

winter employment in the lumber camps.

The land may be obtained by any bona-fide settler, upon the following conditions: That the amount of land each settler may purchase shall not exceed half a section, or 320 acres; that the price paid shall be fifty cents an acre, one fourth down, and the balance in three equal annual instalments with interest at six per cent. The settler will be required to clear and put under cultivation at least ten per cent of the land purchased, and to erect a habitable house. When this has been done, and the purchaser has resided on the land for at least six months in each of the three years, or for two years continuously, and has fully paid for the same, he may obtain his patent.

The result of the Ontario Government's enterprise is that about 8,000 acres are already taken up and the first payments made; and about 30 settlers are now on the ground. By the end of this season there will already be a nice little farming community established there.

Mr. Randall commences development work on "Our Jack" property on Monday or Tuesday night. It is said to be a continuation of the Eshweller vein from which such fine specimens were shown a few days ago by Mr. Goodhue. The property is only three miles out from Rat Portage.—The Rat Portage News.

## The Town of Rat Portage

The town of Rat Portage is the business centre of the whole district which this number of the Colonist describes. It is the most important town on the main line of the C. P. R. between Port Arthur and Winnipeg. It is beautifully situated at the northerly end of the Lake of the Woods, and is 133 miles east of Winnipeg, and about 300 miles west of Fort William. A little west of the business part of the town, though still within the corporation limits the waters of the lake flow in a magnificent stream into the Winnipeg River, which, within a few hundred yards tumbles through a rocky gorge and forms the beautiful Ka-ka-be-kitchewan Falls. The site of the town is about as fine as could be imagined, lying along the lake front where excellent wharfage can be had at very little expense, and at the same time standing high and with a perfect natural drainage upon the gentle undulations of the wooded shore. There is, moreover, plenty of room for expansion, a condition which the last year has shown to be a very necessary one.

Properly speaking the history of Rat

Portage dates from the year 1876, although as far back as two hundred years ago a Hudson's Bay Company's post existed where the present east end of the town lies, and another below the first falls of the Winnipeg River, near where the electric power house now stands. These were links in the chain of trading posts which that company had established extending from the present site of Fort William on Lake Superior west and north through Fort Garry in the Red river district to York Factory on the Hudson's Bay. It is estimated that in those days several millions of dollars worth of furs must annually have passed these posts bound for the markets of the far east. But this is practically ancient history now in a country where progress is so rapid, and as we have said, the modern history of this place began in 1876, when the first C. P. R. contractors located their camps in the neighborhood. It was they who gave the place its present name of Rat Portage. For several years there was very little growth or settlement, and what there was was considerably retarded by the dispute between the Ontario and Manitoba governments as to which had the right of control over the district. The dispute was settled by the decision of the privy council, known as the boundary award, though not without a good deal of trouble, and even some disturbance, before the Manitoba government submitted to the decision which had been given against its claims.

In August 1883, Rat Portage was incorporated as a township, under the laws of Ontario, and H. F. Holmes was elected the first reeve; and in 1891, the difficulty about the provincial boundary having been definitely settled, the town obtained its charter of incorporation. The first council was composed of the following gentlemen: Mayor, Mr. Archie Campbell; councillors, Messrs. Davis, Nash, Savage, Cameron, Belyea and Oliver. The Rat Portage board of trade was formed in 1888.

The growth of the town since its incorporation has been steady and substantial, as the following statistics of the increase of population in comparison with assessment will show:

Year.	Population.	Assessment.
1891.....	2,205 .....	\$ 807,410
1892.....	2,287 .....	856,625
1893.....	2,774 .....	917,260
1894.....	3,182 .....	941,045
1895.....	2,969 .....	1,190,096

The apparent decrease of population in the year 1895 was caused by the fact that at the time the assessment was taken, a great many of the inhabitants were away.

The assessment for the present year

has just been completed, and shows the following satisfactory evidence of recent growth. The population is now fully 4,000, and the gross amount of taxable property is \$1,839,970, of which \$676,000 is exempt from taxation for a certain time.

The vital statistics for the year, show the remarkable proportion of 98 births to only five deaths for the whole year. This is certainly the most conclusive possible evidence of the wonderful salubrity of the place, for surely few if any towns of a population of 4,000 ever had such a low death rate as this, which is little more than one per thousand.

The affairs of the town are at present administered by the following gentlemen: Mr. Geo. Barnes, mayor; and councillors C. W. Belyea, Jacob Hose, Geo. Foster, Charles Pope, Alex. McQuarrie and James B. Davies.

The worthy mayor, Mr. Geo. Barnes, is a pioneer of the settlement, having arrived there in 1882. Starting business in a simple log house, he has grown up with the town, and much of its prosperity is due to the broad-minded spirit of progressiveness with which he has always taken a leading part in its affairs. Although originally from the east, he is a typical westerner, full of the energy and unbounded faith in his adopted home, which is always characteristic of the type. This is the second year that he has held the office of mayor, and during his administration, he has helped to secure many benefits for his town. He is the manager of the K. Furniture company, which is known everywhere through Western Ontario as the headquarters for all kinds of household and office furniture of a very superior class.

The councillors are all thoroughly representative men, some of them having proved themselves so satisfactory to their constituents that they have been elected again and again.

It is a remarkable fact, and one that reflects credit upon the last named councillor, that he has been a member of every council since the town was incorporated. He appears to be as tenacious of office as Mr. Gladstone, and in another quarter of a century or so, if fortune takes us again to Rat Portage, we shall expect to find him still there as the local G. O. M.

The town clerk, Mr. J. Kerr Brydon, also appears in every day parlance, to be "tared with the same stick," for he also has stood where he is ever since there has been a town clerk of Rat Portage.

The other officials of the town are: Treasurer, D. T. Ferguson; chief constable, A. Woods; constables, R. B. Donkin, E. Pich and W. Greenwood; assessors, R. B. Donkin and A. Woods.

The Ontario government officials are