White River, One of the Oldest Settlements in Region

By D. E. Pugh

Mrs. George Linklater, for 67 years a White River resident, has recalled for James Mura, a Michipicoten High School student, some aspects of early White River life. Before the completion of the C.P.R., White River, or Snow Bank, as it was known to the Ojibway, was a tiny Hudson's Bay Post, operated until 1914. With the completion of the C.P.R. in 1885, six C.P.R. houses were established on the east side, as well as a boarding house, coal chutes, water tank, and the section station for dispatchers and operators. By the early 1900's, there were already the Spadoni Brothers' general store, Cottom's Hotel, a Chinese Laundry, Barber Shop, Butcher Store and Pool Room. A one room public school was the focus of such community efforts as Red Cross fund raising dances in the Great War, and silent movies. Before the 1949 fire, a YMCA, located opposite the school, also provided recreational facilities and a boarding house for train crews. By 1910 three churches had been erected. Social activities included vigourously contested softball and hockey games with Schreiber, Chapleau, Cartier and North Bay, witnessed by such early settlers as McGowans, Crimeans, Moodies, Sheehans, Swords, Chryslers and Linklaters.

Economically the town has always been supported by the railway. From 1907 large stock yards, capable of watering, feeding and resting 20,000 animals a month were maintained until April 1973. Being 670 miles east of Winnipeg and 570 miles west of Toronto, it was Canadian law that livestock must not be moved for more than 36 hours without five hours of rest and care. A large 5,000 ton capacity ice house was also maintained for C.P.R. refrigerator cars.

Lumbering was another important activity. Log drives down the Pic by the Whalen Lumber Company in 1890 were replaced by the Bertrand Pulp Company and later by the Austins of Chapleau and by the Abitibi Pulp and Paper Company during the 1920's. It was during this last period that the famous White River - Puckasaw mail route to Lake Superior was run bi-monthly with dog teams.

With the completion of Highway 17 from White River to the Sault in 1960, and Highway 631 to Hornepayne in 1973 White River has become a major tourist centre. A major fly-in air service, ten businesses, seven OPP officers, a municipal building, a curling rink, and a legion hall are but a few activities which indicate that White River continues to maintain its long standing status as a thriving community.

LICENCE PLATE RENEWALS