



Moose Factory drowns under the summer sun. Beyond the garden, looking upstream, is the doctor's office, the R.C.M.P., the Anglican Church and new graveyard, and an Indian camp. Across one of the channels of the Moose River is Hayes Island, where Charles Bayly founded the post in 1673.

Moose Factory

TODAY AND YESTERDAY

Photographs by
Chief Factor J. L. Cotter and Clifford Wilson
(except where otherwise noted)

THE pictures on these eight pages might be divided into two groups. Some were taken about seventy-five years ago by the North's first photographer, James Cotter. Others were taken last summer by the editor. By comparing them it will be seen that the settlement of Moose Factory has changed but little with the passing of the years.

City dwellers who visit this old post find an atmosphere of timelessness about it that charms them. The Cree Indians bring their furs to the trading store today just as they did when the post was established on nearby Hayes Island 273 years ago. There is still only one road in the settlement, and the life that flows along it is calm and unhurried.

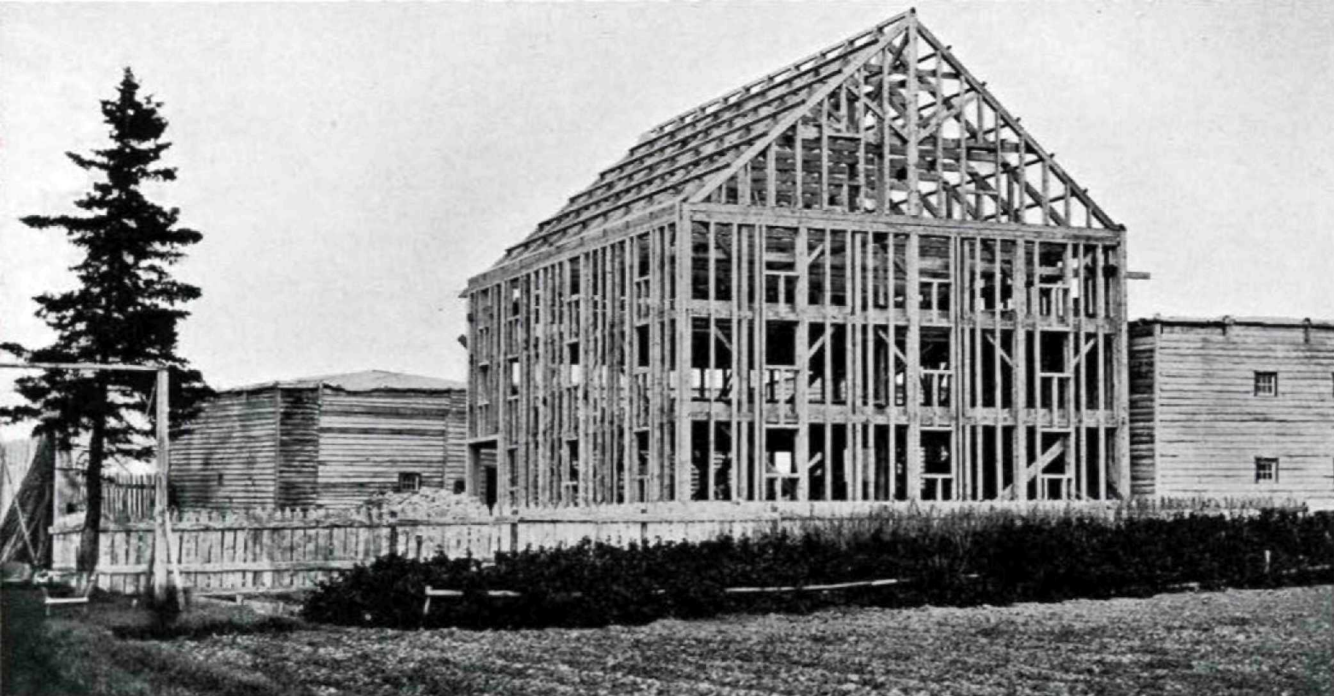
Only twice has the fort heard the clash of fur trade battles—once in 1686, when the Chevalier de Troyes came down the Moose River from faraway Montreal, and with a hundred men captured the post at dawn from seventeen leaderless traders; and once seven years later, when Governor Knight recaptured it for the Company. He burnt it then, and not until 1730 was a new fort built. Since then, trading has been carried on continuously—first on Hayes Island and then on Factory Island, where the post now stands.

