

Diary of a Vagabond

by Dorothy Barker

Three weather-beaten prospectors made the acquaintance of Josiah Flintabbatey Flonatin between the pages of a dime novel.

Sitting around an old potbellied stove they ruminated over what they should call the rich strike they had just staked in the wilderness of northern Manitoba. Flonatin's adventures, after he dug a hole in the earth and found a new world, appealed to them as depicting their own good fortune. So they shortened his nomenclature to Flin Flon, which has stuck to one of the richest mineral fields in Canada.

It is now a community of 12,000 souls with two daily newspapers, nine schools and spectacular red mine shafts, visual evidence of the great wealth that has been dug from a mile below the surface of the earth. The town's life expectancy has run in several cycles of ten years. Mines peter out and new lodes are discovered, fortunes have been made and as many lost in the fluctuation known as "prospector's luck". Now the town has settled into a pattern of permanency as modern methods have improved mining facilities. Even the mounds of slag are being reprocessed, extending the production of zinc and copper mines.

On the morning the CNR's Churchill Excursion diesels pulled their seventeen coaches into a siding, little pools of water reflected the intense blue of a northern sky. It had been raining since dawn, but the last drop we were to see until the train returned to Winnipeg, fell as we walked up the long main street on tour of inspection.

Flat-fronted, one-storey shops leaned sometimes at crazy angles seemingly supporting one another, while the near-by Hudson's Bay Company was remodelling its premises with stone and brick. Every structure in Flin Flon is built atop solid rock. Few houses, or stores, have basements and most buildings perch precariously on their rocky ledges, easy prey for the gales that blow during the long winter months.

I was on the hunt for a genuine sourdough and thought I had discovered him when I spied an old character smoking a huge stogey and with an oversized, weathered old Stetson hanging on his ears. His almost sightless blue eyes, toothless grin, Old Bill mustache and leathery tanned skin had all the earmarks of my mental picture of what a sourdough should look like.

Smokey Joe was pleased with the nickname I gave him, but soon disillusioned me about his prospecting history. He was a horse trader in his youth. Horse flesh in the bush during the early part of the century was as valuable as gold nuggets. Old Joe prospered until the population became mobile on four wheels. His only similarity to that of a prospector was his ability to cook. When hard times hit his pocketbook, Smokey Joe set up a kitchen in a small store and started frying doughnuts. Today his son, who took the business

over after the war, has built it into a small empire of soft drink concessions and sweet buns throughout the mining district.

This was picnic day on the tour. Truckloads of food and dining car crew members passed the buses that transported us from Flin Flon to nearby Beaver Lake, the only point in Saskatchewan we touched. Pipers in their Cameron tartans skirled a welcome and one of the most interesting persons I met during my six days "down north" was Harry Moody. He was what I think I should describe as a gentleman prospector. During his lifetime he had been a millionaire several times over. Victim of capricious circumstances peculiar to this north country. He is ending his days perpetuating the legends and history of the Cree tribe and Eskimos who peopled the area thousands of years ago. He has been the inspiration and instigator of a small museum at Denare Beach, which houses authentic artifacts found in the area.

Curator of this lore is a petite young girl with snapping brown eyes and a skin like the fuzz on a peach. Virginia Hill is proud of her Cree blood and her Scottish great-grandfather. Born in a fish camp on an island in Beaver Lake, she has lived all her life in the woods. Her early education was obtained in a small one-room school and her one year of high school training was obtained through a correspondence course. Though married for five years, she intends to continue mining her education from a correspondence course and when she graduates, will use the money she has earned at the museum to put herself through normal school in Regina. Virginia wants to teach in the little school that first gave her a yen for higher education.

