

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 NEW YEAR'S DAY JOUR DE L'AN	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

The original Canadian beaver was six feet tall with teeth the size of shovels. He scared few men, women or children, for there were few to scare. He lived in an underwater lodge the size of a ballroom and chopped down full-grown trees as if they were toothpicks.

That was around ten thousand years ago, and Canada (as we now call it) had just melted out of the ice age. The Indians found a smaller beaver and adopted him as a clan emblem and model.

He continues to be a model for all—a good father, an industrious citizen, a faithful husband and a dam-good builder. He was not (and is not now) an ideal

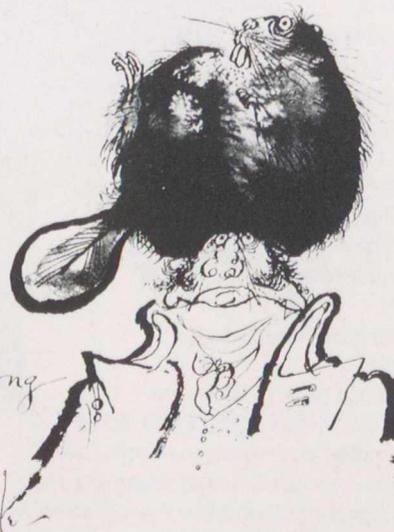
neighbour, being overly fond of flooding fields, roads, construction sites and golf courses.

The first French settlers found *le castor* attractive: a hunter could always find him down at the lodge, and he was both edible and wearable. By the latter part of the sixteenth century his fame had spread to Europe, where it was universally felt that he made a superior hat. He did—his fur was microscopically barbed and could easily be matted, formed into a cone and steamed into a handsome topper. As the demand grew, the fur traders grew rich. In 1673 Governor Louis de Frontenac in Quebec suggested to Minister

Jean-Baptiste Colbert in Paris that the beaver be made part of Quebec's coat of arms. Colbert ignored the suggestion, but the beaver did appear on an official Quebec medal struck in 1690.

The hat flourished for a hundred years, but in 1798 John Hetherington, an Englishman, invented a top hat made of plush or silk shag. From then on the smart set—The Duke of Marlborough, William Ewart Gladstone, Sir John A. Macdonald, Woodrow Wilson, J.P. Morgan and Fred Astaire—wore silk. *Sic transit gloria castori.*

How to make a Beaver Hat



Ronald Searle, in *The Great Fur Opera*. Courtesy Hudson's Bay Company.