

THE COMMERCIAL

A Journal of Commerce, Industry, Finance and Insurance, devoted to the interests of Western Canada, including that portion of Ontario west of Lake Superior, the Province of Manitoba and British Columbia and the Territories.

Sixteenth Year of Publication
ISSUED EVERY SATURDAY

SUBSCRIPTIONS, CANADA AND UNITED STATES'
\$2.00 PER ANNUM IN ADVANCE OR \$2.25 WHEN
NOT SO PAID; OTHER COUNTRIES, \$2.50 PER
ANNUM IN ADVANCE.

Changes for advertisements should be in not later
than Thursday Morning.

Advertisements purporting to be news matter,
or which profess to express the opinions of this
Journal, will not be inserted.

Office: 151 McDermot Street.

D. W. BUCHANAN,
Publisher.

The Commercial certainly enjoys a very much larger circulation among the business community of the vast region lying between Lake Superior and the Pacific Coast, than any other paper in Canada, daily or weekly. The Commercial also reaches the leading wholesale, commission, manufacturing and financial houses of Eastern Canada.

WINNIPEG, APRIL 9, 1898,

RAT PORTAGE.

THE COMMERCIAL VISITS THE WESTERN
SARATOGA.

It was anticipated that the development of the valuable mining industry of the Lake of the Woods district would have the effect during 1897 of producing a "boom" in property and business in Rat Portage. It did, but the "boom" was not accomplished by any of the objectionable features usually the first thing to be noted during or after the boom time. With Rat Portage the advance of property was strictly in accord with real value. The extension of business was only such as increasing trade would warrant. The amount of building done in the season of 1897, while almost phenomenal, was remarkable for the quality and class. Business blocks of stone and brick, which would grace a metropolis, an up-to-date opera house, private residences fit for the finest, summer cottages on the islands, and at least one new steamer that would compare favorably with any on the great lakes. This is a rough draft of the improvements, the total value of which may have been equalled in amount by some other city in Canada during the same period, but the value, comparing the size of towns, certainly was not anything like equalled elsewhere. The Rat Portage Miner of Nov. 18, fixed the amount expended in building and improvements at three-fourths of a million dollars and gave a partial list of the buildings and works erected.

One of the finest blocks erected was the Robinson & Brydon block, built of stone and most handsomely finished inside and out. Part of it is occupied

by the Imperial Bank and their quarters are probably the best in the west. Another neat little block is that built by the Citizens' Electric and Telephone Co., part of which is occupied by the very complete offices and central agency of the company. The manager is Mr. J. A. McCrossan, a specialist—"crank," some say—in electrical matters.

He has made a great success of the company's business, and Rat Portage and Keewatin have a most efficient light and telephone service. The central telephone exchange and the switch boards of the electric light system are installed in the block. The latter are the very latest type of appliances and the manager has the whole plant under control within reach of his office desk. The power is generated by the old H. B. water-power, near the railway bridge.

Messrs. Bowman & Earngey, publishers of the Miner, who occupy the other half of the new building, are new men in the town, Mr. Bowman being an American journalist of wide reputation and Mr. Earngey being an Ontario man "just out." He was formerly in charge of a printing office under the Ontario government at the Industrial school, Mimico. The largest block erected this past year is the new opera house block, erected at large cost and made as good as the best. The front part of the block is utilized as a hotel. Mr. Louis Hilliard, proprietor of the Hilliard House, is the builder of the opera house and runs his hotel also. He also added considerably to the Hilliard House last year. Shaw's hotel is another large three-story brick block erected near the depot. The Drewry block, Odellfellow's hall, Gardiner block, A. S. Horswill's new block are all new buildings and are only a few of them. The Clougher block was entirely remodeled and improved. Campbell Bros. now have their stock of groceries, etc., in it. Numerous private residences were erected, and almost every business place in the town was improved in some way. Acquaintances at Rat Portage received quite a "boom" through the location of the world's champion oarsman, Jake Gaudaur, there last year. In partnership with John Kennedy, also of Orillia, Ont., they took over the management of the Russell House, a fine hotel with location near the lake.

