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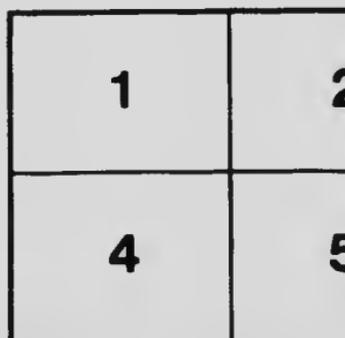
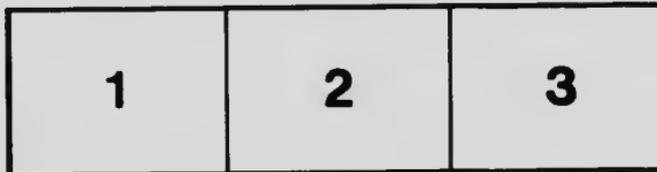
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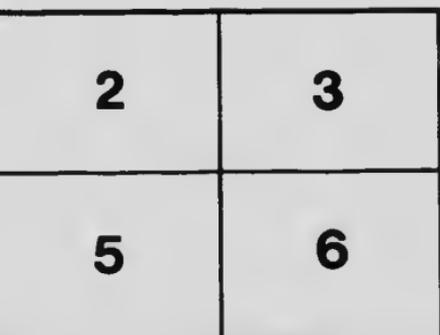
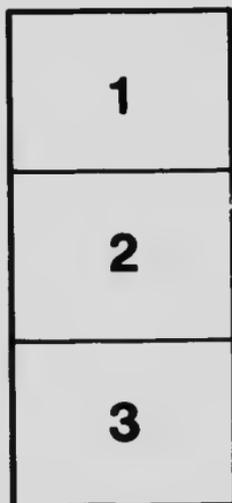
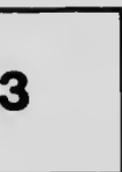
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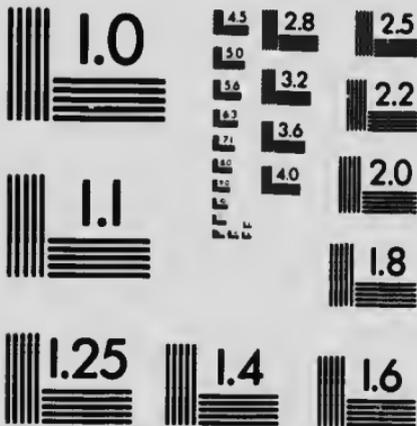
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THE ALGONQUIN NATIONAL PARK OF ONTARIO,
ITS RESOURCES AND ADVANTAGES.

BY

ARCHIBALD M. CAMPBELL.



1901

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THE ALGONQUIN NATIONAL PARK OF ONTARIO—ITS RESOURCES AND ADVANTAGES.

By ARCHIBALD M. CAMPBELL, OTTAWA.

The Parry Sound division of the Canada Atlantic Railway renders readily accessible for the first time one of the most remarkable regions of lake and stream, primeval forest and rugged rock that can be found anywhere. It lies between the Ottawa River and Georgian Bay, and is a compact territory over forty miles square, with an area of nearly 2,000 square miles, comprising eighteen townships and six half townships in the District of Nipissing, and representing in the aggregate a million acres of land and water. The Ontario Government has set apart and reserved for all time to come, "for the benefit, advantage and enjoyment of the people of the Province," this Algonquin National Park. In it, the citizens of Canada have a possession, the value of which they have not yet even remotely realized. It is in reality a huge game preserve, a fisherman's and sportsman's paradise, a source of water supply, a field for reforestry operations, and a natural sanitarium which bids fair to outdo the Adirondack region and other noted health resorts of America.

RIVERS AND LAKES.

