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EARLY DAYS IN AND ABOUT COCHRANE - Part 1

(1880 to 1926)

Information believed to be correct and summarized from several sources but mainly the Cochrane Northland Post (CNP).

Cochrane is located at 49.06 degrees N and 81.00 degrees W & 807' above mean sea level.

The country had been covered by Lake Ojibway during the retreat of the glaciers. The southern extremity went in an arc from Val d'Or to Hearst. Clay was deposited year after year until the lake drained away to Hudson Bay. Some drumlins exist and marshes or bogs but generally the land is relatively flat.

1880. First settlers invaded the territory at the head of Lake Temiskaming. Ontario government contemplating building a railroad. The idea simmers for a long time.

1880s. Jim Palangio landed in New York as a 13 year old without money to buy a meal. He worked on the railroad and married a girl from New Jersey. In 1897, the Klondike gold rush begins. In 1898, Jim Palangio moved to Montreal. Canadian Christmas postage stamp shows British Empire in 'flaming red'. The following year, the first Canadian troops to serve overseas were sent to South Africa to fight in the Boer War.

1900. Federal immigration policy entices eastern Europeans to the Canadian West. \$40,000 was approved for exploring the north prior to building a railroad. During the year ten exploration parties examined the land north of Lake Abitibi. Party one under surveyor T.B. Speight surveyed the Cochrane area. They came by rail from Toronto to Mattawa, then canoe to Lake Temiskaming. A little steam boat called the Meteor took them to the head of the lake. They followed the lakes and streams to the HBC post on Lake Abitibi. It took a week. They then explored the Abitibi river for 160 km. cruising the bush on foot for several miles on each side of the river. They reported clay soil, large quantities of pulp wood and a large falls at Iroquois. The report of each party convinced the government to build a railway from North Bay to Lake Temiskaming. It would colonize the north, exploit the forest, open mines and develop hydro electric dams. The president of the company which became the TNO railroad, Jake Englehart is reported to have turned the first sod in North Bay. So is Hon Frank Latchford, Public Works department in the Ross government reported as the first to turn the sod. In spite of difficulties, the railroad progressed through the rock of the Canadian Shield north of North Bay. Suddenly, discovery of silver was announced at Cobalt on Lake Temiskaming and the government pushed construction of the railroad toward the new mining camp.

1901. Marconi receives first transatlantic radio message at St John's, Newfoundland.

1903. Canada loses Alaska Boundary dispute when British representative sides with the USA.

1904. Jim Palangio moved to North Bay. He helped on the TNO railroad.

1905. On Jan 6, 1905, the first train smoked along L Temiskaming to reach New Liskeard, passing through Cobalt first. Treaty No.9 signed between Crown & Indians of the Cochrane area. About thirty Indians under Chief Commanda frequented the area around what became Lake Commando for fishing and hunting. Until 1911, there were three cabins inhabited by them on the east side of the lake. (Little Lakes Camping Grounds). After the fire of that year, they left the country between the Abitibi and Frederickhouse to the whites. Provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta were formed.

1906. The first train arrived at Englehart, named after the President of the commission presiding over the Ontario railroad proceeding from south to north. Another railroad was being built to connect Quebec to Winnipeg.

1907. The first train arrived at McDougall's Chutes (Matheson) which was 70 km south from Cochrane. The reason for the province to continue the line north was to supply The National Continental promised by Sir Wilfred Laurier which was being built through the forest of Northern Ontario. Joseph E Bourke, who was chosen to find where the two railroads would meet wrote: "I left McDougall's Chutes in a canoe and descended the Black River and Abitibi River to the point chosen for the Transcontinental railway bridge and followed their line between the Abitibi and Frederickhouse rivers. I obtained snowshoes. It was the month of June and snow had fallen on the tops of the hills or drumlins (collines). I was impressed by the placement of the lakes midway between the rivers and decided that would be an ideal site for a town." The name Cochrane had already been selected for the town where ever it would be. Bourke's choice was accepted by the authorities of the Provincial government. The Premier of Ontario in 1907 was convinced that the new town was destined to play the role of the metropolis of the North. Immediately he sent W.J. Beaudry to the site of Cochrane to locate the streets and measure the lots. He thought a town at the junction of two important railways would be able to support a large population. He established the plan on a grand scale. It showed four principal avenues (3,4,5,6th), each 35 metres wide. This part of the town would be opened first. He also located the streets east of Lake Commando. Beaudry had laid out the streets for a residential community where the