

## Something New in Adventure? Rainy Lake Region Beckons

### Veteran Camper Describes the Magnificent Beauty of West- ern Ontario Country

Editor's note: Mr. Kirkland, author of this article, is taking a group of eight north shore boys on a two months' canoe cruise this summer in the Rainy Lake region of Western Ontario. Mr. Kirkland has charge of boys' and men's work at Hull House, Chicago.

By Wallace W. Kirkland

There are at least three things which modern civilization has been unable to find a substitute for. The violin, the snow-shoe and the canoe. Two of these were evolved by the American Indian.

Nothing better has been so far devised for making walking in the woods possible, when the snow is deep and soft, than the snow-shoe. Neither have we been able to find anything to take the place of the canoe as a means of transportation where there are no trails and where the craft which carries a man and his load across one set of lakes and rivers, must be light enough to be portaged by him overland to the next.

Both the snow-shoe and the canoe have been made by the Indian entirely out of materials found in the forest about him. The one, of bent wood with a net-work of animal skins; the other, from the bark of the birch tree with seams made watertight with pitch. When we adopted the canoe of the Indian we got with it as a part of its heritage some of the freedom and self-reliance of its savage creator. Ernest C. Oberholtzer, president of the Superior-Quetico Parks council has well said that the canoe may be considered "the distinctive symbol of our American outdoor freedom."

With food and shelter and a canoe one may lose himself for days or months in the woods and be entirely independent of civilization. Furnishing his own motive power, he can change his location at will, and after paddling across one lake, can pick up his boat and walk with it to the next, even though the distance be miles.

#### Ideal for Canoeing

The Rainy Lake region is ideal for canoe cruising. In it are twenty thousand square miles of uninhabited country, with many lakes and rivers, and abounding in fish and wild animals. It is one the border line between northern Minnesota and western Ontario, and but an overnight ride from the north shore. The lake is seventy miles long with a rough and irregular shore line. There are thousands of islands in it, and opening away to the north are many chains of lakes and rivers which if followed would eventually lead to Hudson's Bay.

The canoe furnishes a silent means of approach, and because of this, is ideal for stalking with animals, especially moose, which are plentiful in this section. These huge animals wade out into the lake to feed and submerge their heads below the surface to get at the lily roots. One is able, by paddling when their heads are down, and sitting motionless when they come up for air, to get within a few feet of them before being discovered. Often it is possible to overtake a swimming moose crossing a lake and prod it along with your paddle.

#### Encounter Timber Wolves

I recall a trip with Dr. and Mrs. Ralph Hamill of Winnetka, when we spent a week trying to get some wild animal photographs. We had portaged out of Rainy lake and had started up the Big Canoe river, when, on a mossy rock less than one hun-

dred yards away, we saw what appeared to be two huge police dogs. For a moment we thought they were dogs but quickly realized that one isn't apt to find police dogs in the woods four days by canoe from human habitation. Then it dawned upon us that the animals we were watching were timber wolves. It was a very hot day and they were cooling off in the shade, perhaps after a chase, and a meal of venison. As the canoe approached, the smaller of the two stood up yawned and stretched, curling its long red tongue much as a dog does. Then ignoring the presence of the canoe it calmly laid down again beside its mate. As we paddled nearer both animals got up, and in a leisurely fashion walked off into the woods. Only after they had disappeared did we think of the cameras.

With the canoe one can visit remote lakes and seldom fished rivers, and in a country as vast as this he may discover new and as yet unfished lakes. While following up the trickle of an uncharted stream last summer we came to a small lake not on our map. It was about a quarter of a mile long and the water was very dark and deep, and the shores rocky, a mass of fallen trees. The first few casts were futile and we were beginning to think there were no fish in it when a cast which landed a few inches from an overhanging rock changed our opinion. As the plug hit the water there was a violent splash and we landed a three pound bass. Sixty bass were caught by us on three different visits to this lake. We were using barbless hooks and most of the fish were returned unharmed to await our coming next summer. One of the bass we caught had just swallowed a full grown Chickadee. We noticed the bird's feet sticking out of the fishes' throat when we were taking the hook out, and a later post mortem revealed that it had been swallowed feathers and all.

