

The ALGOMA NEWS Review

## THE WHITE RIVER — PUCKASKWA DEPOT TRAIL

By D. E. Pugh

Great rafts of pulpwood, annually boomed along Superior's north coast, has stimulated Sault Ste. Marie's economy for many years. Although the Magpie and Michipicoten Rivers contributed many cords, perhaps one of the most famous pulp cutting camps was the Puckaskwa Depot located at the mouth of the Puckaskwa River. Consisting of a number of typical Canadian log shanties, with low, chinked log walls, this camp was provided with fresh meat, mail, payroll and other supplies on a regular basis from Sault Ste. Marie, by Abitibi's ship, the Reliance. In the autumn of each year a boss and four men took ten days to cut their way through accumulated windfalls to White River. As the leaves dropped, and snow whitened the landscape, experienced dog handlers

repaired harness, and waxed toboggans in preparation for the bi-monthly mail and payroll runs between Puckaskwa & White River.

On the journey, ten miles a day was usually covered, through beautiful stands of spruce and second growth jackpine to cabins stationed along the trail. The first cabin, located at the junction of the Fox & North Puckaskwa River, was 8 by 10 feet with a pole roof and mud floor. Spruce boughs proved a bed. From Fox River the trail led to Trout and Partridge Lakes, where a relatively luxurious 10 by 12 foot cabin provided a flat roof, and a bunk. From Partridge to Mongoose Lake, a flat trail usually made an easy run, but the lack of accommodation at Mongoose meant a cold night without shelter. The last stop before the smoke of the CPR Round House at White River was seen, was a clean well cared for trappers cabin, owned by Poirier, equipped with only 1 bunk, but plenty of room on the floor. After the hardships of the seventy mile winter trip, the bars of White River were warmly greeted.

The fastest trip on the trail was 30 hours with a six dog team, involving the removal of a foreman badly crushed by pulpwood. Yet, the primitive conditions of the trail were purposely maintained in winter to discourage the pulp crews from leaving their winter bound home.

By the beginning of the great depression the Puckaskwa camp was closed. Rotting log dams and log foundations yet remain for the curious tourist.

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