

By Canoe to York Factory

Summer, 1911



On Wednesday, 2 August 1911 Kenneth C. Campbell (1875-1961), a dentist living in Winnipeg, started out with three friends for York Factory on Hudson Bay. They were all in their thirties. Below are excerpts of Dr. Campbell's journal edited by his son John G. Campbell of Ottawa.

The first leg of the journey was by wood-burning steamboat from Selkirk, at the south end of Lake Winnipeg, to Norway House, the trading post of the Hudson's Bay Company near the north end of the lake. There the party was outfitted with two canoes and supplies. An Indian guide and three Indian canoe-men were engaged.

The party of eight then proceeded in two canoes along the east channel of the Nelson River, up the Echimamish River and, crossing the height of land, followed the Hayes River to York Factory which they reached on 16 August. After spending several days in the locality, they retraced their route to arrive back at Selkirk on 12 September. The journal paints a picture of the travelling routines, some of the features of the topography along the route and the various episodes they experienced. As well as visits to three HBC posts, several encounters with Indians (Crees) are described.

Members of the party included Richard W. Craig, Laurie C. Boyd, Arthur W. Hogg and Kenneth Campbell. The guides were Solomon Farmer, Johnnie Robertson, James Fletcher and Thompson Macdonald.

Wednesday 2 August 1911: Left Selkirk on the *Wolverine* at three o'clock. A hot day in Selkirk but a grand day on the boat — in fact quite cool on the deck. Into evening a cool breeze sprang up. Boat comfortably filled. Evening spent in smoking, chatting,

reading and listening to music. Arrived at Hecla [Island] at 10:30 p.m. — the first stop.

Thursday 3 August: Woke about 4:30 a.m. with the boat "wooding up" on Little Bullhead near the narrows. Arrived at Berens River at 11:30 a.m. Had two hours sleep on the way after breakfast at 6:00 o'clock. At Berens River, inspected the fish hatchery (empty).

Friday 4 August: *Wolverine* left Berens River at day-break — passed George Island at 10 o'clock. Raining hard when we reached Warren Landing at 5 o'clock p.m. Blowing rather hard and bow pitching in the morning but quieted down as we moved into the north end of the lake [Winnipeg]. Spent the morning reading and playing bridge. Dick, Arthur and I met a chap from Omaha, Neb. Raining nearly all day. A dance in the cookhouse of the fish co. in the evening (with phonograph).

Saturday 5 August: Left Warren Landing at 8 a.m. [Whole party from *Wolverine* on board the *Highlander*] for Norway House — by circuitous route with Indian pilot through Little Playgreen Lake, 3½ miles to Norway House. "Jimmy Big", one of Earl Grey's guides was on board (right from Selkirk). Arrived at Norway House at 11:15 and met Mr. & Mrs. C.C. Sinclair. Mr. Sinclair [Post Manager] talks Cree fluently. Norway House is a large fort — partly stockaded with about a dozen large buildings. Our trip had been arranged by Mr. Sinclair. Our two main guides are Solomon Farmer (main guide) and James Fletcher with two Indian bowmen, Johnnie Robertson and Thompson Macdonald. Spent the afternoon in getting our provisions together. From Mr. Sinclair we got staples viz, flour, bacon, beans, sugar, tea, etc. The



The "Wolverine" at Selkirk on the Red River with members of the Campbell party on deck.

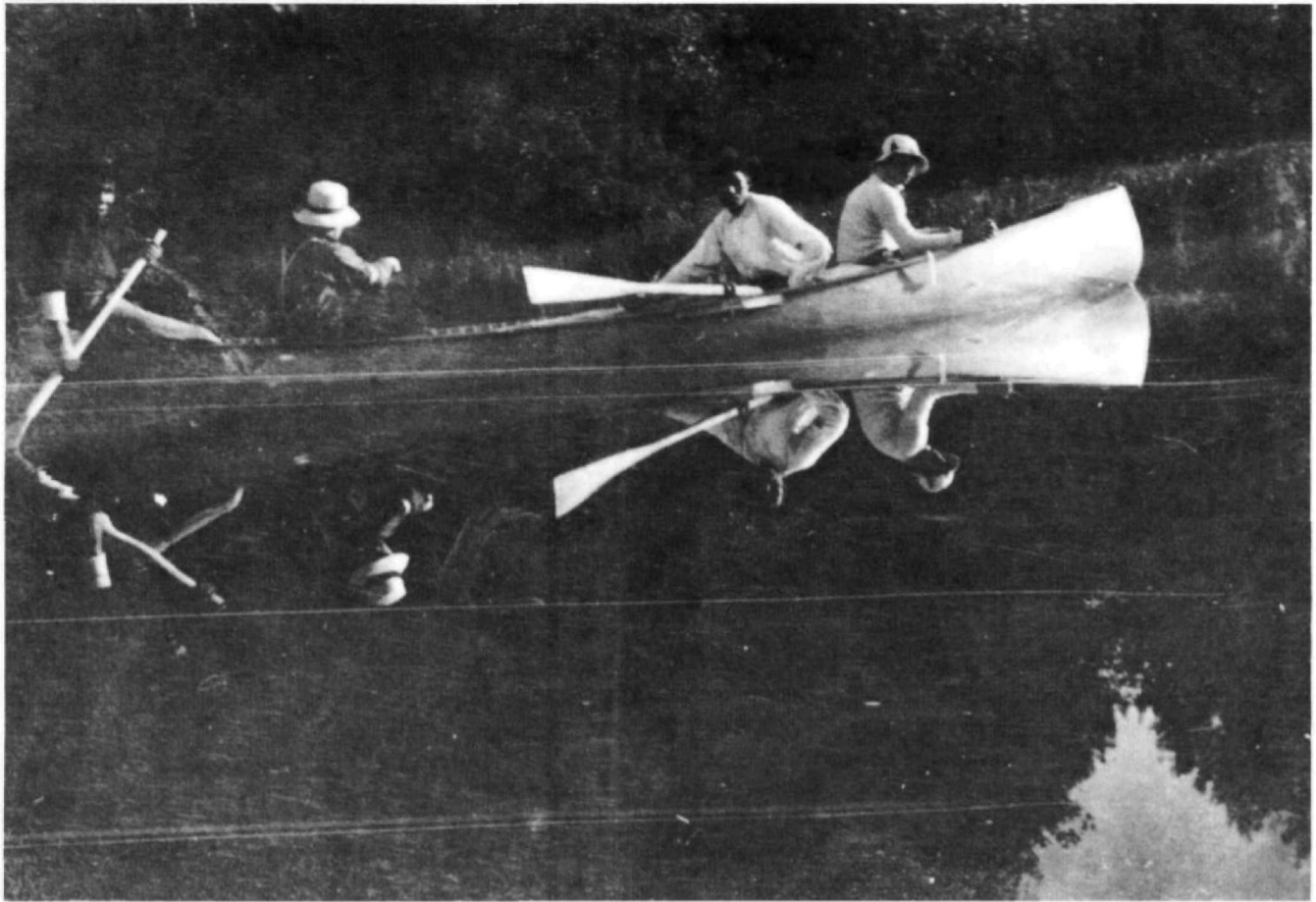
"luxuries", so called, we brought from Winnipeg *viz.* marmalade, maple syrup, cereals, etc. Had supper with HBC employees in the big dining and rooming hall. Mr. Sinclair with us. Fried sturgeon and wild strawberries. We got away from Norway House at 7 o'clock and camped out for the night about three miles down. We were anxious to get going today so we would not have to wait until Monday. One thing that looked odd in this far northern post was a game of billiards being played after supper in an adjoining room in the big Dining Hall.