#### Meet 'Rattlesnake Bill'

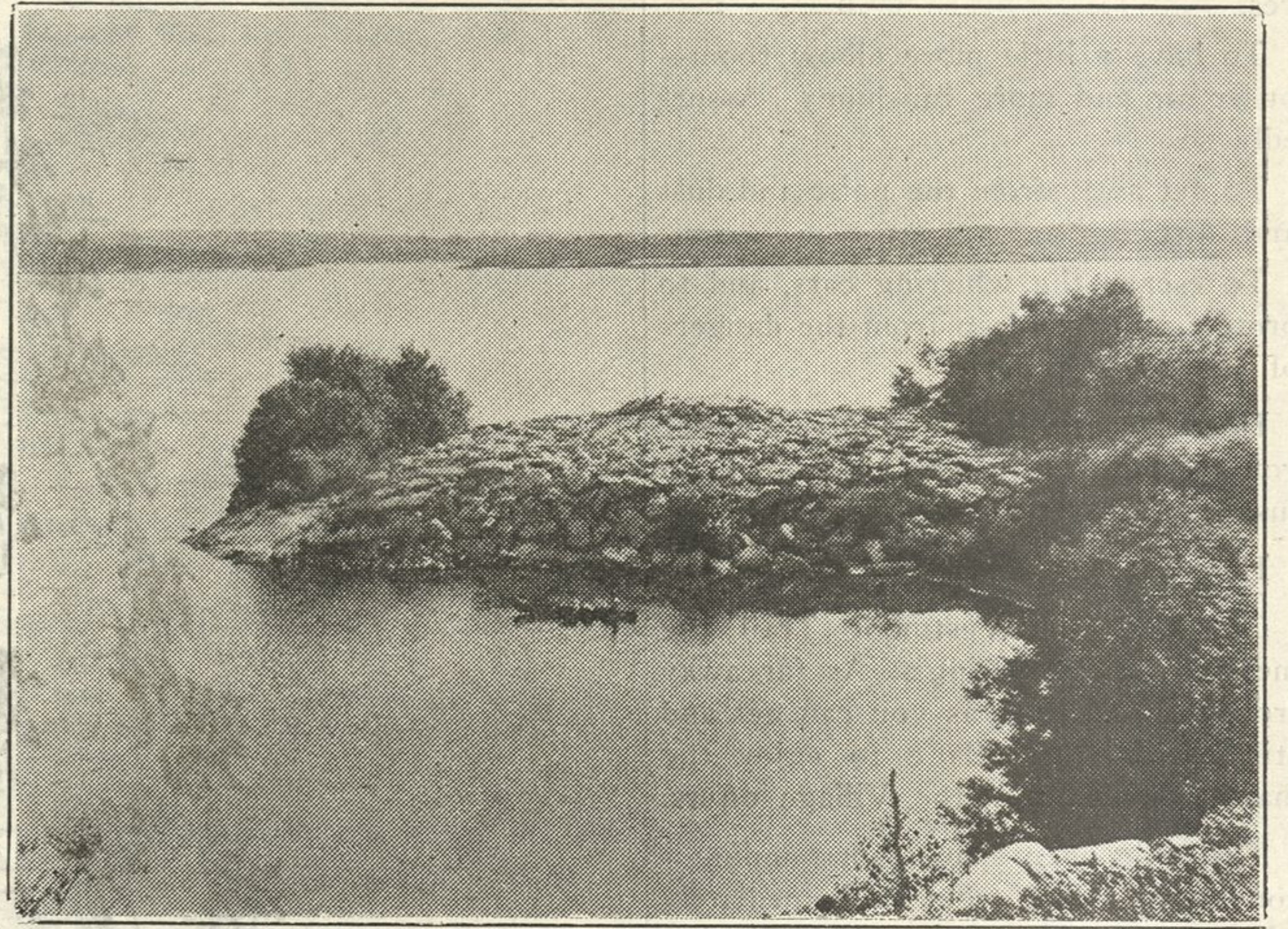
It is very interesting to visit some of the unique characters who take themselves off to live in out of the way places. They are usually men who are unable to stand the crowds and bustle of civilization, but prefer instead a lonely life in some remote spot. Here they live trapping and hunting in the winter and fishing and prospecting for gold in the summer. Such a character is 'Rattlesnake Bill,' or, as he was christened, William Watson. Like the fabled Paul Bunyan of the lumber camps he has been everywhere and can do all sorts of unusual things. He is more than eighty years old and has lived at his present place for fifty years. He got his old title when, as a young man on a cattle ranch, he survived the bite of a rattlesnake, after being at death's door for many months. He claims to be one of the discoverers of the hot water springs at Banff, and it is to the medicinal properties of this now famous resort that he attributes his almost miraculous cure. He tells us that while he lay unconscious in a bath of water, some kind unknown friend photographed him and placed copies of the picture on a table beside his tank. Visitors who viewed this unfortunate man were requested to take a picture, and deposit a coin in a box provided for that purpose. Bill tells us further, that when he awoke from his long nap, not only was he completely cured, but he found awaiting him an accumulation of coins in the box which when counted amounted to over two thousand dollars.

