

Strange Tales from Michipicoten

By D. E. Page

On the edge of the frontier, life is risky. There are many murders, and accidents which forever remain unsolved. Among the voluminous yellowed sheets of old newspapers dealing with the Michipicoten region, there are two bizarre tales which engage the imagination, and raise speculations. One story dates back to the Wawa gold rush of 1897.

Paddling upstream to Dog Lake two grizzly old prospectors saw the bows of an old canoe wedged between two boulders at the bottom of a rapids, with the sides stoved in, and the timber indicating great age. On beaching, to their horror, they found in the water the remains of a human skeleton, bones bleached white, and the skull missing. Nearby an old muzzle loading musket lay rusted beside a collapsed birch bark teepee. On lifting the bark, an axe, Star brand pail and a canoe in great state of preservation were located. A lack of clothing made it impossible to determine whether this man was white or Indian. Mr. Ross, the Hudson Bay factor at Michipicoten however, had not noticed a missing trapper as far back as he could remember. Since the teepee was only a mile from the old overgrown tote road, and ten miles from the Canadian Pacific Railway at Missenabie, the man was probably a white whiskey peddler who sold his wares for 50c a cup, to the CPR construction workers, 12 years before. Running the rapids, he may have fallen from his canoe and drowned.

Our second strange tale comes from W. M. Arnott who delivered mail in subzero weather between Michipicoten River and Anjigami in the 1920's. After an easy dog team run northward in the morning the mailman ran across an old prospector sitting against a tree, and resting his head against his cupped hands. Mr. Arnott let out a shout pleased to have company to break the monotony of travel. The man did not respond. Again the mailman called, and not receiving a reply lost patience and gave the prospector a rough shake to arouse his attention. To Arnott's horror, the man's whole form rocked to one side. Only then was it realized that the prospector was frozen stiff, but in a lifelike attitude.

The body was lashed, still in its seated position to the sled, and was taken to Anjigami. Here the body was shipped to White River, where a considerable amount of

money was found on the body which lacked identification. The body was of a 55 year old man, of whom no trace was ever found as to whom he was, or where he was from. He was not from the Michipicoten Mine or the Mission. Perhaps the hard work of snowshoeing had caused a heart attack, since the old timer's pack was beside him, with an axe and plenty of matches. Timber was near and the old timer was evidently no tenderfoot.

The man's identification and reason for death remains a mystery, one of the many colourful stories of the Michipicoten region.