Sunday 6 August: Got away at 10:15 and sailed our canoes most of the day with a fair wind. Stopped for lunch at 1:00 at a place where we saw two log houses and an old Indian who was full of fever. Saw a litter of young huskies. Made 25 miles today. Pitched camp at 6 p.m. at a fine spot on a point. Johnnie made bannock. Shot a nice duck on the way down but missed another. Crawled under mosquito bar at 9:15 just as the moon rose. Made our first portage today at Tea Falls on the Nelson River.

Monday 7 August: All the Indians, Dick and I slept under mosquito bars last night — fine! Rose at 5:20.

After a bath and a snack we all got away at 6:15. Indians said prayers around fire. Shortly after we broke camp we entered the Echimamish River and stopped at 8:10 for breakfast, having made good progress in two hours. While at breakfast two Indians and a boy came along in a canoe (from God's Lake) and had something to eat with us. Got away again at 9:30 and stopped for lunch at 12:45 on the bank of the Echimamish. Away again at 2. Ascended the river with all its windings, sometimes getting very narrow, at other times broadening out and often very pretty. Marshy nearly all the way with out-croppings of rock at places and occasional scrub. Water the usual amber colour. Passed three small dams on the way up this afternoon. Those dams were built to keep the water deep enough at rapids to allow the York Boats sufficient water.

Arrived at Painted Stone Portage where we camped for the night. This portage (our second one) is on the height of land over which we cross to the Hayes water, but strange to say, this portage is only 75 feet in length. Had supper of fried duck and pickerel, bannock and marmalade (fit for a king). All along the route we see in prominent places fire rangers' notices in Cree. Pre-



Calm waters reflect members of the canoe party on the Echimamish River.

sented Indians with calabash pipes which they seemed to enjoy. Save Arthur and Laurie we slept under mosquito bars. Very heavy dew. At this portage we saw the rocks worn smooth by the frequent passing of the iron-shod York Boats for the last hundred years or more. Standing this evening with our backs to the fire and looking at this portage in front of us, we could not help but think that a large number of people had crossed this same spot in the wilderness in bygone days.

Tuesday 8 August: Earl Grey [Governor General of Canada] started on this date last year from Norway House on this identical route with 12 canoes and 19 guides, there being 11 in his official party. Crawled out from under my mosquito bar at 5:20. We all had a cup of tea and bannock and got away at 6:15. I take off my cap to these Indians who have their prayers beside us at the fire. After they have had their cup of tea and biscuit, Solomon conducts both a reading and prayer for which they all turn and kneel.

The Hayes River water is dark like the Echimamish. Had a shot at a duck but missed it — too far away. Stopped for breakfast on a rock at 8 o'clock. We find this arrangement of meals the only practical way

because if we had breakfast before 6 one could not last out 'till 12 or 1 without eating.

Starting again we went down through a rocky defile with high banks. Then the banks became marshy and finally we came into Robinson Lake, a fair sized lake with marshy shores.

The river then narrowed down for a short distance, and we came to Robinson Portage ($\frac{3}{4}$ mile in length) at 12 o'clock. There the crews of five York Boats had just finished lunch and were going to slide a York Boat from the ground, up the skid-way and onto the car to be taken across the portage on the rude tramway. About 35 men assisted in doing this. Then they tugged and strained for all they were worth to get it up the line. Dick, Laurie and I followed them across the portage to see them launch the boat, which they did quite easily. Giving it a start on small logs which acted as rollers, by its own weight, it went crashing down the hill into the water with a splash.

These York Boats are about 40 feet in length and 10 feet in beam and row with 8 long sweeps; one man in the stern to steer with either a tiller or an extra long sweep. They hold a great quantity of freight and make



One of the canoes with outfit going over the tramway at Robinson Portage.

fairly good time, almost as good time as we do in canoes. There were five York Boats in this fleet and to see their crews all bunched together, they were a picturesque lot of Indians.

Two of our Indians came down with us to take back two cars to carry our canoes and duffle over. This rude tramway is a kind of switchback railway. The car has a brake to prevent it going too fast down the inclines. Going down the last big incline at the upper end of the portage Laurie had an experience. As the car went down the incline Solomon, using the brake, seemed to think he couldn't stop the car and, with a yell in Cree, jumped off, leaving Laurie on the car alone and going pretty fast. It looked as though he would go straight into the water but after going over the "bumps" it ran a few paces on the "corduroy" and stopped a couple of feet short of going down to another platform or wharf.

We caught up with the brigade at Jack Pine Portage where the York Boats were preparing to run the big rapids. It was great to see them go up the river a short distance and turn. Then the crew used their sweeps with might and main to get up speed until they reached the brink. The man standing on the bow stood with his big long pole at the level like a javelin apparently to give the proper direction to the man at the helm. Then with yells in Cree the York Boat took its downstream leap in the rapids and all was excitement until the foot of the rapids was reached — a truly great sight. The man in the bow and one or two others with long poles endeavoured to keep the boat off the rocks. Laurie and Arthur went down in one York Boat.

After leaving Jack Pine Rapids we travelled some miles through a rocky defile to Hell Gate, a twin rap-

ids. We portaged everything here and waited $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ hour to see the York Boats (full laden) go down through Hell Gate but they stayed above for the night. Hell Gate and vicinity is scenery of the wildest nature, especially below. The river flows through a narrow gorge. We went on about a mile and camped on a fine camping place — several shelves of rock. Indians camped much higher than us. I made pancakes and Laurie pea soup while Johnnie made bannock — fewer raspberries here. Dick and Arthur went to bed about 9:30 while Laurie and I sat up for about an hour, talking and smoking — watched the moon rise over the wall of rock opposite. Swift current passing us here.

Wednesday 9 August: Just as we finished breakfast the York Boats passed under sail. We got away between the 4th. and 5th. boat. For a little while our two canoes and the last York Boat sailed abreast but the York Boat with about 500 square feet of sail soon left us behind and we lost sight of them around a point in Windy Lake. We sailed through Windy Lake in fine style — the Indians showing themselves adept at sailing a canoe. They thoroughly enjoy it always as a change from working strenuously when there is no breeze. Windy Lake (no misnomer today whatever it is other days) has fine wooded shores and many beautiful islands.

We overtook the York Boats about 11 just above the four rapids previous to entering Oxford Lake. The York Boat crews had stopped for lunch. When we arrived they were making ready to run the rapids, the first three of which they run full laden while the fourth is run light, being the most dangerous of the four. I told Johnnie I would like to run the rapids in a York Boat.



Shooting the rapids in a York Boat with Laurie Boyd and Arthur Hogg aboard as passengers.

York Boat passing under sail.



He asked the captain of one boat who readily consented. So Dick and I got ashore while Laurie and Arthur went down in our canoes (they ran the first in the canoe and portaged the other three).

As soon as we had finished lunch we started, Dick in one boat and I in another. We made the first all right but in the second rapid the boat I was aboard got stuck on a rock half way down (as did two others behind). About seven of the men immediately scrambled out — clothes and moccasins on — into the water. After several minutes of hard pushing along with the bowmen using poles the boat was eased off — but it was an exciting few minutes. Two of the men had a hard time getting aboard when the boat started to move. The men were all yelling at once, apparently all giving orders but everyone from the captain down kept his temper and all took it good-naturedly, laughing and joking about it immediately afterward.