When the Company was reorganized in 1810, Moose was made the headquarters of the "southern factories." After union with the North West Company in 1821, it became the residence of William Williams, governor of the Southern Department, and meetings of the council of that department were held there several times between 1822 and 1843—Sir George Simpson as Governor-in-chief presiding at the last three. When the department was discontinued about the turn of the century, Moose became the headquarters of the district, and the ships from London, which had called there every year since 1730, began to deliver their cargoes instead at Charlton Island for distribution to the James Bay posts. In 1931 the railway from North Bay reached Moosonee, across the river from Moose Factory, and it became no longer necessary to bring trade goods in by way of Hudson Strait. The district office was moved to Winnipeg three years later, and Moose Factory reverted to the status of a fur trade post.

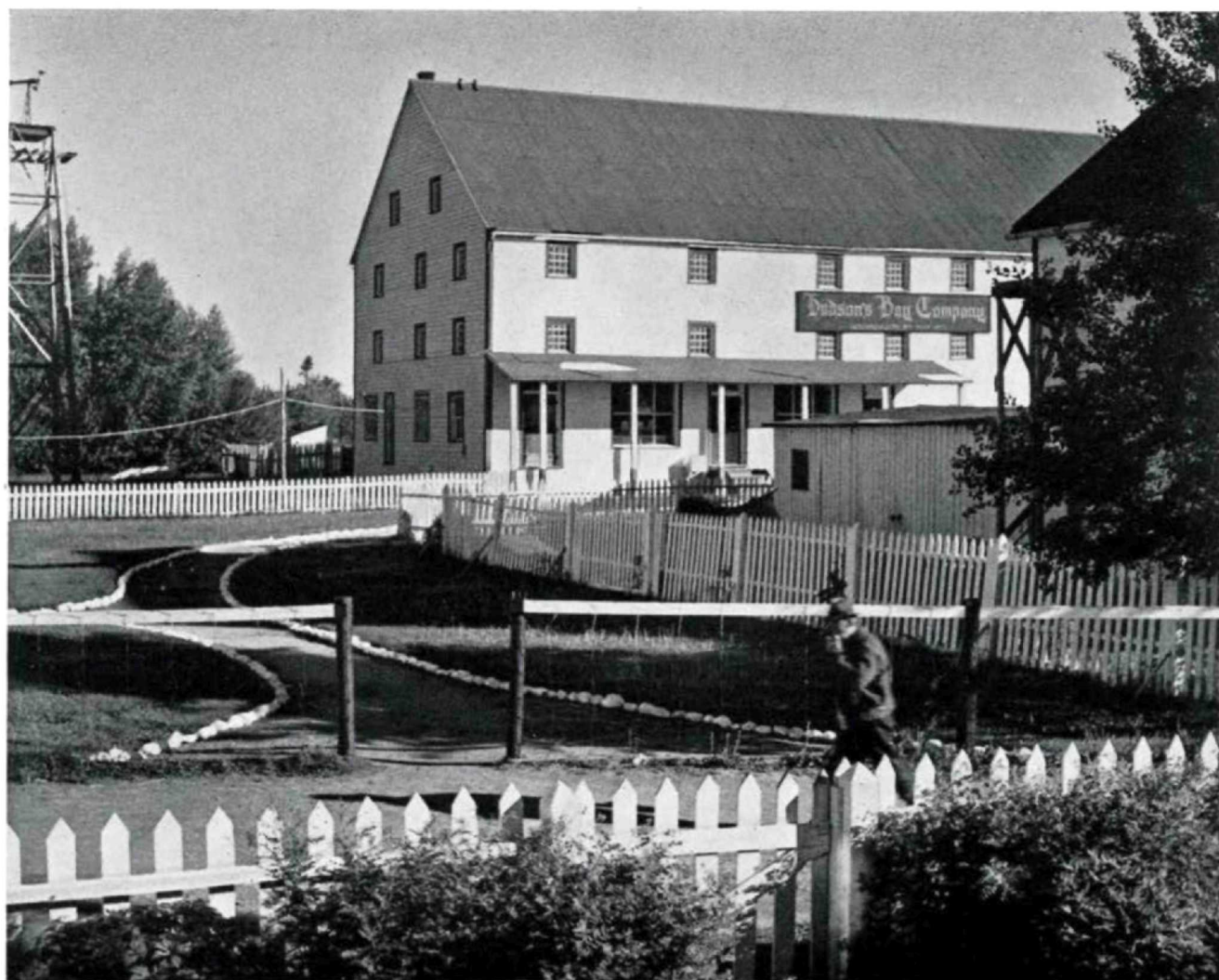
Some of its tall and spacious buildings still stand, however, as mute witnesses to its former importance, and recall the bygone era of square rigged ships and brigades of York boats and birch-bark canoes.

