

Outlaw Trappers Defy Ontario and Win

Lid Is Now Off and There's No Limit to Pelts That May Be Taken—Ontario Leading Fur Producer of America—Seeking New Ways to Prevent Revenue From Vast Fur Wealth Escaping Taxation.

By GREGORY CLARK

HUNDRED thousand beaver pelts were taken in Ontario last season. Gold, timber, fur: the treasures of the north.

Dynamite, the axe and the steel trap: the implements to be inscribed on the coat of arms of the north country.

Gold, they say, will never give out. About timber, they are worried. Trees take such a time to grow again.

And what about fur? Four million, five hundred thousand dollars worth of furs was taken in Ontario last season. A hundred thousand beaver, a half a million muskrat, seventy-eight thousand mink, ninety-four thousand weasel called ermine, seventy-three thousand skunk, eleven thousand red fox.

These are the figures which make Ontario the greatest fur producer in America. No province, however far and wild, no state however romantic and touted in movie and story, comes anywhere near Ontario in these practical evidences of wilderness wealth.

And there is no sign of it passing. Except for one close season, to wit, on beaver south of the French and Mattawan Rivers until 1925, Ontario makes no restrictions on the huge annual slaughter of its fur-bearing animals.

In fact, a few weeks ago, the only restriction they had was removed. And that involves the story of the romantic battle between the law and the north country.

The north country has its way. Because railroads have been spraddled across it, like a couple of stray cobwebs seen against the sky, because settlers have been scattered along the steel, because from the train window, as you whirl across the mighty miles, you see evidences of civilization, because the north country has been mapped and imaginary lines drawn upon it and names importantly affixed to these imaginary spaces. Old Ontario is under the delusion that it has mastered the last wilderness.

But the last wilderness snickers a mighty snicker.

The Law That Failed

THE tale of the beaver laws illustrates the point. Alarmed at the tremendous taking of beaver, to preserve that beautiful and emblematic animal from the lust of the world, the Ontario government passed a law (down, way down in Toronto), to this effect:

That no trapper could take more than ten beaver in a season. And to enforce this law, each licensee to trap beaver had appended to it ten coupons or tags which the trapper had to affix to each of his ten pelts before selling them. And then, no dealer could have a beaver skin in his possession without the tag attached. No beaver hide could be bought, sold or otherwise disposed of without the government coupon on it.

It was a pretty law. It should have worked prettily. But what is law to the north country?

I Like Americans

By A FOREIGNER

LIKE Americans. They are so unlike Canadians. They do not take their policemen seriously. They come to Montreal to drink. Not to criticize. They claim they won the war. But they know at heart that they didn't. They have such respect for Englishmen. They like to live abroad. They do not brag about how they take baths. But they take them. Their teeth are so good. And they wear B.V.D.'s all the year round. I wish they didn't brag about it. They have the second best navy in the world. But they never mention it. They would like to have Henry Ford for president. But they will not elect him. They saw through Bill Bryan. They have gotten tired of Billy Sunday. Their men have such funny hair cuts. They are hard to suck in on Europe. They have been there once. They produced Barney Google, Mutt and Jeff. And Jiggs. They do not hang lady murderers. They put them in vaudeville. They read the Saturday Evening Post. And believe in Santa Claus. When they make money. They make a lot of money. They are fine people.



Hon. Charles McCrea, minister of mines, who reformed the trapping laws.

Especially a law made down, way down in Toronto?

The north country has its way. It shoots deer when it needs deer. It shoots partridge when it feels like partridge. And then, regard this trapper:

He is a hard worker. He spends the summer scouting his trap lines. From some little grey village of shacks along the steel, he sets forth into the last wilderness, which engulfs him five miles from the rails. Through the pathless swampy jungles of the north he feels his way, seeking the shy, rich creatures of the wild. He builds a log shanty in the heart of the country he selects, and two, perhaps three more log shelters at day's march distances out on his trap lines. He invests money, much money, in traps, provisions and outfit. For five long winter months, he dwells afar in the wilderness, pitting his wits against the cunning of the wild, making his endless rounds, despite blizzard and bitter cold, of his traps, from headquarters cabin to night shelters along the way, dragging his home-made jumper sled behind him, laden with supplies, traps and pelts.

Here he is afar in the wilds, and the government allows him ten beaver. Suppose he takes his ten beaver the first week he is in the bush? Will he cease trapping beaver?

He is alone. No one ever comes near. Beaver is a glossy, lovely pelt. It is worth fifteen, twenty dollars.

The answer is in the negative. The trapper didn't cease. He took what the wilderness gave. Is there any law on the amount of gold a miner can take out of the ground? Is there a law on the number of trees a lumberman can cut? So the law made an outlaw of the north country trapper. And the north country gave its sympathy to him.

Ways to Beat the Law

THE trapper took all the beaver fortune brought to his steel traps. And he devised a number of ways of beating the law in the disposal of the pelts.