The third rapid proved a bad one for us too as we got caught on a rock and were swung around against a little rock island about 29 feet across which divides the rapid into two. Only the left rapid is navigable by York Boat. The passage is narrow and curving, very swift — with quite a steep incline. As we swung around and struck, six or seven of the crew, with a yell, made for the rock and I, thinking that they were running to save their lives, made to run for the rock too. But I stopped half way when I saw a line going out to hold the boat from swinging around and going down the other channel backwards or sideways and capsizing. After the bow was secured by the rope about five men standing in the water shoving, and others using poles, tried to get the bow off the rocks but it would not budge. After trying in vain for some time, the crew of the York Boat preceding us came to the rescue with a line on the opposite side of the channel. We got a fresh start and shot the rapid without further mishap. The

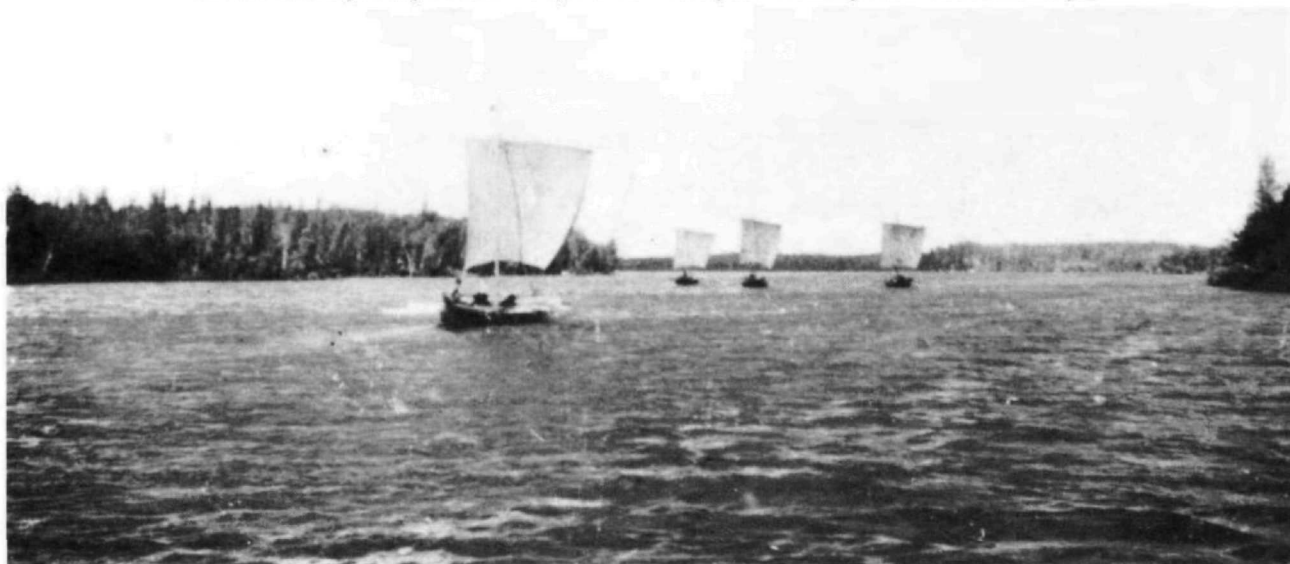
fourth rapid was portaged and the boats went down light. Dick, Laurie and Arthur went down this rapid in the light boat. It was a great sight.

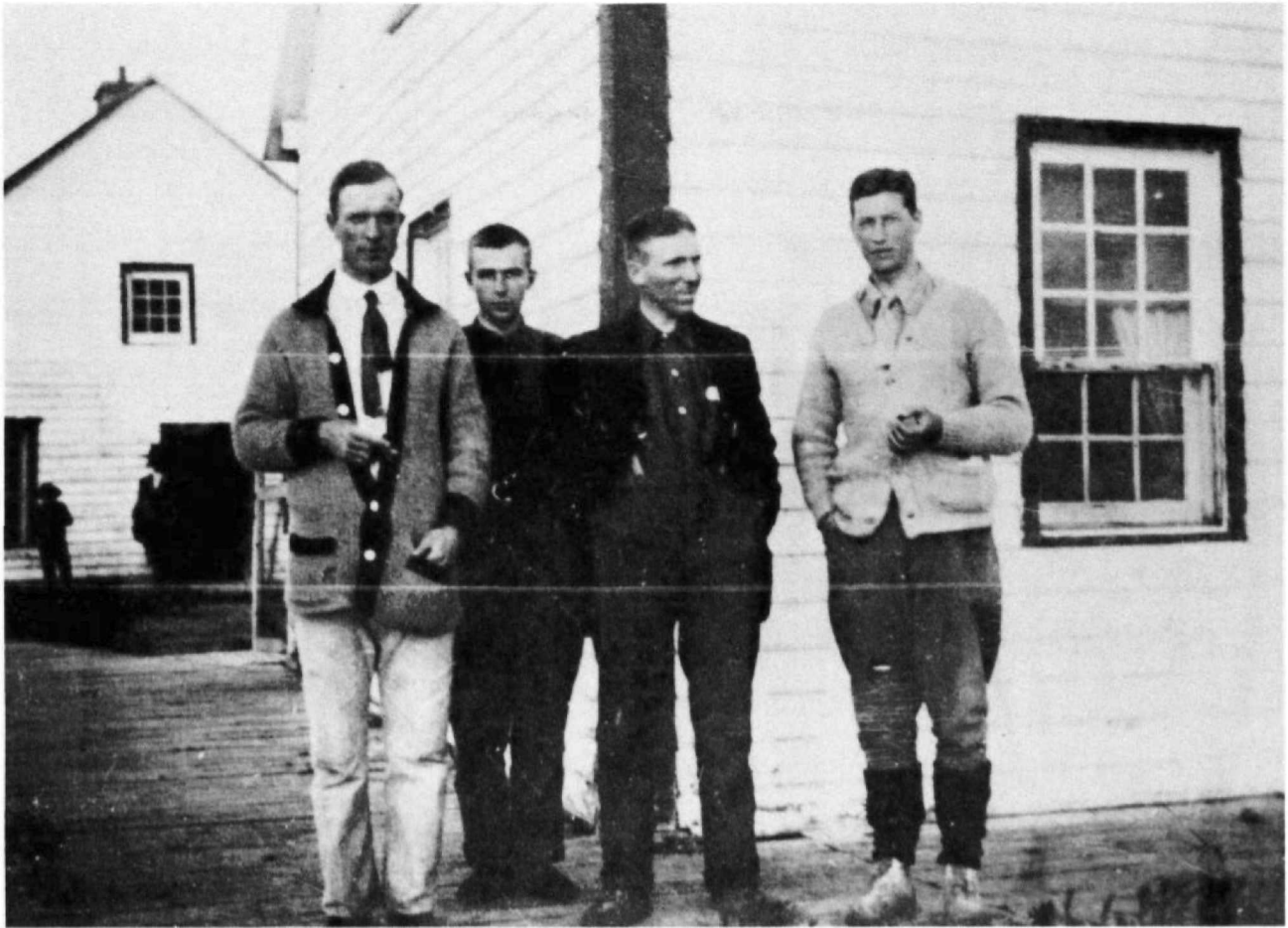
Yesterday and today have been days of great experience to us. I have heard of York Boats for years, seen pictures of them, but these two days have given us the opportunity to get our information first hand and to learn the habits of the crew. Sitting on the elevated stern of a York Boat and seeing the crew work so strenuously at the big sweeps, I could not help but recall what I had read of the old galley slaves. Each rower has a seat and standing place and a bag about a foot high to get purchase. They rise to a standing position (on one foot) and as they fall back to their seat they get the purchase to pull with the sweep. One man to a sweep, both hands on it. The sweeps are 18 ft. long with a 4 to 5 in. diameter shaft and a blade 6 in. wide and 2 in. thick. The stern sweep or tiller is 25 ft. long and slides through a large ring in the stern post with a bolt to keep it from going back too far. The crew ranged from boys of 20 to some old men. We had the Chief of the Oxford Indians as guide of our boat, viz. Jeremiah Juppi.

