

Resources of the Northland

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This is the fourth and concluding installment in this series on Canada's northland. All photographs used in the articles are by the author.

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ESSENTIALLY the Arctic is that area which extends northward from the tree line to the Arctic Ocean, a vast land of varied topography ranging from mud-flats and endless rolling plains barely above sea level to grand, rugged mountains over 8,000 feet high. The ground is permanently frozen thus preventing underground drainage so the snows of the long Winter melt in Spring and run haphazardly into the thousands of little emerald lakes, eventually reaching the sea by the winding rivers and streams.

Glaciers feed into many of the broad inland valleys, carrying tons of gravel and boulders which they deposit in ridges. Little placid ice-cold lakes form below. On the coastline the glaciers calve into the sea giving birth to the splendid icebergs which rise several hundred feet high in the water and which in times past have been such a hazard to ocean going vessels wandering too far into northern waters. Nature in this land does everything on a grand scale. It is as though one was witnessing the beginning of time.

Baffin Island in the Eastern Arctic structurally forms the eastern edge of the Canadian Shield. The Southern Up-

land is rough and rocky but appears flat from the air. It is predominantly gneiss structure of the Pre-Cambrian era. It was this part of the North which gave home to the establishment of the international airport of Frobisher Bay, a mid-point between San Francisco and London or Paris.

To the North sharp peaks and ridges rise over 7,000 feet. Permanent snow fields and glaciers abound and deep passes extend to the sea. These majestic mountains, especially the Penny Highlands,²⁶ afford some of the finest scenery to be found in any country and convey that the Arctic is indeed one of the wonders of the world.

The northern part of this 1,000 mile long island is called the Northern Plateau, a land of smooth-topped plateaus which drop 1,800 feet as sheer cliffs to the sea and also into deep cut, rough, boulder-filled mountain streams. Further to the south-east it merges with the East Coast mountains and to the south-west with the Lowland.

This latter area, about the middle and on the west coast of Baffin Island which looks so dull and monotonous from the air, is actually a land of great charm but so rugged that people can not live there. It was here that the nesting grounds of the Blue Goose²⁷ were discovered, here where caribou abound, here where the white fox is not sought for the purpose of putting his white pelt on the fur market, here where few Eskimos and still fewer white men have travelled. Lake studded areas and rock outcroppings alternate, old raised beaches ribbon the

²⁶Penny Icecap (Baffin Island; 67°15' N. 66° W.). Baird, P. D., & others, Baffin I. Expedition 1953.

²⁷Soper, Joseph Dewey, 1893-. Discovery of the Breeding Ground of the Blue Goose "*Chen caerulescens* (Linnaeus)". (The Canadian Field-Naturalist, Vol. XLIV, No. 1, 1930, 11 pp., containing 5 illus., 1 map.)