

FUR TRADE DAYS

The written history of the area and the involvement of Europeans in the area dates from 1640 when Lake Abitibi was first mentioned in the Jesuit Relations in 1640 and was first shown on a 1685 map as Lac Des Taitibis. In his 1873 geological expedition Walter McQuat calls the lake "Lake Abbitibbe". By around 1900 the name had settled into its present form and spelling.

As well, the Jesuit Relations (1650-1660) document the Iroquois raids from New York State and Southern Ontario that give the town of Iroquois Falls its name.

Following the Iroquois wars which resulted in a considerable disruption and mixing of the original tribes of northeastern Ontario (some refugee groups fled west as far as Lake Nipigon), the area was gradually resettled. These later groups were the ancestors of the present day native peoples of the area now known as Cree and Ojibway.

The first official fur trader in the area was Charles Joseph D'Ailleboust in 1683. In 1686, the Chevalier Pierre DeTroyes arrived in the area with a military expedition on its way to attack the British at Moose Factory. They built a fort on the Quebec side of Lake Abitibi.

From 1760 to 1786, many independent traders were in the area, but by 1787 the Northwest Company took over the fur trade of the area operating from headquarters at Fort Temiskaming. Missionaries arrived in the area around 1837. The story of the missionaries and early churches in the area are worth exploring further.

The Hudson's Bay Company established a post called Newpost on the Abitibi River (near Abitibi Canyon) in 1867, operated by the McLeod family.

In 1905, Mr. W.F. Biederman opened a post at Abitibi Narrows (Fort Temiskaming closed this same year). Mr. W.F. Biederman was the father of the former Albert Biederman of Cochrane.

During the early 1900s the Revillion Freres Fur Trading Company, based in Paris, France, also became active in northern Ontario with posts on the Albany River at Moosonee. They also had a warehouse building on Lake Abitibi.

Also around the turn of the century, there appears to have been a small community and trading post at the mouth of the Ghost River, operated by a small independent trader similar to the Biederman operation. (Ridley 1956).