It is great to see the “middlemen” rise in unison to a standing position and dip their oars at the same time. During exciting moments in the rapids they all talk at once, ordering each other around and joshing one another all the time. They seem to get great pleasure out of the tight places they sometimes find themselves in. The sails are square — about 500 sq. ft. of canvas. The mast is placed just a little forward of the centre of the boat. The far corner of the sail is moved according to the wind. If very fair the sheet is fastened to the gunwale. In a strong gusty wind they lower the sail and reef it.

Dick and I had a light lunch together. Then we all went on down to the river a couple of miles or so into

York Boats sailing on Oxford Lake. The picture was taken from the bow of the last boat in the brigade.





Members of the Campbell party at Oxford House with E.J. Bevington, left.

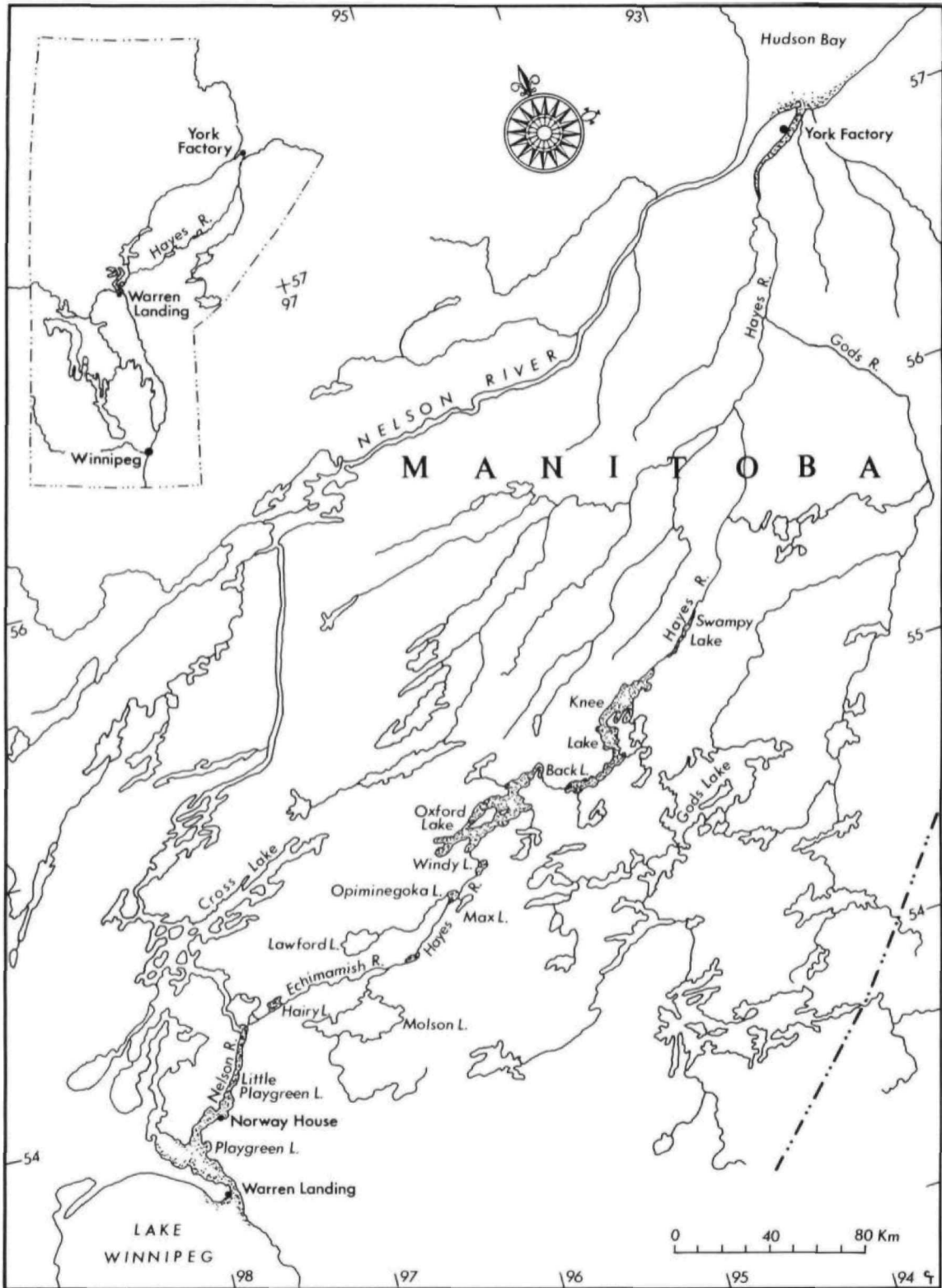
Oxford Lake and waited on the shore (raining) until the York Boats overtook us, it having been arranged at the portage that they would give us a lift down to Oxford House. They picked us up at 3:30. Canoes (light) being taken aboard, we had a great sail down to the post in a stiff breeze and arrived at 9 o'clock. Very cold. Laurie had got his blankets the last two hours, following the example of most of the crew.

Oxford Lake is a fine body of water about 30 miles long and varying in width from one to two miles with numerous islands and rocky points. The shores are heavily wooded — very pretty. On the dock we were met by all the Indians of the place. Mr. E.J. Bevington, Post Manager, and the "Missionary" Mr. Niddrie introduced themselves to us, the former giving us a cordial invitation, which was readily accepted, to come up to the Company's house. We were cold and hungry. Mr. Bevington, had a nice fire going in a wood stove in the living room which was much appreciated. Mr. B. also had his cook make supper for us. We sat around and smoked, Mr. B. supplying the cigars. Our blankets were spread on the floor of the big living room.

Thursday 10 August: Stayed the day at Oxford House, getting a new oar made, a patch on the canoe

and bannock made at the post. We put in this time looking around the post, reading, talking to Bevington who is a typical English sport of about 35 or 37 years of age. In the afternoon Laurie, Arthur and I went over to Back Lake about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile at the back of the post. Dick slept. We spent the evening playing football with about forty Indians. All had moccasins on and kicked as hard as they could every time. After, we wrote letters home, talked to Bevington until about 11:30 and crawled into our blankets on the floor again.

Friday 11 August: Tumbled out at 6 sharp and were off at 6:30. We were soon in Back Lake across which we paddled about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles and went into the river again. Soon the rapids commenced. We ran some all loaded (shipped water at some). At the other three we four got out and the Indians ran the canoes down with full loads. On the last rapid they must have struck a rock for by the time we reached Trout Falls at 11 a.m. both canoes were leaking considerably. Repairs had to be made. Several patches were made of tin from tin cans, the Indians carrying tacks and white lead only with them. The canoes are not standing up well at all. Johnnie said to me they couldn't reach York with these canoes. I said, "Well, they'll have to do, so we'll get busy to repair them."