The Hudson's Bay Co. has a large handsome double store, occupying a fine stone block. John R. Bunn is manager. The Rat Portage Hardware Co., C. E. Neads, manager, has as large a retail hardware stock as one could find in a large city. The requirements of mining, sawmilling, lumbering, shipping, and fishery industries necessitate a most varied and complete assortment. Jas. Shipton is also in the hardware business and though not so long established, is building up a fine trade. Jacob Rose is the oldest hardware merchant. He carries a large stock and has a well-established trade. Campbell Bros., Partington, and J. W. Pickett are the leading grocers. A. S. Horswill has opened a commission house for the handling of produce of all kinds, fruits, etc., in a jobbing trade. Fisher & Co., late of Port Arthur, have been established for some months as wholesale and retail commission agents, handling farm and dairy produce, flour and feed, hay, etc. A. Macdonald, wholesale grocer, Winnipeg, has also a supply warehouse here. The butchers have most elaborate shops for a town of

the size of Rat Portage, and considering that all their goods are imported, the display they make is very creditable. G. A. Kobald is the pioneer of the trade, and has a nice brick store; H. Hellofs is another butcher of more recent establishment; Gibson & Hook are a third firm. They built a fine brick shop last summer and fitted up with plate glass windows, marble counters, etc. J. B. Gardner is a big general merchant, carrying a large stock and outfitting in large quantities for miners and others. Smith & Co. have also a large general stock in two departments. Other dry goods firms are H. E. Hallett, Patton & Young, McKinnon & Co. and B. Shrage. In the furniture trade are Rideout & Davidson and Horne & Taylor, the latter having bought out the K. Furniture Co., of which ex-Mayor Barnes was manager. Some of the hotels have been noted in passing over improvements and building. Besides those mentioned there are the Queen's owned by W. G. Cameron, and Drewry's hotel owned by Mr. George Drewry, who has also a wholesale liquor business. Both these gentlemen are prominent in advancing the interests of the town; they have been here a long time and have considerable interests in mining, the development of which in the district they have each been willing to help along. Mr. Drewry is president of the board of trade, and has been very energetic in bringing forward the merits of Lake of the Woods mining industry.

The fishing industry in the Lake of the Woods and contiguous waters is largely in the hands of the Norman Fish Co., Hugh Armstrong, manager. But fishing has been overdone in the past, so is not as important as it should be. Mr. Armstrong's company has a small fleet on the lake and does quite a trade. The general freight and passenger carrying trade of the lakes not only on regular routes but special trips in the way of excursions or to particular points, such as taking supplies to miners and prospectors is assuming large proportions and has had the effect of rapidly increasing the number of craft on the lake. The Keenora, a fine boat, was built last year for the Fort Frances trip. The steamer Clipper and a large number of smaller vessels were also built. Then there is the Brydges line of steamers plying regularly on the lakes.

The pleasures of living beside and enjoying an outing on the water attract many to Rat Portage yearly who have no serious business other than having a thoroughly good time, and they usually get it. Many westerners have regular summer establishments here, where they and their families spend the holiday season. This summer visitor traffic is growing yearly and is helping Rat Portage in more ways than one. The business done in supplies is an item, and then one cannot come within hailing distance of Rat Portage without falling a victim to the mineral habit—or vice.

The purpose of this letter is not to talk of mines and minerals for the writer is delighted to say he knows nothing of either. Still a reference to Rat Portage is incomplete without a word as to mining. Every one is familiar with the history of John F. Caldwell and the Sultana mine—when I say everyone, I mean everyone who has ever heard of Rat Portage and everyone who knows anything of gold mining. Well the history of Jno. F. Caldwell and the Sultana mine