

## *The First Trail to Jasper House*

By H. J. MOBERLEY, Duck Lake, Sask.

**I**N 1858, owing to some mismanagement or mishap, the H.B.C. clerks and servants stationed at Jasper House had suffered much from starvation, so it was decided to abandon the post. The following spring one man was sent up with supplies of ammunition and to tell the Indians to leave that part of the country. This they did, the Shuswaps going to Fort George, B.C., and the Iroquois and Crees to the vicinity of Edmonton.

Jasper House always was one of the best paying posts in the Saskatchewan district, as nothing but the most valuable furs were bought there; so closing up meant great loss to the district.

Before it was abandoned, the outfit was packed at Edmonton and taken to Fort Assiniboine by pack horses and from there by boat to Jasper, but since the post had been closed there was no boat to make the trip from Fort Assiniboine to Jasper.

In the fall of 1858 I made an offer to W. J. Christie, chief factor in charge of the Saskatchewan district, to go up and re-establish the post. This offer he gladly accepted. There being no boat at Fort Assiniboine, I took thirty-seven pack horses, two engaged servants, two Iroquois hunters, and four young Indians. The hunters took their wives and families. We started about October 20th. We had a good trail to Lac St. Anne's and an Indian trail for a few miles to Island Lake; from there on we had to make our way through woods and muskegs, and a nice time of it we had.

In one place, just after having a lot of work getting through fallen timber, we struck a ridge of large jack pine with a lake on both sides and no under-brush. We certainly enjoyed it until we suddenly came to the end of the ridge, when we found the two lakes were really one in the shape of a horse-shoe and we had been travelling out on a sort of peninsula. The lake proved too broad and deep to cross, so, with a few strong sentences about such shaped lakes, we had our fine ride back, then a few extra miles of bad country to traverse before we got round the lake.

After many a struggle and plenty of hard work we got to the fort about November 15th and made the first trail from Edmonton to Jasper House. The railroad now runs practically over the same trail.

At Jasper House, the dwellings were in a most dilapidated state—mud chimneys down, no windows, and some roofs fallen in, snow a foot deep, and ground frozen. There wasn't quite half a bag of pemmican left. It looked remote, unfriendly and slow, and we felt exceedingly melancholy. But two days after we had mutton from big horn sheep and fine fat moose meat; and from that day, during the three years that I remained in charge, I never once was short of grub. So the first pack trail from Edmonton to Jasper was made and thereafter was so much used and improved that now one can go in a pullman car with every comfort at his command.