Preparing to "track" at the foot of Mossy Portage. 3:45 PM, 13 August 1911.

Trout Falls is a very pretty falls of about 15 ft. Just below the falls is Trout Lake which is small and round. We entered Knee Lake at 1 o'clock and hoisted sail in the fair wind, sailing 'till we made camp at 6:30. For supper I caught two pike which Johnnie fried for us. The fish, with Laurie's pancakes, satisfied our hunger. As the sky showed a coming storm we all turned in early. It rained considerably during the night.

Saturday 12 August: Rose at 5:15, had a plunge, a bite to eat and got away at 6 o'clock, immediately hoisting sail in the fine breeze. We sailed along at a nice clip. Knee Lake is a handsome body of water, 60 miles long and varying in width from $\frac{1}{2}$ mile to 3 or 4, with numerous islands all the way along. Several times I counted 20 or so in sight at one time. Reached end of lake at 2:35. Between this time and the time we made camp for the night at 5:30 we made four portages.

Sunday 13 August: Entered Swampy Lake which is several miles long but not very wide. Ducks were very numerous in the lower end. After entering the river again we ran many rapids with no injury to canoes this time. These rapids however were wild, the like of which I had never seen at any one time. In the after-

noon we made 11 portages, only two of which were full portages, *i.e.* requiring canoes and everything to be portaged. The others we walked over carrying sometimes only our guns and other times nearly all our big duff. At one portage "Rope Portage" the Indians let the canoes down fairly light by means of the bow and stern ropes.

The last portage of the day was at Brassy Hill which rises some 400 or 500 feet above the river. It was in evidence for some time this afternoon. Noticed a grave on the top. It is the only outstanding feature of the landscape since leaving Oxford House. For the most part the banks are low and swampy though wooded. "Cut banks" of clay began to show up today.

Of the dozen swift rapids we ran today there were three wild ones, of which one reads occasionally, but very seldom sees. The first one was very narrow with quite a decided drop with big rough water below. We shipped water on going down the other two. A canoe could not stand much more than this.

In running such rapids our main guide — Solomon — shows himself every inch a guide. He shows no hesitancy, seems to inspire his three assistants with confidence. When he gives orders they obey most care-



"Where we stopped for lunch the day we shot the geese".

fully. We realize that we are well looked after when we are in Solomon's hands.

After landing for the night we proceeded to cook supper of soup, 3 ducks which I shot today and plum pudding which Arthur and Laurie have brought with them from Oxford House. Not a bad bill of fare! Our camping ground is a nice high and dry one on the left bank, almost in sight of Brassy Hill. Slept out under the stars and did not need to use the mosquito bar. Heavy dew. Once when I woke up I saw wonderful Northern Lights.

Monday 14 August: Made the Half-Breed portage about 8 o'clock. Climbed to top of hill — nice clean woods. Looked for the grave of a half-breed who is buried there, but did not find it. More rapids and The Rock the last portage on the way down the river. This rock is in the middle of the river. We stopped for breakfast here and took some snaps. This makes a total of 24 portages on the way down including Tea River Falls on the Nelson. The banks are high now with cut banks more in evidence as we go along. The river flows a swift rapid now all the way to the bay. Eating our lunch and looking at the water going by it resembled a swollen river in the spring — water swirling and eddying everywhere. It is 100 miles from The Rock to York Factory. After passing Fox River about 4 o'clock, made camp at 6:45 on a rather high sloping clay bank. Floor of tent on the slant towards our feet and had to push myself back to correct position several times during the night. Had a fine sleep, however. Finished Agnes Laut's second book today — a very interesting description of the Hudson's Bay Company. [*The Conquest of the Great Northwest* by Agnes C. Laut, 2 vols., London 1908].

Tuesday 15 August: [The party travelled and hunted wild geese in the morning.] We stopped at 12:15 and had a fine goose dinner fried to a nice brown — we were very hungry and enjoyed it immensely and more especially because we had shot the game ourselves. In

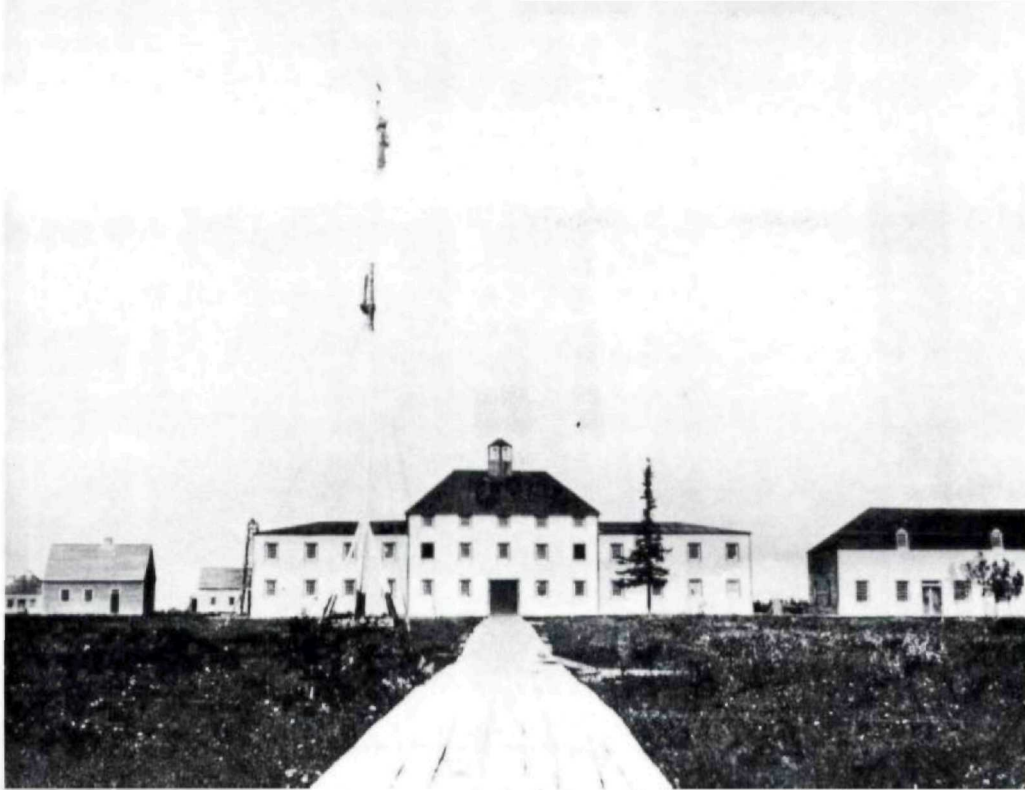
the afternoon we met Mr. Chester Thompson of Winnipeg on his way to Norway House. He was travelling in company with a French "Father" who had come down from Churchill. We gave Mr. Thompson our letter for home. We chatted a while and parted. We made camp about 20 miles from York on a high bank about 6:30. Had another goose for supper. Turned in with my blanket outside at 9 but woke up with the rain at 3 or 4 o'clock. Stuck it out for a while but when the water came through in one shot I moved my blanket into the tent.

[Wednesday 16 August]: — From now on we met individual canoes of Indians with their families tracking up on their way to their winter hunt. Also a York Boat sailing with a good strong wind but the current was so strong that four men had to track [hauling craft against the current by ropes from the bank]. Stopped for lunch and waited for the tide. When at lunch the water rose about two feet — we were about 6 miles up.