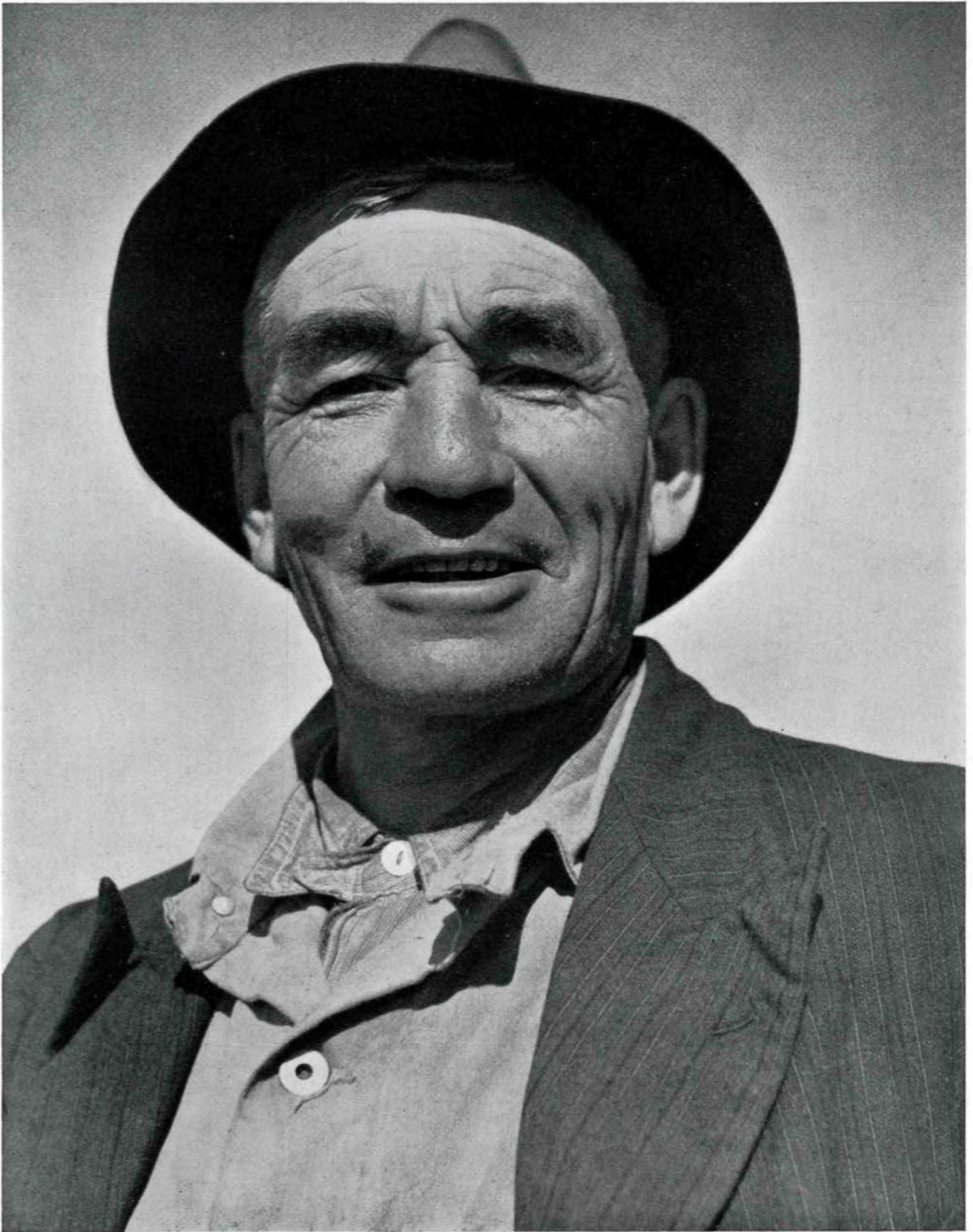
One of the guns on the lawn of the post manager's home. Beyond the flagstaff is the doctor's house, and the store.





