

## EARLY HISTORY OF C.P.R. ROAD

noble and adventurous Frenchman

### SAMUEL DE CHAMPLAIN

first launched his canoe at the mouth of French River, on the beautiful waters of Lake Huron, to gradually bring about and ultimately form and consolidate the scattered and disconnected portions of British North America into a great nation, having an incomparable future before it, must be of great interest to all Canadians, it was suggested to me by Mr. F. C. Wade, president of the Art, Historical & Scientific Association of Vancouver, that I should give an outline history of the first explorations actually undertaken and made with the object in view of discovering a practicable line for a transcontinental railway through British North America, or, to speak more correctly, through that portion of the west of Lake Simcoe, for the railway system of Canada was then insured as far west as that lake, and to the present town of Collingwood, on Lake Huron. I went through the preparatory grades of my profession as a civil engineer, from an axeman upwards, on the first surveys made for this railway between Toronto and Lake Huron.

The history of Canada from the time the French first settled in various places in its eastern and central portions, and made heroic explorations westerly until they saw the great snow-capped range of the Rocky Mountains like a wall rising somewhat abruptly from the prairie country, and which latter country was, in my younger days, generally known as the Nor'-West, until the surrender of Quebec, embraces what constitutes the first or strictly French period.

Shortly after the fall of Quebec, France ceded her right of sovereignty to Great Britain, since which time, with the exception of some matters not fully provided for in the treaty between the Powers, the two races have dwelt together in peace and amity, and no portion of the population of Canada have been more loyal than the French-Canadians in their efforts to assist, together with other British subjects, in building up the great Canadian nation which extends from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean, and from the United States to "the Frozen Ocean" which washes the northern shores of British North America.

As years passed by, and the country east of Lake Huron became populous and prosperous, it was found necessary to build railways to facilitate transportation, and to unite the different portions of the country by constructing a great highway through Upper and Lower Canada and the easterly Maritime Provinces, and for that purpose the Grand Trunk Railway was built, which, together with other important railways (and also being built, gave an immense impetus to the settlement and development of the portion of Canada east of Lake Huron.

Until the early fifties of the nineteenth century very little was known of the country west of Lake Huron, and it was generally supposed to be a rugged, cold, barren and inhospitable country, more suitable for wild animals and savage Indians than for civilized settlement and commercial development.

It was in the year 1850, when I was emerging from boyhood, that I met in Barrie

an English gentleman from Kent, England, and we arranged to undertake a trip from Barrie to Sault Ste. Marie for the purpose of exploring the north shore of Lake Huron, and also for shooting and fishing, and to be present at the town of Manitowaning, on the great Manitoulin Island, in order to see the annual distribution of the presents that the government in those days gave to the Indians that then inhabited the country around Lakes Huron and Superior.

We purchased a small bark canoe, which we transported by the old military road from Barrie to the Willow River, down which we paddled to the Nottawasaga River, and thence down it to Lake Huron, and then coasted along the shore of Lake Huron to Penetangishene where we outfitted.

After a delightful trip, during which we saw a great deal of the country bordering the north shore of Lake Huron, we went to see the distribution of the presents to the Indians. There were

### SEVERAL THOUSAND INDIANS

congregated, and many of the Indian warriors were very fine looking men. War dances were innumerable, and a canoe race was got up, in which there were upwards of four hundred birch bark canoes. We visited the Wallace copper mine on the Whitefish River, as well as the Bruce mines. We then returned to the site of an old saw-mill, about five miles from the village of Manitowaning, where raspberries grew in profusion, and wild pigeons were innumerable. Having shot a great number of these birds we embarked on the old steamer Gore, and proceeded to Sturgeon Bay, and thence in our canoe to the Coldwater River, where we put our canoe on a wagon and transported it to Orillia, and then, launching our canoe on Lake Couchiching, we paddled back to Barrie. It was during this trip that I noticed the large forests of white pine that existed throughout the country we had visited.

In the year 1854 I secured the most available of the above timber by taking up some fifteen hundred square miles of timber limits, and I spent a large portion of the years 1855-1857 exploring through the country north of Lakes Huron and Superior, and between Lake Simcoe and the Michipicoten River, which discharges its water into Lake Superior.

It was when exploring this portion of Canada that the idea of getting an extension of the railway system that centred in Toronto first occurred to me, and which I thought might in due time be extended to the Red River in the present Province of Manitoba.

On my return to Toronto, at the end of the year 1857, I learnt that the Imperial Government had sent out an expedition, under the command of Captain Palliser, to explore British territory between Lake Superior and the Pacific Coast, and at the same time I heard that rich deposits of gold had been discovered in the valley of the Fraser River in British Columbia. It then struck me that it might be possible to extend the railway I had projected from Toronto to the Red River all the way across the continent, entirely through British territory, to the Pacific Coast.