

# RESOURCES OF CANADA'S FERTILE NORTHLAND

## Enormous Tract of Country Hitherto Regarded as Inaccessible and Comparatively Barren, Lying to the North of the Saskatchewan Watershed are Unspeakably Rich in Timber and Minerals, While There are Thousands of Miles of Agricultural Land Fit for Settlement—Valuable Information Collected by R. E. Young for the Country.

In the minds of many Canadians the idea is inherent that the vast country lying to the north of the Saskatchewan watershed and west of Hudson's bay is unfitted for agriculture, and that its value to the Dominion lies in its annual production of furs, already exploited, its vast timber forests, known but not yet brought into service, and its mineral wealth, as yet unknown and almost absolutely unexplored.

For some time past it has been realized by numbers of far-sighted people that after a few more years' inflow of immigration at the present rate, Canada's future expansion as an agricultural, lumbering, mining and industrial country will depend upon the exploitation of the natural resources of this far north land, together with the northern portions of Quebec, the districts of Keewatin and Ungava, on the coast of Hudson's bay, the immense Mackenzie and Peace River districts, and the Yukon territory.

The trend of settlement in Canada, and also in the United States, has been westward, following the construction of the railways. The land in the railway belts (the more southern part of western Canada) is being rapidly filled up, as the older railway lines throw out their branches northward, and as the location and construction of the new National Transcontinental railway proceeds. Attention is being already being drawn to that portion of Canada, hitherto supposed to be not only inaccessible but comparatively barren, which lies still further north.

Mr. R. E. Young, of the department of the interior, in 1905, prepared a statement showing that the enormous lands of immigrants and settlers would exhaust the reasonable time exhaust the available resources of the country. He pointed out that the present settled portions of the western provinces, and calling attention to the practically unexplored hinterland of Canada.

Mr. Young also had a map of the northern portion of Canada prepared which contained all available information from any source regarding the possibilities and resources of the country. As a result of Mr. Young's investigations the matter was taken up by the House and a select committee of the House was appointed to inquire into the resources and value of that part of the Dominion lying north of the Rocky mountains and west of the Mackenzie and Peace River territories. The select committee also brought within the scope of its investigation the resources and value of that part of the Dominion lying north of the Rocky mountains and west of the Mackenzie and Peace River territories.

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more valuable, according to thorough and authentic and well substantiated evidence, than was at one time supposed, and is capable of sustaining a very large and prosperous population. The settlements in this distant region, while insignificant in number and extent as compared with its vast area, are important as demonstrating practically and unquestionably the great possibilities of this territory as an agricultural and industrial country, and also as emphasizing the importance of exploring and surveying such areas as are likely to first attract the stream of settlement which is bound to set in before long.

**GOOD AGRICULTURAL LAND.**  
According to one witness who has had exceptional opportunities for familiarizing himself with the country and its resources, there is in the Peace River section of this country as much good agricultural land fit for settlement, and yet unsettled, as there is settled in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta today.

W. F. Bredin, member of the Alberta legislative assembly, who resides at Lesser Slave Lake, after a careful computation estimates the area of agricultural lands available in the unoccupied territory of Mackenzie and northern Alberta at not less than one hundred million acres.

Owing to the attention which has been drawn to the Peace river country of late by reason of the proposed construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific railway through it, the evidence of those who have been familiar with this portion of the country is perhaps of the most vital public interest at the present time. Mr. A. Conroy, of the Indian department, who has been travelling through the country for eight or nine years gave some interesting details. From his southern end of Lesser Slave Lake to the valley of the Swan Hills, is a beautiful country, which lies still further north.

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river before you come to the mountain. It has its wheat and its muskies, and its low patches of land, that you will find in almost any country where you have a large growth of scrub timber, but the larger part of this land is the witness had by traveling over the country away

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As a rule frost comes in September, and wheat is generally sown May 5; potatoes being planted from May 20 on, and the weather is quite as hot as at Prince Albert, and the days are longer.

