at this time with traders and voyageurs, some from Montreal, bound to the interior posts, some from the interior posts bound to Montreal. The councils were held in great state, for every member felt as if sitting in parliament, and every retainer and dependent looked up to the

assemblage with awe, as to the House of Lords. There was a vast deal of solemn deliberation, and hard Scottish reasoning, with an occasional swell of pompous declamation. These grave and weighty councils," Irving goes on to say, "were alternated by huge feasts and revels, like some of the old feasts described in Highland castles."

Neither Toronto, nor Niagara, nor Kingston could approach the commercial



SULTANA BAY, NORTH SIDE OF SULTANA ISLAND.

From a photograph by Miss Alice M. D. Fitch.

greatness of Fort William ninety years ago; and in no part of the interior of the lower peninsula were such scenes of activity to be witnessed as along the highways of trade in the interior of the northern country, from the Ottawa river to the Lake of the Woods.