

name was originally given by Sir Thomas Button to the river itself, the bay into which the rivers flow he called Button's Bay. Sir Thomas Button wintered his ships in the Nelson River near the mouth of a small creek; his winter quarters must have been above Flamborough Head, as he describes the river at that place as being less than one mile wide. Port Nelson was so named after the master of one of his ships who died during the winter. The fact of the name being thus entered on the chart may have led people to believe that some harbour existed at this point. The Nelson and Hayes Rivers here empty their waters into Hudson's Bay, and on the tongue of land lying between the mouths of these rivers is built York Factory, the great *entrepôt*, in years gone by, of the Hudson's Bay Company.

The site was selected by the company, not on account of the existence of any harbour for the security of their shipping, but because the Hayes River was the best boat and canoe route to and from the interior.

Formerly this route was the great, if not the only, means of communication with the early settlers of the Red River and Selkirk Settlements, and it at one time required two ships of considerable size to carry out the goods, not only for the company's trade, but for the use of the settlers. At that time the company's ship did not come in to the fort, but the freight was discharged in the outer roads into schooners, which the company kept in the bay; these took the freight up the river to the Factory, taking out the return cargo in the same way.

Of late years, other means of communication with the North-West Territories having been established, the freight requirements of the company's trade at this post have been much decreased, and for several years past a small brigantine, drawing from 9 to 11 feet of water, has done all the work for the York and Churchill district, and this small vessel has frequently taken the ground both going in and coming out. The outer anchorage in the lead of the Nelson River is ten miles from the nearest land, which is so low as to be out of sight from the deck. The tidal currents at this point runs from two to two and a half or even three knots per hour, the direction varying with the time of the tide. The only distinguishable object is the Point Marsh Beacon, which towers up 80 feet above high water, and without which it would be almost impossible to make the anchorage even in clear weather.

In thick weather a ship must keep right out in thirty fathoms of water, or she may find herself carried in by the tide, when she cannot get out again.

A shoal (Point Marsh Shoal) extends out for over eight miles, and has less than six feet of water on it; and when it is borne in mind that the surrounding land is uniformly low and level, with no natural features which could be used as leading marks, some idea of the difficulty of taking a ship into this place may be realized.

It is undoubtedly true that a channel does exist in the lead of the Nelson River, but it is both narrow and somewhat tortuous, and would have to be closely buoyed throughout its entire length from the anchorage to Seal Island, a distance of about twenty-seven nautical miles. The Indians say that the channel shifts from year to year, and I have no doubt that their statement is correct.

The mouth of the river from Sam's Creek to Point Marsh Beacon is ten miles across, and the channel at this point less than a mile in width. It narrows opposite Black Bear Creek to about 2,000 feet, and two miles east of Flamborough Head, where the river is still between two and three miles wide, the channel has narrowed to 200 feet.

In order to make a channel and basin capable of accommodating freight-carrying vessels much dredging would have to be done, and besides the 27 miles of closely buoyed channel a lightship would have to be moored some distance from the outer anchorage to enable ships to come in if the weather was partially clear.

A great deal of fog hangs over the bay in the months of July and August, and much delay, if not disaster, would be sure to occur if vessels were to attempt to make this port in anything but the finest clear weather, and as we met a lot of loose ice, which was very heavy, off the mouth of the river on the 5th of August, the lightship could not be placed in position till all danger from this cause was gone.

The cost of the construction and maintenance of a harbour at this place together

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