There are also statements as to the mineral possibilities of the northern portion of these vast tracts by many witnesses. The evidence of A. Von Hammerstein as to the beds of tar sands which extend for miles along the Athabasca river about 120 miles north of Edmonton, is particularly interesting. These sands are impregnated with oil gum, something the nature of tar.

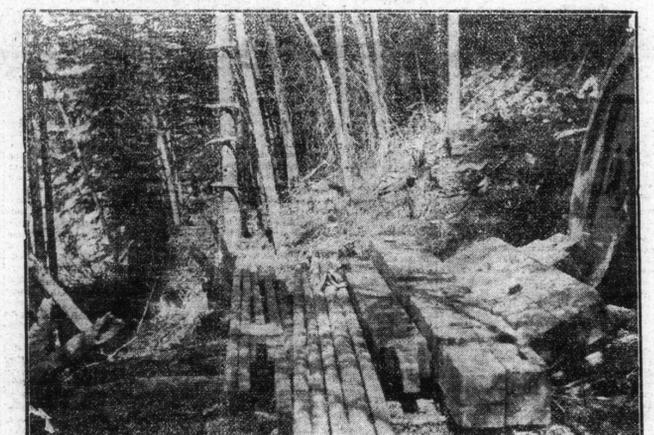
He considers there is in this locality evidence of enormous wealth in petroleum. He also refers to the extensive and valuable deposits of salt in the same locality, and he speaks of the wonderful natural gas well at Pelican Rapids, on the Athabasca. This well has been burning continuously for eleven or twelve years and is considered the largest gas well in the world. Almost anywhere in that district natural gas is found, says Mr. Von Hammerstein, and in his boring camps the natural flow of gas is used for lighting purposes.

An interesting field of speculation as to the possibilities of mineral exploration in Canada is opened up by considering a few facts. Some of the more recent mineral development which has taken place. The gold output of the Klondike may be placed at over \$18,000,000 to date; the output in gold, silver and copper from the north of the Yukon territory, from the month of July to the end of the year, is estimated to have been \$37,000,000; the wonderful coal deposits at Fernie, estimated to last at the present rate of consumption, upwards of 6,000 years; and finally the Cobalt silver district, including the greatest silver mines in the world; all these are discoveries of the past twenty years.

UNEXPLORED COUNTRY.  
Now, a line drawn across the map of northwest Canada, from the mouth of the Saskatchewan northwest to the Athabasca river near Fort McMurray, and thence northwest again to the Mackenzie basin, divides the country into two portions, about one-third lying south of the line, the two-thirds lying north are practically unexplored. In this vast country are immense mineral possibilities, which are as yet almost entirely unknown. No one can say to what extent they are to be a barren portion of rocks found rich in minerals everywhere else, or whether they will in the future be the scene of perhaps even greater discoveries than have been made at Cobalt, Northwest again of this, and about 300 miles north of Prince Albert, there is an area of sandstone with large possibilities of copper, being the same formation which

is found to be so rich in that mineral around Lake Superior. At Duhaunt Lake copper-bearing rocks are found, doubtless the same belt which extends across the coppermine river, where the natives make implements from the copper found.

Everywhere on the rivers, and nearly always in close proximity to the mineral districts, waterpowers of all capacities are found, and those who doubt the strength factor in the development of the mining of the future in this country.



Oil Boring Machine in Place, Beyond Fort McKay. Latitude 56, S, Longitude 111, 3. Timber Cut in Locality, Spruce, 10 Feet by 10 Inches.

the Peace river country in 1906. It was an average sample of the 22,000 bushels held, at the time he obtained it, in the Hudson's Bay company's mill at Fort Vermilion. The grain raised there for some time past has been of the quality known as "Lac du St. Jean" wheat, and is materially from the sample originally obtained from the "Ottawa" experimental farm that is now being raised in the original stock being a soft wheat, while the sample produced is as hard as steel file.

As to the soil, many supposed that the Peace river valley, as a valley, was a low lying section of land in the bottom of the river. It is spoken of as "The Valley" by many people, and they think that it extends from the mouth of the Athabasca ocean.