Arrived at York at 3:50. A few Indians and Mr. Faries [Rev. Richard Faries, later Archdeacon], the Church of England missionary, were on the embankment to see us land. We met Mr. Ray [George R. Ray], the post Manager, who gave us a hearty welcome. I had some mail for him from Norway House including a letter of introduction from Mr. C.C. Sinclair. We had supper at six; it was a real treat to get fresh bread and cream once again. We find Mr. & Mrs. Ray most kind and solicitous of our enjoyment while at York Factory. We expect to stay two or three days so Mr. Ray is putting us up at the post, sleeping in the old guard room and getting our meals in the Master House with Mr. & Mrs. Ray and family of five plus Mr. Hanford, Mr. Hogg, and Mr. [John] Macdonald, Clerk.

In the evening we went over to see the famous old library, established somewhat over a hundred years ago. It is a room about 12'x12' with shelving in nearly all available space. All the books are catalogued. It contains many ancient copies of earlier authors — published from 1784 to 1795 or thereabouts. We took great pleasure in looking through Franklin's Journals, La Pérouse the French admiral who came out and took Churchill and York about 1759 [actually 1782] and many other old journals of those who made numerous voyages in these parts.

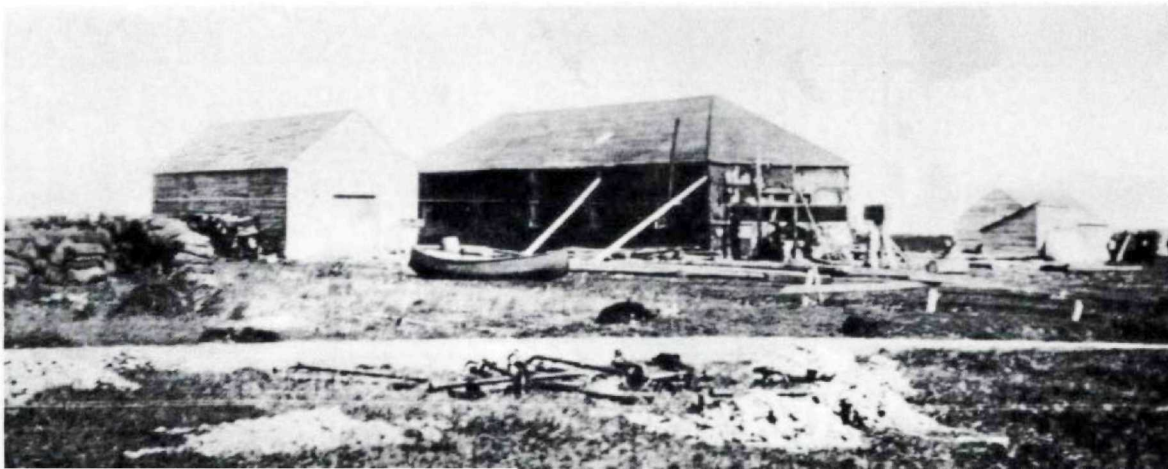
We went out to Mr. Ray's office and had a chat. He explained to us all about the term "skin" — how the Indians know absolutely nothing about the value of dollars and cents. If they go into the "shop" and enquire what a certain thing costs they are told it costs so many skins — 7 sticks of "nigger head" [tobacco] a skin — 8 boxes of wax Vestas [weatherproof matches] for a skin — a tin of Capstan tobacco 1½ skins (no ¼ skins). Should any of them get any actual money by any means they turn it into the Company and are



View of Depot Building (centre) and other buildings, York Factory, August 1911.



Members of the Campbell party carrying the old bell to the York Factory library.

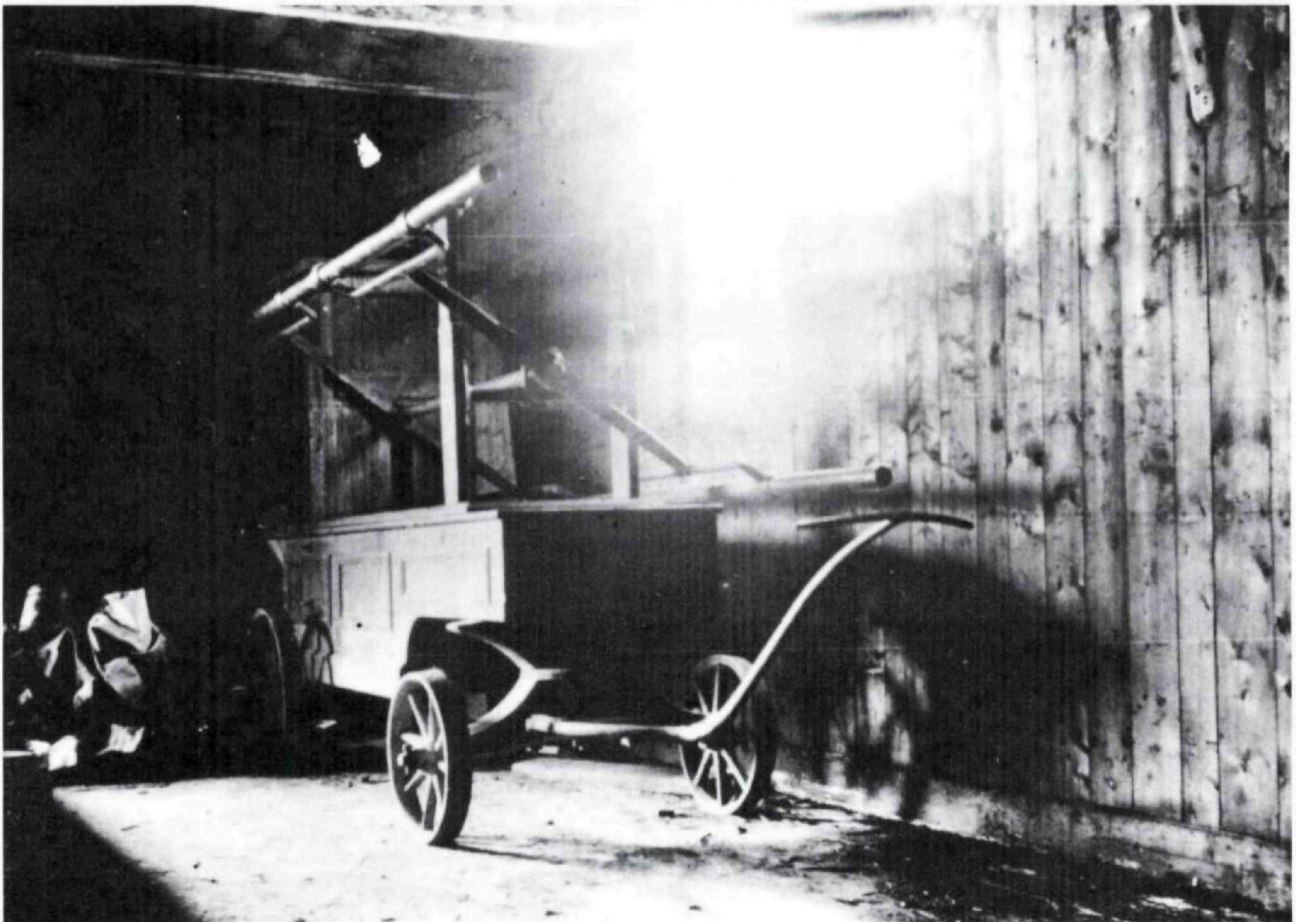


Colony Building at York Factory, said to have sheltered Selkirk Settlers.