The present three-storey warehouse and store, the south end of which is shown in both these pictures, was built of stout timbers in 1871. Beside it, in the top picture, is seen the "Old Factory," erected in the days of George III. When the store porch was repaired in 1938, two old lead plates were found, one commemorating the building of the store, the other a major repair of the 1890's. The lower photo was taken from the porch of the post manager's house.





Moose Factory man. George McLeod, who came to the post about the turn of the century, worked as a blacksmith there for fifteen years, then ran the sawmill for ten. Since 1924 he has been a sort of travelling carpenter for the Fur Trade Department. When he retires, he plans to go back to blacksmithing at Moose Factory.

Portrait by R. N. Hourde.

Right: The lectern fall in the Anglican church is of moosehide beaded with a design of rising mallards.



Left: On this old anvil, generations of blacksmiths have pounded out spikes, nails, York boat fittings, door hardware, camp stoves, angle irons, canoe-pole irons, sled hardware, and dozens of other metal articles for use around the post, and on the rivers and trails that lead to it. Behind it is an old Carron stove, used in the fur trade across Canada. R. N. Hourde

Dr. Robert Bell, the celebrated Canadian geologist, at Moose Factory in 1878. The old cannon is of the same type and calibre as those at Fort Prince of Wales. It was later thrown into the river where it is now used as a deadhead. The Indians standing at bow and stern of the birchbark canoe were typical Moose Factory canoe men.





Top: The staff house (foreground) and post manager's dwelling, both built of squared logs in 1820. Anchored on the Moose River beyond is the doctor's launch.



Left: One of the chairs made at the post many years ago.

THE BEAVER, June 1946

Right: the present post manager's family. Mrs. R. M. Duncan with Margaret and Norman in their garden.





Left: Children of the settlement below the post play on the river bank in the evening. One has a doll in an Indian moss bag.



The oldest gravestone in the old cemetery, erected to the memory of two brothers and two sisters—the youngest of whom died at ten months, the eldest at eleven years, when she was "lost among the ice with an Indian family" in 1802.



Group of old timers. Joseph Chichoo and Philip Morrison sit by an ancient fur press on one of the two rusted cannon overlooking the river. The guns were found on Trodely Island, just north of Charlton, and were brought in by an Eskimo in 1931.



1868: The settlement's only road, viewed from the post manager's residence. Down the left hand side are seen the decorated gateway to the old store; a small dwelling and the carpenters' shop (both still standing), the belfry, the joiners' shop, and at the end, the palisade of the depot, where the goods from London were stored, demolished in 1932. In the distance is a schooner bringing goods from the London ship (anchored out of sight) and transferring them to a lighter in which they were conveyed to the wharf (seen directly below). The white building near the river was used as a steam sawmill from 1883 to 1914. In the foreground are two large cannon, one of which appears in the picture of Dr. Bell, and beyond them piles of whipsawn lumber, and one of the lighters.

1945: Other generations walk the selfsame road, little changed in eighty years.