The river bottom proper only consists of points or flats between the banks of the river, which "bottom" is practically about two miles in width, whereas the Great Peace valley, which is properly called the Peace river valley, is in reality a broad tract of country. When you once get on to the height of land, this so-called "valley" covers 300 miles in width, and extends from the Rocky Mountains on Lake Athabasca, into which the Peace river drains. The banks are very high where the Peace river leaves the mountains, and the banks of the river to get up on what is spoken of as the height of land. At Fort St. John the banks are about 1,000 feet in height, and it would be quite a problem for the farmer living up on the height of land to get water from the river. When you reach the Peace river crossing, which at present is the terminus of the river, you find the banks are about 100 feet in height, and where the road winds down to the Peace river, it is about one mile long, that length being necessary to get down the grade to get down to the bottom of the river.

From the Peace river crossing as the river swings to the north and east, the banks gradually become lower, and when Wolverine Point, about 200 miles to the northeast of the Peace river crossing is reached, the banks are about 200 feet in height. From thence to Fort Vermilion the banks become lower, and at Fort Vermilion you find the banks from 100 to 150 feet in height.



Four Mills at Vermilion, Peace River.

in this portion of the country bordering the Arctic circle it would be quite reasonable to suppose that crops would mature much later than farther south, but the contrary is the case, due to the greater length of the day. There is at least two hours more sunshine per day during the summer at Fort Simpson than at Edmonton and points further north. A very valuable point established by the enquiry was with regard to muskies. A very large portion of the northern country is composed of muskies. These muskies are properly timbered swamps, and in their present condition are useless for agriculture, being composed of moss sometimes three feet or more thick, soaked with and lying in water.

HOW TO TREAT MUSKIE.  
It was shown that where the timber is cut off, and the sun allowed to act upon the moss, it dries and the moisture which has been held and protected by the moss, disappears.

At Fort Chipewyan, the Roman Catholic mission has a farm which was originally muskies, right among the Laurentian rocks which was treated in this way, and is first class soil. They grow wheat there which obtained a medal at the Centennial exposition.

After returning from his first trip in 1902, Mr. Stewart wrote his annual report, A. G. Page 16. Fertile northlands port to the department, and he read a few sentences therein written, as he had prepared his report when the matter was fresh in his memory.



The Chutes or Great Falls of Peace River, Near Fort Vermilion.

scattered all over the country, sometimes in the form of small falls. The snowfall is moderate. The mill here is not heavy, little more so than in the Prince Albert section.

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In the summer months the temperature of the northern country is little lower than that of Manitoba or Saskatchewan. Any marked difference is at the northern points, where the sun shines from one to three hours longer than from the south.

For the three summer months a area, which includes western and northern portions of northern Saskatchewan and the basin of the Mackenzie, allows the Arctic circle, has between the solstices of the possible amount of sunshine range from 17 hours in the latitude of Edmonton to 19 hours 30 minutes at Ft. Simpson, it may be surmised that growth of plants and cereals may be even more rapid in the northern than in the southern districts.

The average daily mean highest temperature in July at Winnipeg is 72 degrees, at Calgary 71, degrees, at Ft. Hay river, on Great Slave lake, it is 72 degrees, and at Fort Simpson, 71, degrees.

**A. C. FRASER IS NEW PRESIDENT**  
Edmonton Board of Trade Officers. Able Reviews of the Year's Work.

That the Edmonton board of trade is doing a great work for the city and district was clearly shown by the reports of the president, Wm. Short, at the annual meeting of the board, which was held in the city council chamber yesterday afternoon.

President Short's annual address was characterized by a large representation of the business interests of the city and all were pleased with the shortness of the report. The report of the recent financial depression which has been accomplished in advertising this portion of Alberta in other parts of Canada at the United States.

The chair was occupied by W. Short, who, after the election of E. C. Brown, S. C. Chamberlain, J. Torrey, J. A. Fife and J. H. McKay as new members presented an annual address, which was as follows:

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