An accidental double-exposure produces a ghostly tepee in the York Factory library. The library was famous for its many old and rare books.

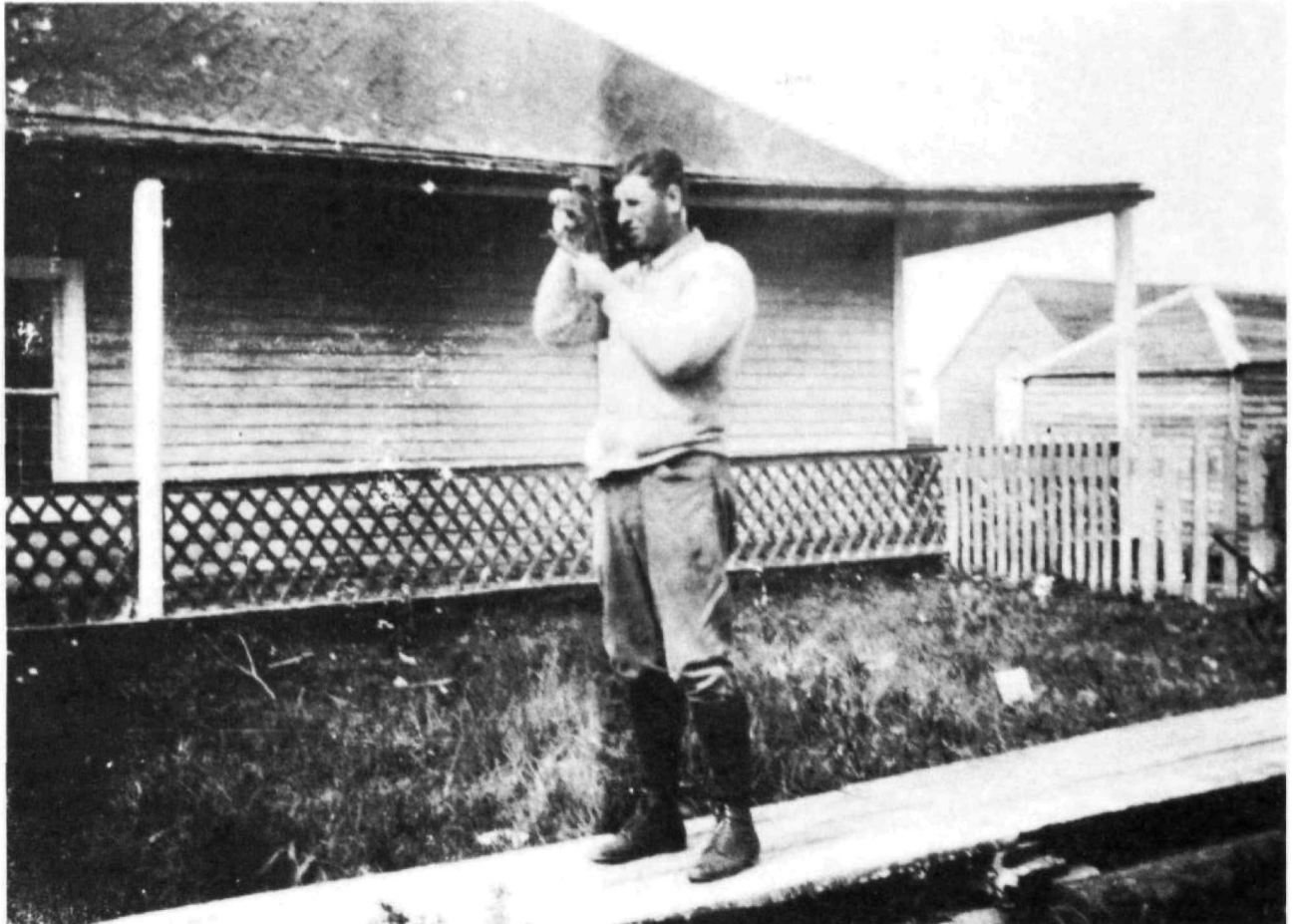
The old 1823 fire engine at York Factory, 1911.





Group including George Ray (second from right) and Richard Faries (third from right) at the place near York Factory where anchors were buried to support a capstan.

Laurie Boyd using a sextant, York Factory.





The four Indian guides pose at Painted Stone Portage.

credited with so many skins. One dollar = 2½ skins so that they can then go to the shop and get so many skins of sugar, tobacco, yards of calico, etc. They know nothing of saving money. If they have, say, 12 skins coming to them for work done at the post they will get an order from the office for the 12 skins and go and spend, say 8 skins for things they really want. Then the Indian will look around to see what he can spend the other 4 skins on. The clerk will ask him if he wants a shirt, tobacco or anything else that comes to mind. The reply will invariably be "Ke-am" meaning "I don't care" or "it doesn't matter" and so he would trade something just to get rid of his money. A few Indians show thrift by keeping something to their credit all summer but on the whole they spend it as quickly as they make it.

In the fall the Company outfits the Indians for the winter hunt. In the spring the furs are bought and the Company takes out the cost of their outfitting and gives them credit for so many skins for the balance. The Indian then goes to the shop with an order for so many skins to buy what he wants. A martin has a value of 12 skins, a beaver 10 skins. This "skin" or "made beaver" is really of no special value except for

the sake of book keeping. The Company sets a price of so many skins on a certain article and the fur is "bought" in at a certain number of skins.

The goods our party buys are not figured out in skins, *i.e.* a record of **WHAT** we buy is kept and before we leave the accountant figures out the cost of the goods by a tariff and adds a percentage profit to get the price we pay. However the clerk behind the counter couldn't tell us how much anything will cost because he doesn't know — beyond what he would tell an Indian — so many skins.

Thursday 17 August: The time for meals at the fort are breakfast at 8, dinner at 12 and supper at 6. After breakfast Mr. Ray offered to show us things of interest around the post *e.g.* the apothecary's room where we saw old surgeon's instruments, bottles of drugs, an old mortar and pestle, etc. From there we went into the shop where the Indians hang around all day long, and through the big warehouses. The big building surrounds a court and was at one time covered with a lead roof. This was removed and sold in England a few years ago producing 60,000 lbs. of lead at 4¢ per.

Very few furs around the post now, they all having been shipped out. We saw the big fur presses to make

the "pieces". The second floor of the big building is used for storing all kinds of small ware for sale in the shop and for sending to smaller trading posts for which York is a centre. In one room they have stored all the old books of the Company — day books, journals, etc. in which we saw the wonderful "copper-plate" writing which must have taken the clerks a long time to do. These old books are most beautifully bound in leather. Some we saw had a lock and key.

From this room we went with Mr. Ray up two flights to the lookout tower which was used to search for incoming boats. We looked through the very old telescope which is kept there and noticed a wind gauge broken by the wind. We passed through many of the other buildings as well. Among them the fish house and flour warehouse which contained about 3,000 sacks (100 lb.) of flour. In another warehouse there was an old fire engine of 1823 vintage, fire irons, etc. At the Cree church (Church of England) Mr. Faries joined us to take us through. After that we were shown the powder magazines and the burying ground.

