

Taming of the Nipigon

The following is a brief history of the 'taming of the Nipigon'. This was written by a Camp Clerk by the name of G.A. Hayes.

To the best of our knowledge, this history was compiled sometime in the early 1960's when the river drives were eventually phased out of existence ...

In its natural state, the Nipigon River was considered drivable. The drop of 250 feet with its many falls and rapids from Lake Nipigon to Lake Superior, was a challenge to courageous men who had to navigate this turbulent stream.

Those early voyageurs never dreamed that millions of cords of pulpwood and millions of feet in sawlogs would some day be driven down this mighty river.

James Whalen made the first attempt to drive the Nipigon River in 1900, bringing pine sawlogs from Lake Helen to Nipigon. This bold pioneer in the following years moved operations up the River and its tributaries - Frazer Creek and Bass Creek.

He took drives from as far up the river as Pine Portage. He met considerable difficulty with centre jams in the section between the present sites of Cameron and Alexander Dams. Some of the wood remained there until the flooding of the area on construction of the power station. After the 1907 season, Whalen discontinued operations and very little activity was noted on the river for the next 15 years.

Cameron Falls power

station was completed in 1921. The 72 foot head of water thus created, raised the water level to form Lake Jessie from two smaller lakes. The rapids at Split Rock and the falls at Island Portage disappeared under this flood.

The power station at Alexander Falls went into operation in 1931. The chief influence this dam had on the river was that it reduced the eddies below Cameron Falls. The main operators driving the Nipigon River during the twenties and early thirties were D.A. Clark, C.W. Cox and Thunder Bay Improvements. Centre jams below Cameron Falls created most of their troubles, some taking a week to break.

In 1937 Abitibi began the huge job of installing improvements along the entire river from Virgin to Lake Helen. Camps were constructed, storages were built, glance booms and piers were placed in vital spots to direct the flow of wood. Boom walks were built above the sluiceways at the various dams to aid the passage of wood.

The tugs 'Nipigon' and 'Orient Bay' were built in 1938 to raft wood to the head of the river. That fall, the 'Nipigon' spilled its first raft into the storage at Virgin Falls. In all, 14,000 cords were towed in four rafts. The first of the wood was sluiced through Virgin Dam on September 28, and the last of it arrived at Lake Helen on November 9. The undrivable river had finally been driven.

Production during the war years was limited - a yearly average of 150,000 cords were driven. A distinct increase was shown shortly afterward, the peak year being 1948 when over 400,000 cords came down the river. In all, approximately 5 1/2 million cords of pulpwood have been driven since 1938. This figure does not take in the several millions of sawlogs included in the drives.

The power station at Pine Portage brought about further changes in driving conditions. This great dam raised the level of water in the river to that of Lake Nipigon, causing Emma Lake to disappear in the larger, newly formed Pine Lake, Virgin Falls, White Chutes, Devils Rapids and many other fast-water headaches of the drive foremen were eliminated by this flooding (-30).

Pine Lake has become a towing operation, as well as Lake Jessie. Warping tugs 'Wabino' and 'P.P.M. 31' make up rafts of approximately 5,000 cords at Victoria storage and tow them to a storage just above Pine Dam where the 'gator 'Ovongan' takes over the pushes the wood into the sluiceway. On Lake Jessie the 'Outan', with the help of the 'Purdom', performs similar operation. The 'Flatrock' or the 'Knight' help sluice at Cameron Dam. It has become necessary to work these boats on a two shift basis, and often three shifts, to keep the wood moving at a steady pace.

Nipigon River drive is not a single operation, but a series of individual drives. The number of drives depends on how many operators are making use of the river, and the availability of their wood during the season. There have been as many as ten individual drives over one season.

Each one of these drives has to be reared beyond a certain section of the river before the succeeding drive can proceed. The higher water has made rearing a simpler operation. Small alligators like the 'Babikan', with a small string of booms can get quite close to shore to pick up small straggling pockets of wood. The long, awkward, hand operated pointer is becoming a thing of the past for rearing purposes. The full cooperation of the Hydro crews

at the various dams in giving more water when needed, has facilitated rearing considerably.

Installation of flow developers above the sluice gates at the dams has reduced the work of the sluicer. A small 'gator, working its way through the wood at the trip boom, breaks off a small quantity of wood at a time; this wood is then caught in the current developed and carried down into the sluiceway. Very seldom does a sluicer have to push wood with his pike-pole from beginning to end of shift.

Once the wood is below Alexander Dam a good current carries it to the mouth of the river at Lake Helen. Here it is stored for eventual delivery and rafting to Nipigon Straits for the Lake Superior tugs.

Most physical hazards of the river have been brought under limited control, but mother nature still presents our major driving problem - wind. The best results shown on the river have been when the storages were full of wood. A constant supply at the head of the river depends on delivery from the main sources of supply; the Ombabika and the Blackwater Rivers.

Favourable wind direction allows rafts to be made up in these storages, contrary winds have held up rafts as much as two weeks. Operating periods over the last 20 years have varied from 105 to 188 days. The quantity of wood stored in the river over freeze-up, the number of drives, or the length of the operating season have no appreciable influence on the quantity of wood driven. In 1956 it required 187 days to handle 344,000 cords, while in 1957 it took only 131 days for 376,000 cords.

'As the wind blows, so goes the Nipigon River Drive,' to quote an old drive superintendent.

