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**LEDWITH'S
FOOD MARKET**

A Progressive Merchant Advertises



by Kay Dee

I saw a perfect needlepoint picture on Sunday—reflected in the Muskoka river. I was happily sun-bathing, lying on a rock on the shore of the river when I spotted the needlepoint. Across the river was a jagged line of grey rock, and above, on a steep slope, birches and evergreen stretched up to a blue sky.

The steady ripples of the current made the whole reflection of the lovely scene appear in small squares on the water, looking exactly like separate stitches. The different shades of green appeared to be in distinct areas, just as needlepoint is. The birch trunks were perfect, and in the blue skies a few clouds were flying solo, as they always do in needlepoint landscapes.

I thought, "If only one artist could draw that, and make a needlepoint pattern of it. The ladies here could make the pictures or chair backs or footstool covers in the winter time, and surely sell them to American tourists in the summer."

I had been thinking of American tourists, because the day before I had been looking in store windows wondering if I were a tourist, just what I would take home that would be really Canadian—really Ontario-ian. And you'll know there wasn't much!

Have any of you heard Thor Hansen speaking? He goes all around the country boosting Canadian designs. He tells how surprised he was when he came to Canada from—Denmark, I think—and tried to buy something Canadian, to send home. He had thought there would be Canadian china, crystal and silverware as well as tiny birch bark canoes. He himself made design for needlework from Canadian scenes which are very lovely.

Such beautiful country in Muskoka! And how popular oil painting has become in Canada! Yet we only saw oil paintings for sale in one store in towns that cater to tourists full tilt. The paintings were of London, England, and of Venice, complete with canal. I was not only astonished but somehow disgusted.

There was some Indian work for

sale in Port Carling, Bracebridge and Gravenhurst, and some French Canadian wood carved figures. But why weren't there any figures of pioneer United Empire Loyalists? Of soldiers from the war of 1812? Of Laura Secord? Of our early leaders in government, our governor generals?

Why weren't there heavy plaid jackets advertised as Canadian lumbermen's choice of winter wear? Little skis and snow shoes and sleds? Hudson's Bay blankets and trim totem poles? We were in one restaurant that featured totem poles, but the small ones that were for sale were pitifully cheap looking. Surely there would be a market for well-carved pieces of Canadian wood!

Even in the Canadian Handicraft Store in Toronto, where all the work is hand done by Canadians, the Canadian theme is often ignored.

Why could not prints of Canadian painting by the Group of Seven and Tom Thomson be sold up north?

Dear me, as you can read, I really felt quite strongly on the subject.

We did see some genuinely Canadian, genuine professionals last week-end, and I was proud as Punch. We saw the Straw Hat Players at Gravenhurst do Caprice by Alfred de Musset and a Phoenix too Frequent, by Christopher Fry. (Fry is the man who wrote the commentary for A Queen is Crowned, you know).

The crowd? Very small. There were only about 75 there. But the acting was very, very good, costumes and sets excellent. Not for a moment did we have that awkward feeling that extends to the audience when actors are uncomfortable. Both plays were very enjoyable.

Afterwards, we spoke to a man who was sitting behind us. No—he spoke to us. We went into a restaurant for coffee and talked with him—mostly listened—for quite a while. He was a rich American (of course!) and referred casually to his stocks and bonds with a wave of hand and flash of diamond rings!

He had thought the plays splendid, and said he had never expected to find anything so good "up here." He had been to Europe 18 times, and had been in many countries, including Russia.

After we heard what he had to say about things he disliked, we knew he would not have said he liked our theatre unless he meant it.

The things he didn't like? Well, Quebec, for one. And we always think Quebec, with its quaint towns is what tourists would enjoy. He found the people too ignorant, he said. He disliked high taxes, the American banking system—and Roosevelt. How he disliked Roosevelt!

When he was in Russia, he was told to get out—and he did. He said the people wore rags, with burlap around their feet. That was several years ago.

Sunday afternoon we heard a splendid review on our portable radio of the plays we had seen in Gravenhurst, when critic Nathan Cohen, whose tongue can sometimes be devastating, praised them unstintingly. That was when we were lying on the rocks watching the cool reflection of the trees in the Muskoka river. And here I am back at the beginning again.

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