In the vaileys, between the rocky ridges of the Laurentian formation, are the fountain-heads of the Muskoka, Magnetawan, Madawaska, Petawawa, Amable du Fond, and South rivers—all important streams, emptying into Georgian Bay, the Ottawa and Mattawa rivers, and Lake Nipissing. Within the limits of the Park is a large part of the watershed which divides the streams flowing into the Ottawa river from those which empty into Georgian Bay, and there is probably not to be found elsewhere within the Province a tract of country which in the same limited space gives rise to so many important streams. Therefore, one of the principal objects that the Government had in view when establishing the reservation was the protection and maintenance of their water supply. The interests of the lumberman, who annually floats large quantities of timber to market down their waters, of the manufacturer for whose mill-wheels they supply the motive

power, and of the farmer to whom a continuous supply of water in spring, well and stream is an absolute necessity—all required that provision should be made to keep the hills and highlands of this inland plateau covered with a heavy forest growth. The park contains within its boundaries an immense volume of water in lake and river, brook, pond and marsh. The spring and autumn rains and the heavy snows of winter keep the fountain-heads of the important streams rising there continually replenished, the density of the forest retarding evaporation, and the spongy layer of leaves and decaying vegetation which covers the ground, tending to maintain an equable flow throughout the year. The reservation is a veritable lake land, it being estimated that there are about 1,000 lakes and ponds within its borders. Most of the large lakes find a place on the map of the Park that has been issued by the Ontario government, but many of the smaller ones have not as yet been accurately located. Many of the lakes are of great natural beauty—not too large to be picturesque, nor too small to possess many a mirrored islet. Great Opeongo lake in the south east corner of the Park is the largest body of water, being twelve miles in length. It is a truly noble sheet of many square miles in extent, is very irregular in shape, possesses numerous islands, and presents many picturesque features. At a certain spot on the lonely shore of this lake there are still the remains of an ancient burial ground of the Algonquin Indians, reminding us of that once powerful race, which, in days gone by, held all this northland as its untitled domain. The name of the Park is the only reminder that we have of this primitive ownership, for the white man has displaced the red, the stalwart brave has vanished to his happy hunting-ground, and the pale-face reigns in his stead. The superintendent of the Queen Victoria Niagara Falls Park writes as follows of the lake scenery of the region: "Each expanse of water has some charm peculiarly its own. On every side the forest primeval clothes the hills and mountains with verdure of varying hue down to the very shore; deep shades are thrown across the Park waters of the lake, whose placid surface mirrors to perfection every outline of cloud or hill, tree or rock; while the baby ripples from the bow of the canoe, or the congeries of air bubbles

from each stroke of the paddles, glisten in the sunlight like diamonds, or as the stars on a December night. To the tourist the continual change from lake to river, from river to portage, and from portage to river and lake again, make a delightful panorama which captivates the eye and the senses, and provides abundant opportunity for the cultivation of the tastes in the study of all the varying phases of the landscape, and impels a seeking after more perfect knowledge of the many varieties of animal and vegetable life, which have their habitat in the territory."

TIMBER.

This region forms part of the great forest which formerly covered the whole Province, and which here consists of white and red pine, hemlock, tamarac, balsam, spruce, cedar, birch, maple, beech, ironwood, ash and basswood. All the lands embraced in the Park limits are now covered by licenses to cut timber, and on certain of them, pine has been cut for nearly half a century. Bush fires and lumbering operations have made serious inroads upon the supply of pine, but it will still be many years before the Park can, under existing contracts, be freed from these operations. There are no other vested interests in the reservation, so that eventually the Crown will have sole ownership and control of all its products and resources.

A FINE CANOEING AND CAMPING GROUND.

For canoeing and camping, the Park offers unexcelled facilities and attractions. The rangers have already made over a hundred miles of trails and portages, and have cleared obstructions from, and otherwise improved the navigation of, many of the streams. This work will be continued until the comparatively free navigation of the more important routes through the reservation has been secured. As a rule, the portages are short and easily made, and are generally welcomed by the canoeist, giving him a chance to stretch his legs. Forty or more log huts or cabins have been erected at different points throughout the Park, and this number is to be yearly increased. They are intended to furnish shelter to the rangers and others in their canoe trips through the reserve, and vary in distance from seven to ten miles of each other—the limit being a day's journey on snowshoes in the winter.

