

David Thompson: Explorer

By

J. B. Tyrrell

Photographs by the Author

Editor's Foreword

The leading Canadian explorer to-day is undoubtedly Mr. J. B. Tyrrell, the author of the following article. Mr. Tyrrell claims for himself no more assuming title than that of mining engineer. His office in the Confederation Life Building, in Toronto, is very much like all other offices, except that it contains curious photographs and other souvenirs of the many long journeys which Mr. Tyrrell has made in Canada. He knows Canada's farthest north as few know it. He explored the Mackenzie river, the rivers leading into Hudson's Bay, and made maps which no one else could have made. He has been the only white man to venture in certain parts of Canada, and is the modern David Thompson, the modern edition of the man of whom he writes in this article, though he would never admit it himself.

The paper herewith printed was read by Mr. Tyrrell before the British Association for the Advancement of Science. Mr. Tyrrell permitted it to be reproduced in the Geographical Journal and in MacLean's Magazine. He is already well known as the author of "Across the Sub-Arctic," and is now working on a new edition of Samuel Hearne's Diary and David Thompson's Journal.

IT gives me a great deal of pleasure to have the opportunity of submitting a few of the facts on which I venture to claim that David Thompson, of whose achievements but little note has been taken, was the greatest land geographer that the British race has produced.

A poor boy from a London charity school, he spent most of his life on the northern part of this continent when it was a wilderness, peopled only by the natives and by a few fur traders, who had little groups of houses or factories, often

hundreds of miles apart, scattered along the principal waterways.

He was a fur trader in the employ of the Hudson Bay and North-West Companies, and in the prosecution of this trade he travelled many thousands of miles in canoes, on horseback, and on foot through what was then a vast unmapped country, extending from Montreal on the east to the Pacific ocean on the west, and from Athabasca Lake on the north to the headwaters of the Mississippi River on the south. Wherever he