After lunch we four had some fun carrying over to the library, from the big warehouse, an old bell inscribed "Fort Richmond — 1750". I took a photo of it along side the John Franklin sundial belonging to Mr. Ray. We pored over some books in the library for a while, then we all went over to Mrs. Faries' to make a call and to see the silk and bead work. We all bought some. From there we went up the beach at low tide and saw the old cemetery which the sea is washing away. One

sees the ends of the coffins sticking out, boxes falling out and lying along the beach.

Friday 18 August: Our guide complained of one canoe not being fit to go back to Norway House. So we arranged to exchange this bad canoe with one the Huskies [Inuit] have about 5 miles up the shore. They have a great camp — 10 or 11 all told all in one big skin teepee, including two papooses. They also have a fine kayak, new apparently, for which he said he wanted 30 skins (\$12). I had asked him how many skins. He couldn't tell me at first, until I signified to tell me with his ten fingers, which he did to 30. Then Arthur produced matches and he counted out 30.

The father of the family indicated to me with no uncertain pride that these were all his family. One of the sons had his wife there too. The old Esquimaux woman looked very picturesque with a papoose on her back. They were all smiles and seemed glad to have us take an interest in them.

* * * *

THE RETURN TRIP

After two further days of sightseeing around York the party set out to retrace its route up the Hayes, Echimamish and Nelson Rivers to Norway House which they reached on 6 September after 17 days. The entire trip from outset at Selkirk on 2 August to return to Winnipeg on 13 September took 43 days and

K.C. Campbell in a kayak, York Factory.





Laurie Boyd and Kenneth Campbell with guides on the Echimamish River.

covered about 1,300 miles of which 700 were travelled by canoe on the three rivers.

The first part of the return journey required 6 days of hard tracking against the current of the Hayes. Tracking consisted of two men pulling the canoe upstream while the other two men took the bow and stern. Each half hour or so the men changed positions:

This tracking is a great business. The tracking line is 180 ft. long, about 170 ft. is normally used, except when the canoe has to go out far to avoid shallow water, and the full length is used. The line is $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick and is tied to the 1st. thwart of the canoe. In order to make the stern run easily the painter is tied to the line and drawn up a little. The man steering the canoe ordinarily keeps it out about 30 or 40 ft. The bowman keeps on the lookout to see that the line doesn't catch on snags. The two men pulling have "tump lines" (used for portaging loads on one's back) tied to the tracking line which is placed across the chest — over one shoulder and under the other arm — so that the arms and hands are free. Sometimes we hauled at the water's edge, sometimes on top of a bank and other times half way up on a steep bank where the footing is insecure. We struggled

over gravel, rocks, sand, mud and blue clay and through bushes and long grasses — all kinds of tracking in all kinds of weather.

Though the journal entries frequently complained of gruelling conditions from cold, rain, fatigue and dangerous footing, there was also satisfaction from a sense of accomplishment in the face of such physical challenge. Sometimes the crews had to resort to poling as well. At one point they stopped near an Indian tepee:

I went into the Indians' teepee and it was quite a sight. A cruel wind was blowing outside but inside all was quiet and warm from the fire in the middle about two feet wide. Around the inside there must have been 9 or 10 men, women and children — apparently two or three families. Some were sitting, some were lying down, the men smoking. On the point of a stick against the fire was a whole fish cooking. Around the walls, stretched across the poles, were several beaver skins, shot that day. Just above my head, which I didn't notice at first, was a beaver tail hanging to smoke and dry (considered fine eating by the Indians). The whole scene was quite picturesque.

Finally the party reached The Rock on 26 August:

A fine camping place is this Rock Portage. Everybody usually stops here to dry things and to clean the mud and clay out of the canoes. It has ten times more significance now than it had when we went down the river. For six long days — wet and weary ones — we have laboured as hard as the Indians, or nearly so, and each day we longed for the time when we could stand on the Rock. The sun was brightly shining when we arrived and we have thoroughly enjoyed our stay and rest here.

Travelling became more pleasant in the steeper upper reaches of the Hayes but it was still much tougher than descending. Considerable poling, tracking, and portaging was required; however the days had their lighter moments:

[Thursday 31 August] On again against a strong head wind and made our camp at 5:50 on a point on Knee Lake. Here we made our fire and camped in a fine grove of tall timber. We had a pleasant evening around the fire, talking and chatting, everybody in good spirits. Where we had tea at four, Solomon skinned a mink which he had shot in the afternoon. Retired at 8:45 and had a good sleep.

Encounters with York Boats were always enjoyed — as on 2 September:

About 10:45 we sighted the two York Boats that we expected to meet. Having gotten permission from Mr. Bevington, manager at Oxford House, to open the “packet” to see if there was any mail for us, I went out to a point to flag them with a towel. They were coming down fast with the wind. They responded to our signals and both boats came in on the lea side of the point while Johnnie told the guide of the two boats what we wanted. He readily assented and opened the packet with a hammer. After going through all the mail in one box, and finding none, we opened the other big packet and found all the mail was for Churchill and York Factory. So we were disappointed in not getting any letters or papers. I gave every man a pipeful of tobacco and we left them — a merry crowd they were — mostly young fellows.

And again at lunch time on the same day:

Stopped at a very sheltered spot — wind was blowing hard in the trees above us and not a breath of air stirring where we were. The sun so nice and warm. I spread out my blanket to dry, Johnnie likewise his deer skins, on the smooth rocks. Went on at 2 o'clock. Sailed some during the afternoon — beautiful day — so bright and sunny. Oxford Lake looked great with its numerous wooded islands. The rocky shores were very similar to Lake of the Woods country [in Northwestern Ontario]. Made a fire for

tea at another pretty place with a smooth stone off which I had a swim. Passed quite a number of canoes today on Oxford Lake taking goods down to the “traders”. [“Free-traders” independent of the HBC]. Arrived at the end of the lake and made camp about 7 on a handsome well-used spot. Had a tasty supper and turned in near the fire at 9 o'clock. Tents are not up tonight — everybody sleeping under the stars. This has been to me one of the nicest days of the trip. Such good weather and such great places for our fires and although we had to buck a persistent headwind a great deal of the time we made the whole length of the lake today — about 40 miles or so.

The party reached Norway House by 6 September where they were welcomed again by the Sinclairs. Florence, Dr. Campbell's wife, travelled up from Winnipeg to meet them. A day was spent around the post visiting, buying silk in the store, etc., before boarding the steamboat southbound on Lake Winnipeg and arrival at Selkirk on 12 September 1911.

All photographs are from the album of Kenneth C. Campbell and are used by permission of John G. Campbell.

York Factory

Trading activity at York Factory can be traced back to the last years of the seventeenth century when the Hudson's Bay Company began to establish its control over the area. It was captured by D'Iberville after the celebrated “Battle of the Bay” in 1697, was restored to the British in 1713 and fell briefly once again to the French under La Pérouse in 1782.

Great names of exploration and the fur trade have York Factory connections, including Henry Kelsey, William Stewart and Anthony Henday.

During the eighteenth century York Factory developed into an important trading centre and as posts were established inland it became a major entry point for trade goods from Europe and the exit point for furs.

York Factory reached the zenith of its importance in the early nineteenth century when it became headquarters for the HBC Northern Department, but as the century progressed its importance declined as trade routes were expanded in the south. In 1878 Fort Garry became the Company headquarters and York Factory reverted to the status of a depot. Its decline continued into the twentieth century and the HBC terminated operations there in 1957.

York Factory was formally handed over to the Canadian Government in July 1968 and the few remaining buildings are now administered by Parks Canada as an historic site.