

## Michipicoten's Grasset Trail



### D. E. Pugh

Prior to the completion of the Algoma Central Railway in 1914, mail was brought sixty miles from Grasset on the Canadian Pacific Railway to Michipicoten River. Grasset, now non-existent, was located north of Missanabie, and was normally reached by dog team in winter, by crossing the Magpie River, and heading north past the Magpie Mine to Twelve Mile Lake and the C.P.R.

The hardest dog team journey always occurred at Christmas due to the enormously large and heavy Christmas mail. Peter Arnott, a life long Wawa resident, recalled one of his most dangerous and difficult trips. Reaching Grasset on January 1, he discovered waiting to his dismay, some six hundred pounds of mail. Loading the mail aboard his dog sleigh, he crossed Twelve Mile Lake in weather forty degrees below zero. Unfortunately his sleigh began breaking through the snow into the slush below. Before reaching the shore runners were a foot thick with ice, and Mr. Arnott's feet were wet. Mr. Arnott quickly began a fire to dry out his socks. He then smashed the brittle ice from the sleigh runners. Once completed, he then found his moccasins frozen stiff. Drying out his moccasins, and adding an extra heavy pair of socks, Mr. Arnott then started off down the trail with his heavy load of mail. On January 2, the Magpie Mine was reached, and some of the mail turned over to the hundred miners. Mr. Arnott then pushed on to Camp Three, four miles further on, along the Magpie Railway Spur Line. Here he met and stayed with Alex Ross, another Wawa old timer, who was cutting timber for the mine. Fortunately a train came through on the spur line from Michipicoten Harbour, so that Mr. Arnott was able to rid himself of the remaining mail. Mr. Arnott continued to follow the tracks to Wawa Station, then turned off to the Mission, on January 3rd. So ended a sixty mile trip.

The endurance and toughness of such men as Peter Arnott is a small indication of the remarkable qualities of Michipicoten's early pioneers. Such qualities have been responsible for the growth of the Michipicoten region.