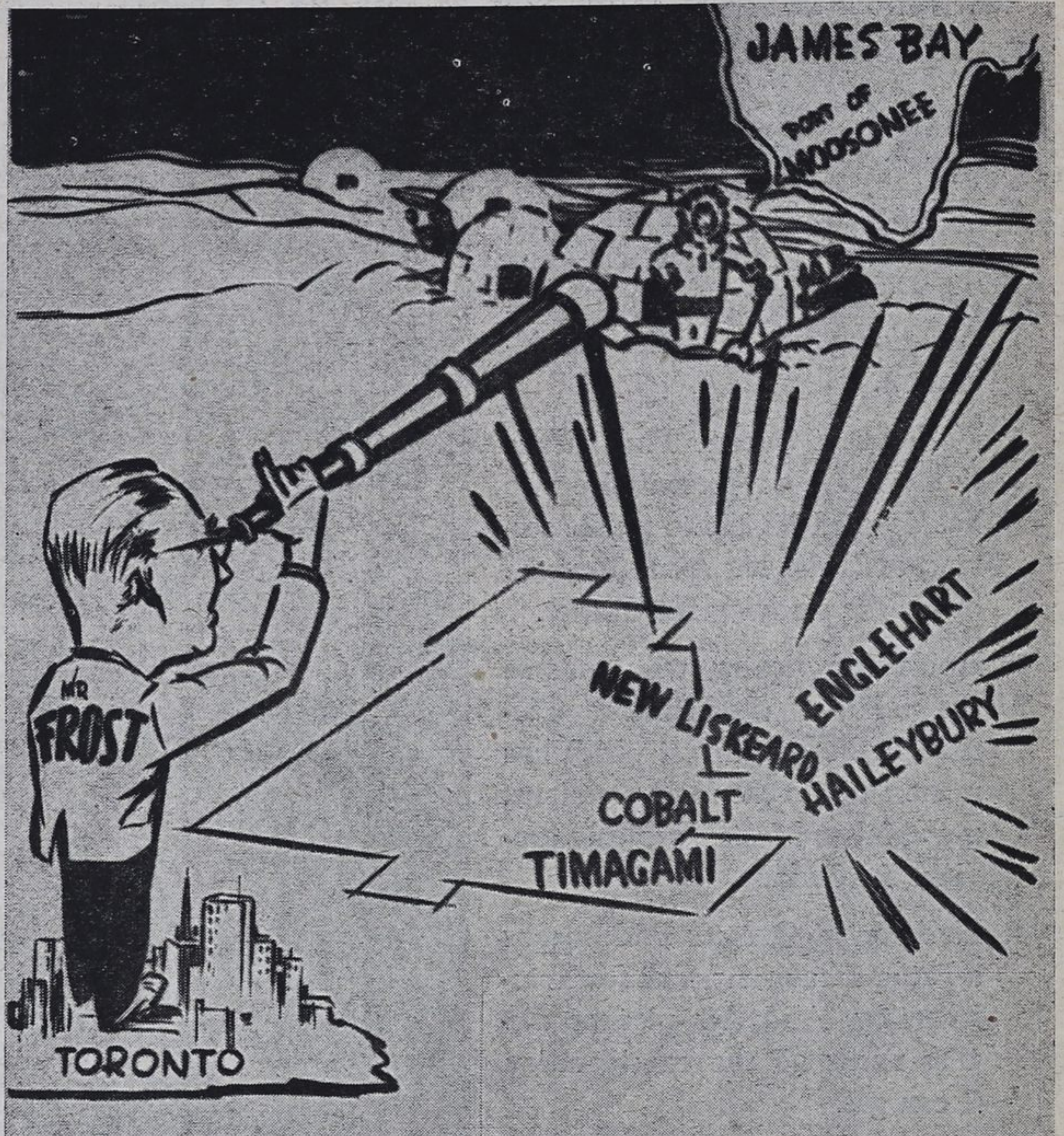
These are only a few of the romantic personalities we met en route, but they are typical of the frontier spirit that imbues them to build interesting lives, though almost completely isolated by climate and distance from the southern, more populated section of the country.

Geology Report For Lorrain

A preliminary report on the geology of the north part of Lorrain Township (Concessions 7 to 12), in the District of Temiskaming, has been completed and is now ready for distribution by the Ontario Department of Mines. The report, which was written by Dr. Robert Thomson of the Department's Geological staff, is priced at \$1.00.

A set of five uncoloured Provisional Map sheets, on the scale of one inch to 400 feet, together with a Legend, Symbol sheet, covering the area dealt with in the report, is also available from the Department at \$5.00 for each set.

Temiskaming?



I Still Can't See Temiskaming!

