

74. This has been a very substantially built trail, long stretches having been corduroyed, but those portions are now very dangerous and impassable, owing to the corduroying having rotted, thereby letting a horse through with great danger of breaking his legs. We had to leave the trail at these places and travel through the muskegs.

Near the Pembina River I met James Norris of Edmonton with a pack outfit, returning from mining on the McLeod River. On the 28th inst. the McLeod was reached and crossed. This river is a considerable stream of two hundred yards in width, with easy approaches. From accounts I got of it, it is very rich in gold, and is worked by the half-breeds from about Lac St. Ann's. The gold is situated differently from other gold-producing streams such as the Saskatchewan and Athabasca, it is not found distributed over the bars below high water mark as in those rivers, but in pockets in old beds above the present high water mark. Such finds as \$50.00 for two days washing and \$200.00 for seven days are reported, but are, I think, rare. There is no systematic work done, and if thoroughly prospected might turn out very rich.

Near this river I passed a hunter and prospector named Derr who, with his partner Craig, is located in the mountains near the head of the Big Smoky River. He was then returning from Edmonton where he had been to purchase his annual supply of provisions. This man complained of some depredations made on him by Miatis Delorme (of whom you have had a previous report from me), he having possessed himself of some of Derr's property. Delorme, however, I heard had left the Territories and was in British Columbia in the neighbourhood of Tete Juan Cache, as was also St. Paul his partner. Although not getting these men the fact of our having been in that part of the country and looking for them will have a very salutary effect. On 31st July I passed the winter trading post of Dan Noyes at White Mud, but which at this season of the year was abandoned. On August 2nd I reached the Athabasca River at Cache Pecotte. The territory from the watershed between the McLeod River and the Athabasca, and a long distance north and west to Henry House, is quite deserted by the Indians during the past year or two, that district being burnt and the game driven out. I never saw so bleak and barren a wilderness, the streams being barren of fish and not a sign of fur or feather among the stumps of what had once been a fine forest. The soil is principally red sand with patches of loam in low places.

I left part of outfit at Cache Pecotte and went to Jasper House, which I reached on the 3rd August. I proposed going on to the trading post of J. Swift at Henry House, and of G. Cowan on Birch Creek, but did not, as these traders were from home. I therefore returned to Cache Pecotte, crossed the Athabasca and started for Sturgeon Lake. The route I had intended to take was north from the Athabasca about thirty miles, to Pierre Grey's place on Fishing Lakes, and then north-east over a trail used by Sturgeon Lake Indians who traded at Grey's, (Grey's is now abandoned), but found that recent fires had made that route impracticable, so I had to continue due north to the Little Smoky River and then due east to form a junction with the Lac St. Ann and Sturgeon Lake trails, which made the distance considerably greater. I found the country all burnt till near the junction of the trail from Sturgeon Lake to Lac St. Ann, which is the direct road from Edmonton to Fort St. John. Before reaching this trail, which we struck on the south side of the Little Smoky, about fifty miles from Sturgeon Lake, the character of the country changed, muskegs were less frequent, the timber was all green and small prairies frequent.

All down the Little Smoky indications of large game were very numerous and few signs of any hunting. I learnt from the traders at Sturgeon Lake that that district was little hunted. Sturgeon Lake is about ten or twelve miles long by three or four miles broad. It is a nice body of water, deep with sandy shores, except small portion of the south-west end which is marshy about the narrows, where the trail crosses. The lake contains abundance of fine white fish. There are located here during the winter season, four trading posts, namely, the Hudson's Bay Company, Miles McDermott, Rivet and Larue & Picard. During the summer the Hudson's Bay Company and McDermott only are there. The country about the margin of the lake is prairie, upon which many of the Indians have built houses as winter quarters. To each of these houses a small garden is attached in which are potatoes of a very fine quality besides other garden