A NATURAL GAME PRESERVE.

Mr C. K. Grigg, then a member of the Park staff, in the autumn of 1897, contributed two short articles to the "Ottawa Evening Journal," which contained some very interesting information about the inhabitants of this great game and fish preserve. He also proved conclusively the necessity for such an asylum for our game, and showed how successful the experiment had been. He said that prior to the inception of the Park, scarcely a beaver could be found outside its present limits anywhere in this province south of Lake Nipissing, and that in what is now the Park, only a few straggling and decimated colonies existed. It is estimated that there are now hundreds of colonies of these interesting animals within its boundaries. In many cases, they have not only erected new dams, but have also built upon the ruins of old ones. The beaver houses which dot the edges of the streams and marshes are, like the dams, marvels of engineering and architectural skill. The menu of this industrious little denizen of the forest consists principally of the tender bark of the saplings, and he afterwards utilizes the denuded trunks for his dams. The following extracts from the "Report of the Royal Commission on Forest Reservation and National Park," may be of interest :

"Of the fur-bearing animals, the beaver is by far the most valuable. On the shore of every lake in this district are to be found old beaver houses, and there is scarcely a brook in the whole territory on which at short intervals their abandoned dams may not be seen. Now one may travel for days there without seeing a single fresh beaver sign.

"There are two reasons why this industrious and harmless animal should be preserved from destruction. First, because its skin furnishes us with one of our richest and most valuable furs ; and, second, because from its habits it is perhaps the greatest natural conservator of water. It is probably within the mark to say that were this region again stocked with beaver as it once was, there would be in every township at least a hundred dams and beaver ponds, each with its family or families of beaver, exclusive of the large numbers in the lakes and rivers where no dam building is necessary. In this way the water area would be increased by perhaps a fifth, a very important circumstance from the lumberman's point of view.

"The beaver is a most prolific creature, and, if left undisturbed, the progeny of a single couple would, in a few years, stock a large extent of country. The young beavers remain in the same house as the parents until they are a year old, when they strike off in couples for themselves, and either build a new house on the same pond or select a site on some other creek, and there erect a dam and house. In a few weeks the dry swamp or marsh is transformed into a lake, and the stock of provisions, consisting of a pile of saplings and brush, for winter use, is laid up beside the house, only a few of the limbs showing above the surface of the water. In the interior of the house a dry, warm nest is made, where they remain all winter. Going out at the call of hunger to the pile of provisions, they drag a piece up out of the water and eat the bark, which, together with the roots of aquatic plants, is their only food, thrusting the pole back again into the water. Here they remain until the long, warm days of spring soften the ice, when, cutting a hole in it, they go out for a taste of fresh food. In the beginning of May they bring forth their young, which almost invariably consist the first year of two, after which the average number is from four to six."

Otter are also now very plentiful, and the marten, mink, fisher and their fur-coated kin are not behind in fecundity. In fact, the net-work of waters that course through the dark tree-avenues of the reservation are becoming thickly populated with these animals, and this region affords grand opportunities for the observation and study of the naturalist. The true sportsman will certainly rejoice that there is now such a sanctuary for our nobler game, and that already the lordly moose, which has been almost totally exterminated in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and elsewhere, and which bids fair to suffer a similar fate in this Province, is again multiplying. It seems almost incredible with what ferocity and wastefulness such animals as the moose have been hunted and killed in the past. According to an official report, in the spring of 1887, to give an example, the carcasses of not less than sixty moose were found in this district, the animals having been killed for their skins alone. During the preceding winter, between Lake Traverse on the Petawawa and Bissett's station on the C. P. R., a distance of a little over twenty miles, seventy moose were

slaughtered after Christmas. If one-half of these were females, and if they even averaged only one calf each, here was game enough destroyed in one season to stock the Park. Besides affording noble sport to the hunter, the moose is a very valuable animal to the settler and the frontiersman, and it would be a pity to allow him to be exterminated like the buffalo of the western plains without at least affording him every opportunity of survival. A full-grown moose weighs upwards of 1,000 pounds, and will dress 500 pounds of beef, while his skin will make twenty pairs of moccasins, which readily sell at two dollars a pair.