First, if the trapper was anywhere near the Quebec border, he simply took his furs in the spring and paddled across river and lake to the boundary, where numbers of traveling dealers waited in tent camps along the water highways, to buy contraband skins from Ontario trappers. Knowing the skins to be contraband, these dealers rooked the trappers for all they could on the price of the beaver pelts. Thus the trapper was done out of his fair price, and the government of Ontario was done out of its royalty on all skins of all kinds taken in the province.

If the trapper was too far from the Quebec border he could always find, in the little towns, someone who was making a special business of buying contraband skins and transporting them by canoe the several hundred miles through the bush to the border.

Those who were bold enough amongst the trappers simply swore out an affidavit to the effect that the beaver pelts they had above the number of ten, without tags, had been trapped outside the province.

Another system was to buy beaver coupons from the Indians. All Indians are not trappers. In the vicinity of white men, a sort of lethargy attacks the Indian. Since he is entitled, free, to a beaver license and ten tags for himself and every member of his family, the lazy Indian found a handy source of income in selling his tags to white trappers who had the misfortune to catch more than the ten beaver permitted by law.

One way or another, the trapper beat the law. The north country had its way. And it was with a loud chuckle that echoed over some three hundred thousand square miles of wilderness that the north country received the news

Paice, of the Soo, is carrying, for the first time, the law and the name of Ontario into the depths of the forgotten country of Patricia.

Ontario is Greatest Fur Producer in the Dominion

ONTARIO'S lead over the other provinces is shown in these Dominion figures for the year 1921 on representative furs:

	Beaver	Muskrat	Red Fox	White Fox	Mink
Ontario	83,812	462,136	5,965	236	44,597
Quebec	49,009	206,987	4,113	6,970	19,061
New Brunswick	162	14,171	680	1	1,899
Manitoba	10,656	396,180	1,250	84	14,120
British Columbia	527	72,850	579	238	8,177
Northwest Terr.	2,571	156,820	961	13,778	8,334
Yukon Terr.	0	12,765	450	0	608

of the repeal of the beaver laws.

A trapper, this season, can now trap as many beaver as he pleases. The lid is off.

Making Outlaws of Trappers

HON Charles McCrea, (himself from the north country,) minister of mines for Ontario, in whose portfolio rests also fish and game, put the new law across.

"We came to the conclusion," said he, "astounding as it may seem, that there were as many beaver being killed in Ontario with the law as would be killed without any law. In short, as many beaver as possible were being taken. The law was simply of no account. It would break the treasury to try to put in a force of overseers sufficient to patrol that immense north country of ours. But what distressed the north country more than anything was that the law was making outlaws of the trappers."

"We have removed all restrictions. A man may take all the beaver he can. The results will be: the trapper will get full value for his pelts; the province will get its revenue off thousands of pelts that were slipping into Quebec and Manitoba; and the trapper can hold up his head."

"And no more beaver will be taken now than formerly. Because formerly they were taking all they could anyway."

"What about conservation?" Mr. McCrea was asked.

"Ontario has seven districts, with a district warden over each. In these districts, at strategic centres, are the game overseers, to the number of fifty, with several special patrol officers roaming about. One of the principal duties of this staff is to make an annual report on the fur situation in every locality. For conservation, we will declare closed any district in which the fur bearing animals show signs of becoming depleted."

Conservation is a drastic sort of thing. It wouldn't do, for instance, to declare a small region closed. In that case, it would be very easy for the trappers to trap within the closed

region and pretend the pelts were taken outside. The government has closed the entire province south of the French and Mattawan rivers to beaver and other trapping until 1925. That region borders on one of the greatest beaver countries in the world—the Sudbury belt. Overseers and special officers have been thickened up in this closed region, to prevent trappers north of the rivers from sneaking across. Closed means closed. The fine for breaking the law will eat up a season's profits.

Season is Closed Earlier

ONTARIO has taken the lid off beaver, but it has done another big thing in conservation. It has made the close of the beaver season March 31, and allows only ten days after that date for the trapper to get rid of his skins. For, you see, beavers are easily trapped in the early spring. Like deer and human beings and all other creatures, beavers are somewhat crazy during the mating season, and will take chances they would not otherwise take. In the spring, trappers can make far bigger catches than in the fall or winter. In past years, nobody knows how many beavers were taken at the mating season, and the skins turned in as late as May. The new law squares that.

Another trick ruthless trappers had in dealing with the beaver was to destroy the beaver house, thus driving the beaver out of shelter, making trapping easy, or the actual killing of them with clubs a possibility. This has been made a crime of the darkest sort in the new law, which forbids the disturbing of beaver houses in any way.

"To patrol that vast wilderness," said Hon. Charles McCrea, "is economically impossible. Ontario can do best by placing the fur trade on a business basis, so that the trapper and the province can get the most out of it. And when conservation is necessary, conserve in the most drastic fashion."

The deputy minister of game and fisheries for Ontario is Donald McDonald, a name that ought



Fighting Forest Fires in Northern Minnesota



This girl little realizes that the matched pelts in her mink coat have behind each of them a story of daring and romance in the last wilderness.

to be instantly significant to everybody in the fur game, from trapper to dealer. Mr. McDonald was with the Hudson's Bay Company for fifteen years, and with Revillon Freres and other great companies another eight years before he came down out of the north to handle the government's game and fisheries department. He was ranging the wilderness hundreds of miles inland north of Superior a quarter of a century ago, one year collected seventeen thousand muskrat on the Winisk and Albany rivers, and such tales he can tell of the trout fishing, for example, over the height of land, where legend had it that there were no trout. He knows fur. And he knows trappers.

