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## CANADIAN ABORIGINAL CANOES.

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Canoeing, it may be remarked by way of introduction, is one of a number of things which have been borrowed, either for use or amusement, from the American Indian. The name, strangely enough, has been introduced from a region at some distance from that with which we are accustomed to connect canoe culture in its typical form, being derived from the word "canoa," in use among the Arawak of the West Indies. This was adopted in a similar form by the Spaniards, and as "canot" by the early French in Canada. The fact that there was already a name in current use, then, is no doubt the reason none of the names applied by the Indians of the Eastern Woodland area of America was adopted.

An Ojibwa term, fairly well-known from its employment by Longfellow in "The Song of Hiawatha", is "cheemaun". A name applied to a very large craft is "nabikwan". A Mohawk appellation is "gahonwe'ia"; rendered by the Onondaga, a related tribe, as "gaho'nwa". It is interesting to note, in the last-mentioned dialects, the close resemblance to the term for a bark bowl or trough.

Quaint early English forms, now obsolete, are "canow" and "cannoe".

There is little doubt that, in the earlier days of French exploration and settlement along the St. Lawrence and of English settlement in New England, the birch-bark canoe of Indian make was very soon adopted as the most convenient method of travel. We can readily infer, also, from early writers and other such sources, the extremely important part played by the canoe in the development of a very large portion of the North American continent.

It would obviously be most interesting to trace the canoe and other such devices to their origins, but there are indications that the problem in hand is one of the diffusion or spread of a cultural trait already elaborated, or partly elaborated, it may be in some other region. This is in part suggested by both the extent and the continuity of the area in which canoes are used. We can see that migrations of population, or the influence of one tribe

upon a neighboring one (accultural influence) would soon disseminate the canoe idea, possibly in a simple form, very widely, and that, under the influence of the varied materials at hand and diversified requirements, specialization in various directions would later arise.

Materials naturally played an important part. In areas where trees were not at hand, or were less convenient, such materials as rushes were sometimes built into a boat-shaped raft (see the balsa of California); or a skin-covered craft was employed, as in the Eskimo area, among the neighboring Kutchin of the Yukon, the Tahltan and other Athabascans of the Mackenzie region, and in some parts of the Plains) see the "bull-boat," a tub-shaped craft of skin and withes, used by various Siouan tribes, including the Mandan and the Hidatsa; also by the Arikara, a Caddoan tribe). The Omaha (Siouan) used hide-covered boats or canoes of ordinary type, but with a rude framework, indicating the slight development among them of ideas regarding navigation. In the last-mentioned craft, an oar or large paddle was used for steering, the paddlers sitting near the bow.

One of the most interesting developments in North American navigation was the canoe of birch-bark, which apparently reached its perfection in the Algonkian area, a region extending from around the Great Lakes, and some distance westward, to the maritime provinces and the New England states, though the birch canoe area exhibits cultural extensions in various directions, but particularly northward and westward to the Mackenzie river basin. There is little doubt that this distribution was largely determined by the range of the canoe birch (*Betula papyrifera*), which extends practically from the Atlantic coast to the Rockies, as well as to some distance south of the international boundary. The disappearance of the birch southward is indicated by the fact that very inferior canoes of elm, buttonwood and basswood bark were constructed by the Iroquois of Central New York state and southward, who evidently found the materials last mentioned