Ask Yourself These Questions:

- HAS the Conservative Government done a single thing to help alleviate unemployment?
- HAS the Conservative Government done a single thing to develop Temiskaming's natural resources?
- HAS the Conservative Government done anything to help tourist operators develop their holdings through a loan policy?
- HAS the Conservative Government done anything to subsidize transportation rates to and from the north?
- HAS the Conservative Government done anything to help farmers?
- HAS the Conservative Government done anything to help bring secondary industries to Temiskaming?
- HAS the Conservative Government built one Provincial Park along Lake Temiskaming?
- WHAT has the great Diefenbaker-Frost team done to help YOU?
- WILL the government build a hospital for retarded children in Temiskaming?
- HAS the Conservative Government done enough to build you the highways you need and deserve?
- AREN'T YOU fed up with empty promises?

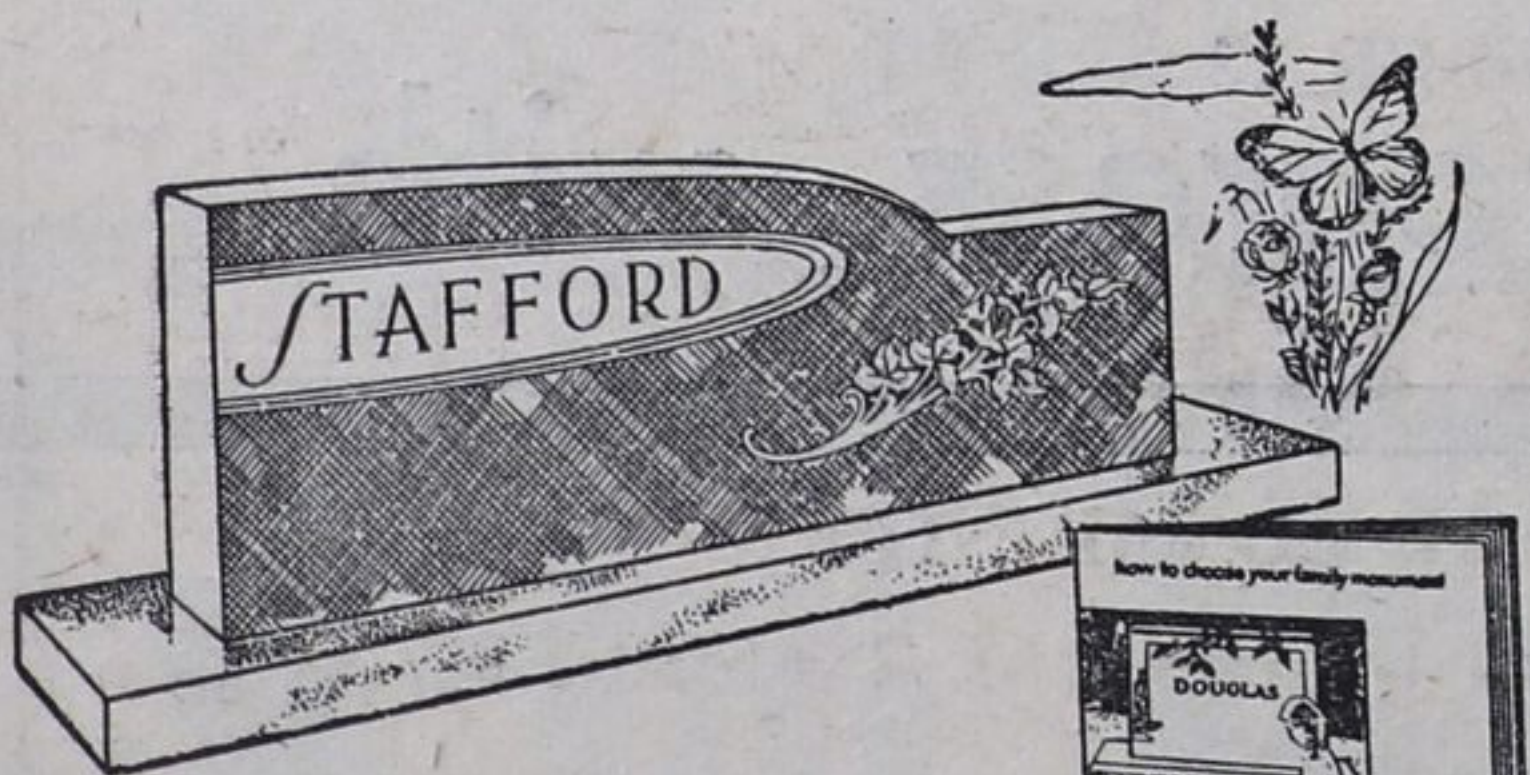
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