Hockey Stats

Elk's Hockey Scoreboard at Jan. 31/83 by Ron Thompson

Tom Thumb Standings	GF	GA	Win	Loss	Tie	Points
Nichol's Trucking	59	33	7	1	1	15
Home Hardware	68	33	5	2	2	12
Shell Restaurant	47	66	4	4	1	9
Legion Branch 32	36	78	0	9	0	0

Tom Thumb Scorers	Team	Goals	Assists	Total
1. Terry Nicol	Nichols	25	10	35
2. Bradley Mannila	H-H	21	7	28
3. Jean Marc Fortier	H-H	23	1	24
4. Norman Jensen	Legion	16	6	22
5. Jerry Nicol	Nichols	13	7	20
6. Curtis Thompson	Shell	14	4	18
7. Jonah Dupuis	H-H	8	10	18
8. Gerald Laframboise	Nichols	15	2	17
9. Kenneth Legacy	Shell	13	3	16
10. Robbie Ray	H-H	11	4	15
11. Jason Thompson	Shell	9	3	12
12. Shane Ruth	Nichols	2	8	10

Pee Wee Standings	GF	GA	Win	Loss	Tie	Points
International Hotel	51	43	5	3	1	11
Dampier's Fisheries	50	26	5	3	-	10
Doc's Mens Wear	32	64	2	6	1	5

Pee Wee Scorers	Team	Goals	Assists	Total
1. Joey Haskell	Int. Hotel	17	3	20
2. Kurt Dampier	Dampiers	14	5	19
3. Omar Belisle	Doc's	9	9	18
4. Tommy Dampier	Dampiers	13	4	17
5. Jimmy Logan	Int'l Hotel	8	5	13
6. Jeremy Hardy	Dampiers	4	9	13
7. Aaron Duke	Doc's	7	5	12
8. Jamie Robinson	Dampiers	8	4	12
9. Kenny Harper	Int'l Hotel	5	6	11
10. Brent Kochan	Int'l Hotel	6	3	9
11. Jeff Zechner	Int'l Hotel	4	5	9
12. Todd St. Jean	Doc's	6	1	7

Red Rock Commercial Hockey League Statistics Effective to January 12, 1983

League Standings	Won	Lost	Tied	Points
1. Huskies	13	4	1	27
2. Superiors	9	8	1	19
3. Renards	7	9	2	16
4. Dorion	4	12	2	10

Goaltenders Average	GP	GA	Avg.
Loik (Renards)	5	19	3.80
Gregno (Huskies)	16	61	3.81
Clemer (Huskies)	2	9	4.50
Hulls (Superiors)	12	55	4.58
Huntus (Superiors)	6	28	4.60
W. Haskell (Dorion)	7	38	5.40
Haley (Renards)	10	55	5.50
Renaud (Dorion)	11	62	5.60

Top Scorers	Goals	Assists	Points
Fowler (Huskies)	23	12	35
Fecteau (Huskies)	16	19	35
R. Dupuis (Huskies)	17	11	28
Pelletier (Huskies)	11	17	28
Illijow (Huskies)	11	15	26
N. Boudreau (Renards)	12	11	23
Brand (Superiors)	9	10	19
N. Dutil (Dorion)	13	4	17
Imhoff (Superiors)	13	4	17
B. Kennedy (Renards)	6	11	17
Kurliak (Superiors)	9	7	16
Farrel (Renards)	8	8	16

Statistics prepared by G. Boulter
League Statistician

Home grants extended

Jack Masters M.P. - Thunder Bay Nipigon, was extremely pleased by the announcement that the Canadian Home Ownership Stimulation plan has been extended from April 30, 1983 to December 31, 1983, in Northern Areas such as Thunder Bay.

"With the extension, many more people in our area will be able to make use of the \$3,000 grant," Mr. Masters stated. Before, due to climatic conditions in the Northern areas, those interested in construction of new homes were unable to meet the deadline for applications.

As it stands now those wishing to apply may do so as long as the unit is purchased before May 1st, 1983 and started before the end of 1983. In Northern areas such as ours, this means that those interested in construction may be able to wait until weather permits to lay the foundation for construction.

RRR RED ROCK RECREATION

UPCOMING RECREATION EVENTS

INTRODUCTORY CROSS-COUNTRY SKI CLINIC:

A basic introductory course for the novice. Wed., Feb. 16, 7:30 p.m. classroom instruction on clothing and care of equipment at the Red Rock Recreation Centre. Sat., Feb. 19, 11:00 a.m., snow instruction at the Rendezvous Ski Club trail. Clinic for persons 13 years of age or older. Registration limited to first 20 students. Fee \$5.00 per person, \$10 per family. Clinician, Lorne Morrow CANSI instructor. Phone 886-2421.

DOG OBEDIENCE & SHOW HANDLING:

A ten week course beginning Mon., Feb. 14. To be held at the Red Rock Recreation Centre Gym. Obedience Classes will be held from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. and Show handling from 8:30 to 9:00 p.m. Registration fees - Obedience classes: \$20.00 per dog. Show handling \$10.00 per dog.

There will be pre-registration for these programs at the Red Rock Recreation Centre Office week days from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

For further information call
886-2284

REGISTER NOW

and enjoy special discount available only until April 1st.

DORION

Contact

Dorion Bible Camp 857-2331
Christian Supply House 622-3424

BIBLE

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CAMP

Bringing CHRIST to Canada's Youth

Remember for your child, "Camping does not cost, it pays "Great Dividends"



CANADIAN SUNDAY SCHOOL MISSION

Annual Dorion Bible Camp Meeting

February 14th, 7:30 p.m.
Syndicate Baptist Church
451 Syndicate Ave.
Thunder Bay South



Money's Worth
To get the most for your family clothing dollar, select classic rather than faddish styles. Classic styles are "in" for several seasons.



Valentine's Special

During the week of February 7 to 13 a purchase of \$5.00 or more entitles you to enter your name in a draw for a

GIANT BOX OF CHOCOLATES

The draw will take place Mon. Feb. 14.



HuskyHouse
Restaurant