One of his favorite stories is about the domestication of the cow moose. He had been hunting near his cabin

and had killed a bull. As he approached the carcass to dress it he noticed a cow moose wandering aimlessly about a few yards away and seemingly oblivious to the presence of man. Bill then saw that she was totally blind, and some how he discovered that she had been dependent

island was also the nesting place for thousands of gulls in the spring months.

Our attempts to get fish in Kaiarskons were disappointing. Only a small lake trout rewarded our efforts. We were trolling with three hundred feet of line out when we felt him tug,



Kaiarskons—An Adventurer's Paradise

upon the bull that he had killed for her guidance from one pasture to another. Cutting off the tail of the bull and holding it out for the cow to grasp, Bill led her to his nearby cabin, where she lived happily ever afterwards. A month or two later while examining the moose group in the Field Museum it dawned upon me that a moose has no tail. Far be it from me however to spoil so excellent a yarn by telling Bill about my discovery.

Mr. and Mrs. William Zimmerman, Jr., of Highland Park, are canoe cruising enthusiasts, and spend a month or more each summer in the Rainy Lake region. They know Rattlesnake Bill and have spent many a night listening to his interesting and sometimes imaginary stories of the early days.

There is always an element of adventure present while traveling by map and compass through unknown territory. It is sometimes quite difficult to locate a portage a few feet wide on the shores of a heavily wooded lake miles in extent. The following experience is typical.

#### Kaiarskons, the Enchanted

At the end of the mile portage when the bow of our canoe slid into the water we felt that Kaiarskons was different. When we paddled through the rock portal and got our first view of this most unusual lake we proclaimed it Kaiarskons the Enchanted. After leaving Fort Frances, Ontario, we had paddled north for four days through rain and over lakes whose waters were dark. Kaiarskons greeted us with bright sunshine, and water that sparkled like blue-white diamonds. Our first knowledge of the lake had come from an old geologist who had prospected there for radium a decade ago. He spoke of it as the most remarkable one he had visited in the Rainy Lake region. We were assured that time and effort spent in going there would be well worth our while.

We stopped for tea on an island formed out of a massive heap of great boulders. One side rugged and forbidding; the other with a sand beach, and crescent like cove where the boat of the adventurer could ride at peace. The island was crowned with a number of dwarfed and twisted pine trees loaded with scores of large stork-like nests of the blue heron. We later discovered that this

and then could see his silver sides glistening far below the surface as he zig-zagged upward through the clear water on the journey that ended in our frying pan.

Our camp that night was made on a sand beach, behind a fringe of birch, and we cooked our evening meal down by the water on a flat rock that jutted out into the lake.

We had entered Kaiarskons from the southwest out of Loon lake, and planned to portage out of the northeast bay into Furlong; but somewhere it is written that mortals may enter enchanted country with ease, but if they do, it is only after trials and tribulations that they are permitted to leave.

#### A Difficult Portage

The northern portage was difficult to find so we climbed a hill from which we could see Furlong lake. On descending we found a trail which seemed to lead to this lake, but it was badly overgrown. We began blazing this trail and cutting out the trees which would hamper the passage of the canoe. It was hard work, but we knew that our praises would be sung by future generations of canoe cruisers and the thought spurred us on. The portage was a mile long.

After hours of hard work the trail was finished and our canoe and equipment carried across. We loaded up and paddled away expecting to find the next portage that would lead us into Strawberry Lake and so on to the north.

Around the first bend we saw a rock which had an uncanny resemblance to the one we had cooked our breakfast on that morning. Upon landing we found the remnant of a bannock and recognized our camp of the previous night.

We had spent hours clearing and blazing a circular moose trail, and had laboriously portaged our canoe and duffle out of one bay of Kaiarskons, through the dense forest behind our camp, and then back into Kaiarskons at a point a half a mile down the shore.

Kaiarskons was indeed enchanted, but our comfortable bough beds of the night were waiting for us and we were ready to use them.

We spent two days without finding a way out and our time being limited we had to retrace our steps returning the way we had come.