The nimble-footed deer are, notwithstanding the onslaughts of the pot-hunter in the past, and of their natural enemy the wolf, always, growing in numbers. For here, too, the wolf, the fiercest and most cunning enemy of all animal life, thrives, and claims many a victim, especially among the young deer and smaller quadrupeds. The interlocked antlers of moose and deer, which the rangers occasionally find in the Park, tell of forest tragedies where conflicts have been waged to the death and the strife has been ignominiously terminated by the arrival of the wolves on the scene. At the time of his first visit to the Park, the writer was shown (and got an excellent photograph of) two pairs of these locked antlers, which had been taken from the carcasses of two bucks found the previous winter in the woods, and whose inextricable grip of each other caused their mutual destruction. It would, in fact, be impossible to separate them without destroying them.

BIRD LIFE.

Bird life is also being attracted to the Park. Owing to the wanton and useless destruction of our feathered friends, by means of guns in the hands of boys and young men, insectivorous birds are every year becoming scarcer in the settled portions of the Province, and had we not a refuge such as the Algonquin Park some species would probably eventually become practically extinct. Partridge are numerous, but are preyed upon by the foxes — which, however, along with the wolves, bears and other destructive and objectionable animals and birds, are being gradually killed off by the rangers. Wild duck are reported plentiful on some of the lakes, and wild rice has been sown with the intention of at-

tracting these birds to other waters. It is said to be the government's intention to introduced black game and capercaillie from Europe, and prairie fowl from our own western plains.

FISH, AND FISHING.

The disciples of good old Izaak Walton will find in the streams and lakes of the Algonquin Park an abundance of trout, pike, pickeral, and, in certain localities, white-fish and herring. Eels of large size are plentiful in the Opeongo branch of the Madawaska. Strange to say, both black and rock bass are missing. With the view of introducing these excellent and gamy fish, General Manager Chamberlin, of the Canada Atlantic Railway, offered special facilities for their transportation from other lakes in the Parry Sound District to those of the Park. As a rule, brook trout, considered by many as the "King of fishes," are looked for in rushing mountain torrent or the shining silver brook, but while the waters of most of the brooks in the reservation are dark, it seems to suit the taste and requirements of this loveliest and gamiest of fishes. Mr. George B. Hayes, Prison Commissioner of the State of New York, claims to have fished nearly all the streams of North America, but says that for game qualities as well as beauty of color and form, the brook trout of the Algonquin Park excel all others. Perhaps the biggest of these speckled beauties are caught in the Petawawa river, where they range on an average from half a pound to four and a half pounds in weight, almost, if not quite, equal in size to those of the famous Nepigon. Most of the brook trout are of a superior quality of flesh, being firm, and ranging in color from a rich cream to the brightest salmon tint, while the skin exhibits its glorious rainbow hues. In most of the lakes the salmon trout, commonly called grey or lake trout, abounds. To catch them, spoon or bait is used, as they seldom rise to the fly. To fish within the Park limits, it is necessary to get a permit from the Superintendent, and, even then, the use of rod and line and trowling line only are permitted. Moreover, the angler is only allowed to take such fish as he requires for his own use, within the Park, and is forbidden to carry away or wantonly destroy any piscatorial spoils. It is not likely that the waters within the reservation will ever be choked with the sawdust which has proved so fatal else-

where, so that, with the afore-mentioned restrictions in force, the finny tribes should there have great opportunities for increase.

GEOLOGICAL FORMATION AND MINERALS.

The land comprised in the Algonquin Park is in general of little use for agricultural purposes, being, as might be expected from its situation on a watershed, for the greater part rough, broken and stony. There are few high hills, the surface being mostly composed of rocky ridges, alternating with valleys, swamps and marshes. The rough ribs of the Laurentian formation everywhere protrude, and in granite or gneiss dip at all angles to the southeast, the strike of the strata being northeast by southwest. No limestone, so far as the writer knows, occurs, and the indications of mineral hitherto found are few, consisting principally of traces of iron. Mining exploration or prospecting for minerals within the Park is prohibited except under certain conditions and provisions. The working of mines and the developing of mining interests would be regulated in the same way.

