

N. W. Ontario.

Rat Portage and Vicinity.

Early in June the writer as a representative of THE COLONIST had occasion to go to Rat Portage on trip which was intended to be purely business but out of which I made up my mind to take as much pleasure as possible. The journey there was uneventful, the only thing about it worth noticing being its tediousness. The train arrives at Rat Portage about midnight; too early to admit of any sleep being obtained before its arrival, and too late to allow of a comfortable night's rest after.

Rat Portage, to begin in the conventional way, is situated some 133 miles east of Winnipeg on the main line of the Canadian Pacific railway at the point where the line touches the wonderfully beautiful Lake of the Woods. About three miles west of it is the village of Keewatin also on the shore of this lake and midway between the two is Norman which is really a part of Rat Portage. The town has a population of about 1300 and is noted for several things, unlike the majority of the towns of Western Canada, which are only noted for one thing—wheat. Among these several things those most particularly worthy of notice are its lumbering and mining industries, its superior advantages as a summer resort; and its being the nearest point of importance in the old province of Ontario to the new province of Manitoba. The private opinion of most people who visit the town, is that it should really be a part of Manitoba and such nature undoubtedly intended it to be, but man ruled otherwise so Ontario it is.

To continue this sketch in a logical manner, we should now look at the lumbering industry, as it was on this that Rat Portage first based its claim to consideration as a point of importance. The mills are about evenly distributed between the points mentioned; Rat Portage, Norman and Keewatin. At the Portage itself are the mills of the Western Lumber Company and of Messrs. Ross, Hall and Brown; at Norman, the Minnesota and Ontario Lumber Company, Cameron & Kennedy, and the Safety Bay or Bulmer Company now being operated by Messrs. Cameron & Kennedy; and at Keewatin, the Keewatin Lumber Company and Messrs. Dick & Banuing. The cuts of each of these mills will run this year from nine to thirteen or thirteen and a half million feet.

The mining industry of Rat Portage district is not in such a perfect state of development as the lumbering industry and has heretofore been somewhat neglected or more properly speaking unfortunate. The history of this industry is merely a repetition of the old story of wildcat speculation followed by years of depression. It is happily now on a firm footing and with the right men in the lead is bound to advance and become a substantial reality. The new reduction works which have only recently been started to work are now in regular operation, and under the management of Mr. Brent will undoubtedly show satisfactory results. Under another heading in this issue we have some important news relating to the mining industry of Rat Portage.

My first impression of the town itself was a very pleasant one. The morning after my

arrival was bright and sunny; from an elevation on the north side of the town I got a very pretty view of the whole situation; I could see the many fine buildings which adorn its main street and in front of all the lake with its beautiful islands. Rat Portage is fast becoming one of the best known pleasure resorts in Canada and it is already one of the most delightful. The lake affords excellent boating, bathing and fishing; the islands make excellent camping grounds while the scenery is most interesting and restful. There are several pretty sights in the neighborhood, among them being the falls of Winnipeg River.

It is from Rat Portage that the passenger boats start on the run to Fort Francis. The trip out to that place is one of the finest that Canada affords in point of scenery.

Norman is a small place and is not much frequented by travelling people, it being so near the Portage that visitors generally stop in the larger place and run back and forward on the ferry. It has some attractions, however, and should not be overlooked in a visit to the district. It is at Norman that the electric light works which supply Rat Portage with light are situated.

Keewatin is a most interesting place. It is noted for its lumbering and for the fact that at it is established the famous flouring mill of the Lake of the Woods Milling company. This mill is a huge stone structure fitted up with the most improved milling machinery and run by water power. Alongside of it stands an elevator which holds something like 500,000 bushels of wheat. The mill has a capacity of 2,000 barrels per day. The most interesting thing about this mill to a western observer is the fact that it is run by water power, of which there is an unlimited amount to be had here. Mr. Hastings is the resident member of the company. Their western headquarters are at Winnipeg under the management of Mr. McGaw, who is also a member of the firm.

Keewatin as we have shown in another paragraph has a liberal share of the lumbering establishments of this district. The mills situated here are run by water power and are able to make some very large cuts in a season. Keewatin is incorporated as a village and is well organized in a municipal sense.

I have now given THE COLONIST's readers a fair idea of the characteristics of this district. Its claims to recognition is based on very substantial grounds and if persistently placed before capitalists, homeseekers and the public generally will no doubt gain for the district a liberal increase in population and the necessary amount of money to thoroughly develop its latent resources.

A Lake of the Woods Mine.

Since the reported discovery of nickel in the Lake of the Woods district, many strangers have visited the locality to learn if the mineral existed in quantity and would be rich enough to work. An examination of the outcrop in Frenchman Bay, S.W. of Keewatin, has shown up a body of ore more than 200 feet in width, which occurs on an escarpment that borders on this Bay. The trend of this massive vein, or lode, is N.E. S.W., and has been traced across the narrows of Black Sturgeon lake, a distance of twelve miles. It follows

the line of contact of the granitoid gneiss with Huronian in which formation it occurs. The outcrop varies on the trend of the lode from 20 to 60 feet in width except at the above mentioned place, at Frenchman Bay, where some developing has been done. A cross cut has been made about 30 feet in length and a shaft started. Assays made from this property give a good result for surface ore of nickel and cobalt; it is also found that some of the intercalated stratas, which form the gauge, or ore body, are rich in gold and silver. The ore is close grained pyrrhotite iron, nearly solid mineral. Should this mammoth body of ore increase in richness as depth is attained it will rank as the greatest mine in Canada, and will prove a bonanza to the whole district.

Notes.

Elections for Reeve and Councillors in the Municipality of Shuniah took place of Saturday July 9th.

The \$20,000 debentures issued recently by McKellar ward of the municipality of Neebing, have been sold to a Montreal party, by Ray, Street & Co., at the fair rate of 96.

A vote was taken in the municipality of Shuniah, on Saturday, July 9th, to empower the council of the municipality to transfer the lands incorporated in the town of Port Arthur by act of the legislature at its late session.

It is said that a contract has been signed between a party of Minnesota capitalists and the Port Arthur & Duluth Railway Company, which provides for the mining of 100,000 tons of ore per annum for ten years from the mines in Minnesota near Gunflint Lake.

The Ontario Government have issued a small book descriptive of the Rainy Lake district which will doubtless be of great service in making known the resources and principal features of that part of the Province of Ontario. The book is well illustrated.

Port Arthur Herald: "One of the oldest pioneers at the head of the lake died last week in the person of Mr. Charles Fregeau. He was about 68 years of age, and was born in the parish of Cap St Ignace, province of Quebec. He came to Ontonagon, the pioneer mining camp of Lake Superior in '54. In Superior's early days he ran a stage between St. Paul and the head of the lake, over the old military road, and afterwards carried the mail between Superior and Ashland. He was wheelsman and the sole survivor of the ill fated passenger steamer Sunbeam, which went down off Ontonagon in a terrible gale about the year 1867 or 1868, and after drifting about on a gang plank for 36 hours finally drifted ashore and was picked almost dead from exposure by a party of explorers who happened to pass along in a sail boat and saw him on the shore. He leaves a widow and twelve children.

AN eastern despatch of June 30th contained information that 14 delegates from the maritime provinces were starting on a tour which was intended to take in Manitoba, the Territories and British Columbia. They are to report as to the possibilities of the west as a field for immigration.