"Every year," he said, "Ontario is adding another game sanctuary to its list. In twenty-five years, by the present program, Ontario will have half a hundred great forest sanctuaries, both in the settled areas and in the very remote regions, where trapping will be forbidden and where the fur-bearers will be free to propagate and spread to the outer lands. A close season has a remarkable effect. Last winter, a sort of close season was declared by the weather. The severe winter made the trapping of muskrats very difficult. The result is, there has never been such a splendid crop of muskrats for years. There need be no fear for the fur crop. The edge of the real wilds, far north, has scarcely been touched, after all. And in a couple of years of closed season, on a wide area, we can restock the wilds in a most astonishing way."

Where Ontario Really is

IT is in that remote country beyond the last settlements that Mr. McDonald's heart is. Ontario hardly thinks of it as Ontario. Take a good wide look at the map of Ontario. The little black foot-shaped bit at the bottom is Ontario to some two million inhabitants of the province. That little black bit is south of the French and Mattawan rivers. When the person from Old Ontario says he is going north for a holiday, he means somewhere south, not north, of those rivers. Yet four-fifths of the province lies north of those rivers.

Strung along the Sudbury belt, northward, are the districts of Temiskaming, Algoma, Thunder Bay, Rainy River. North of them, north of all their boundaries, lies the district of Patricia, which is no man's land. It carries Ontario to Hudson's Bay. It is a land of spruce swamp and poplar flats. Its trappers are Indians, and white traders penetrate it to vie with the great companies in the search for fur. It swarms with fur. It is the heart of the last wilderness.

And Ontario has just sent its man into it. E. W. Paice, of the Soo, an experienced officer, is now bringing the law, for the first time, into the Ontario which Ontario almost forgets. He went in by Winnipeg, up Lake Winnipeg to the top, thence north and east by canoe, up the Echimonish river to Oxford House, across God's lake and down God's river to Island lake, where there are nine trading posts collecting furs from that vast country that lies between northern Manitoba and Hudson's Bay, and feeding them out, via the route Paice had taken, with his Indians, to Manitoba. It is to collect Ontario's royalty on these furs that Paice has gone in there alone. After he has established a system of collection this winter, he is to push on into the great beyond, down mighty rivers that are



The black portion is Ontario south of the French and Mattawan rivers. The rest is Northern Ontario, fur mine of America, treasure house of the world.

amongst the other imaginary lines upon the map, visiting posts, camps, meeting traders and voyageurs on these highways, and spreading the law and the name of Ontario all over that forgotten country.

This winter, also, Dan Ward, special patrol officer, has set out from Lac Seul, above Superior, to cut a winter trail to Deer Lake, another trading centre in the far north. He, too, goes alone, with Indian packers, to carry the law into no man's land. On the east at Moose Factory, nearer home, is George Ray, special officer, patrolling the James Bay country.

The Take of One Season

TEN thousand white trappers and nobody knows how many Indians are abroad in the land now. Five thousand of these white trappers are men who disappear for five long months into that wilderness away from the spidery steel, to brave the legendary north all alone, in primitive fashion, their game the wildest of the wild, foxes, lynx, martin, and mink, beaver, and fearful carcajou.

Their take last season came to this:

Beaver	93,971	Fox, silver or	
Otter	5,309	black	87
Fisher	2,657	Fox, white	1,765
Marten	7,327	Lynx	170
Mink	78,478	Raccoon	836
Muskrat	554,888	Skunk	20,344
Bear	2,137	Weasel	73,219
Fox, cross	469	Wolverine	94,399
Fox, red	11,272		6

A total of 947,343 pelts. An estimated value of \$4,489,288.

Their law is the law of the north, of the forests and swamps, of the blizzard and the storm.

The north country has its way.

I Like Canadians

By A FOREIGNER

LIKE Canadians. They are so unlike Americans. They go home at night. Their cigars don't smell bad. Their hats fit. They really believe that they won the war. They don't believe in Literature. They think Art has been exaggerated. But they are wonderful on ice skates. A few of them are very rich. But when they are rich they buy more horses than motor cars. Chicago calls Toronto a puritan town. But both boxing and horse-racing are illegal in Chicago. Nobody works on Sunday. Nobody. That doesn't make me mad. There is only one Woodbine. But were you ever at Blue Bonnets? If you kill somebody with a motor car in Ontario You are liable to go to jail. So it isn't done. There have been over 500 people killed by motor cars in Chicago So far this year. It is hard to get rich in Canada. But it is easy to make money. There are too many tea rooms. But, then, there are no cabarets. If you tip a waiter a quarter He says "Thank you." Instead of calling the bouncer. They let women stand up in the street cars. Even if they are good-looking. They are all in a hurry to get home to supper And their radio sets. They are a fine people. I like them.