A FIELD FOR EXPERIMENTS IN FORESTRY.

Much might be said about the possibilities for useful experiment in forestry which such a region affords. The re-planting of burnt areas, the re-filling of gaps in the original forest, the obtaining of accurate information anent the soils, localities and exposures suitable for certain trees, the discovery of the best method of obtaining from a forest the maximum amount of product which it is capable of yielding without at the same time trenching upon its capacity, and the solution of the problem of destroying the branches and tree tops left on the ground by the lumberman during the culling of a pine forest, are all experiments of a great probable value which might advantageously be made.

CLIMATE.

The retention of such an extensive block of forest is bound to have a beneficial influence on the climate of the surrounding country. Forests tend to promote humidity, and exert a tempering effect upon injurious winds, preventing the fierce hurricanes and "blizzards" common in unforested lands. They also help to equalize the atmosphere, cooling the summer air and mitigating

its severity in the winter. Consequently, the destruction of a large portion of the forest growth of a country is generally attended by a deterioration in its climate. History proves that many countries which once possessed forests became sterile after having been deprived of them.

A NATURAL SANITARIUM.

Owing to the altitude of this region, and its bracing atmosphere—redolent with the resinous odours of the pine and balsam, it is a great natural sanitarium, where consumptives may recover lost health and vigor. The idea has been shown to be well founded that pine forests are of specific value in the cure of lung disease. The old Romans sent sufferers of this class to Libria, where, by breathing the balsamic emanations of the pines which there abounded, they are said to have received much benefit. In the Adirondack Forest of New York State a sanitarium has been in operation for many years, with the special object of relieving patients in the early stages of consumption. It offers to such the benefit of climatic treatment, a systematic out-door life, hygienic habits and suitable medical treatment, and its reports show that twenty-five per cent of the patients are apparently cured; while twenty-five or thirty per cent more are sufficiently restored in health to resume their work or support themselves by their own efforts while living in a suitable climate. The Gravenhurst sanitarium on Lake Muskoka is a newer institution, which has also attained a considerable measure of success in this sort of treatment, but perhaps the results obtained by the famous Dr. Otto Walther, at the sanitarium at Nordrach, in the Baden Black Forest, Germany, are better than those obtained at any similar hospital in the world. However, there can be little doubt but that a sojourn in the pine forests of this Nipissing upland, with its pure air, good water and aromatic breezes, would be beneficial to many afflicted with weak lungs.

THE PARK HEADQUARTERS.

The Park headquarters were at first situated on Canoe Lake, but, for various reasons, Cache Lake was considered a more suitable spot for them, and they were removed thither. Suitable buildings for the accommodation of the superintendent and his

staff of six or seven rangers, were erected during the summer of 1897 on the lake shore just south of the railway track. The rangers are supposed to be travelling about most of the time, in order to keep a sharp lookout for trespassers and poachers, and against fires, and to watch especially the waterways and usual entrances to the Park. They incidentally erect shelter-lodges, make other improvements, and wage war on wolves and other noxious animals.

On a rocky point, about fifteen feet above the water, and so embowered in birches and spruces that one might paddle by unconscious of its presence, stands "Fort Necessity"—one of the shelter-lodges. It is a small, rustic, one-roomed cabin, containing a sheet-iron stove, rude stools and table, and a platform bed the width of the building. The latter will accommodate, if necessary, six men, three at one end and three at the other, lying feet to feet.

The inlet of the lake is near by, and a paddle of half a mile up it brings you to White's Lake, in the vicinity of which—and within the sound of the locomotive whistle—a fine beaver-dam and other works of that exemplary animal can be seen.

Enough has, doubtless, been said about the Algonquin National Park to give some idea of its character and resources, and of the great inducements which it offers to the canoeman, the camper, the sportsman, the seeker after rest and health, and the lover of Nature.



