

## **Muskoka: The Beginnings of a Successful Trade and Tourism Center: 1600 – 1867**

It took roughly two decades before Canadian Confederation for the policy planners of British North America (BNA) to be ready to seriously invest in the settlement and development of Muskoka. Why the development of the Region, and specifically of our town, Gravenhurst, located on the beautiful shores of Lake Muskoka, was so comparatively delayed, as opposed to the development of the lands of Upper Canada south of us, and why trade and tourism emerged as its prime economic activities, is the subject of this investigation.

This paper's purpose is to merely initiate the investigation, because the answer to these questions is truly complex. Before proceeding, it should be disclosed that the materials studied are primarily secondary sources (which fortunately contain some valuable primary source quotations). Also, the writer has been fortunate in having at her disposal input from the highly-skilled archives research team, under the leadership of Mary Storey at the Muskoka wharf's Muskoka Boat and Heritage Centre museum in Gravenhurst. This includes Mr. Richard Tatley, Muskoka's renowned steamship historian. To Mary, and Richard, for editing, and to the team for assisting with local history details, many thanks are due.

Gravenhurst's destiny was shaped in these early years by both local and international factors, most of which were beyond her control. European wars over territorial and colonial expansion and for mercantile power between Britain and France greatly impacted events in the region known today as Canada, and indirectly, the attention paid to Muskoka's development. By 1783, after the defeat of the French by the English on the Plains of Abraham (1759), and less than twenty years later, the successful revolution of Britain's thirteen American colonies (1774 – 1783), the whole political structure of North America had been changed. British North America had been created north of the United States of America, and the boundary between these two nations was unclearly defined except by military occupation. The new United States of America (USA) was a new proud, independent and hostile neighbour, ready to test Britain's territorial holdings especially by expanding into the previously prohibited territory north and west of the Appalachians. This lightly populated and marginally defended BNA west, was then the area north and west of the Great Lakes (present day Ontario and the western Plains – then simply called Rupert land).

In focusing on internal affairs, our lens will be mainly on the territory today called Ontario, as this region functioned as part of the political, economic, and social realities of three distinct time periods: first, the time of French occupation and French rule (1534 – 1760); second, the era of British paternalistic and autocratic rule (1760 – 1849); and finally, the period of the achievement of responsible government and the beginning of political and cultural compromise leading to Confederation (1850 – 1867). Britain's changing approach to her holdings in BNA in each of these eras would have important consequences for Muskoka.

The common North American issues both the French and the English faced were the following: how to tame and settle the vast wilderness of the West in order to turn this into productive territory; how to relate to the indigenous Native tribes living there, so as to exploit their knowledge while keeping them under control; how to, in this age of water

transport, develop the most efficient vehicles of travel and the best routes of travel so as to militarily defend the area for trade and settlement; and finally, how to attract the right type of manpower (Indians, soldiers, pioneers). Settlers needed to be tough, hard-working, patient, resourceful and entrepreneurial. Most of all they needed to be dedicated to staying here, to working together to build and defend their fledgling communities in the region. Wilderness isolation was lonely, the Saint Lawrence River was frozen for about four months of the year, and the currents and rapids on the river were serious impediments to getting cargo ships in to the West. Pioneers too frequently had to survive when spring steamships from the mother country failed to make the surly Atlantic passage successfully (as happened frequently in the early years of Atlantic navigation. This made having friendly relations with the Natives very valuable.

Gravenhurst is located at the south tip of the region called Muskoka. It lies at the most southerly point of a large watershed, which today comprises most of the Algonquin Park area. The Muskoka River and its many tributaries, an enormously important component of travel to and from Gravenhurst today, must have struck its first explorers with awe and fear. Its shoreline beauty is amazing especially as it tumbles powerfully in thunderous waterfalls and untamable rapids over some of the highest craggy hills of Ontario's rough Canadian shield in the Park area, to meander over the lower-lying and gentler, and vast, yet rocky and irregular expanse of the Gravenhurst to present-day Parry Sound region where it enters Georgian Bay. Numerous lakes, large and small, many of the Muskoka River tributaries with fierce currents, rocky outcrops and waterfalls, dot this breath-taking landscape. Geraldine Coombs describes the whole Muskoka region as an area about sixty miles at its widest point and roughly forty-two miles at its longest bounded by the Severn River on the south and Georgian Bay on the west. She speaks appreciatively of the landscape's great variety; its moderately high hills, lakes with both high rocky embankments, yet also with coves and sheltered bays with sandy beaches, and interesting channels. She describes the weather as welcoming; hot summer days and cool nights, temperatures ranging on average between 24 degrees Celsius to 32 degrees in the summer months, the gorgeous Fall season when the maple trees frame the dark clear lakes in a rainbow of colours, and the Winter season when, after the first snow, all is covered in a blanket of white.

The first voyagers to the north saw this beauty, but could also dwell on its many negatives. The long Muskoka River (that Gary Long describes as running for 219 kilometers) was dangerous, requiring lengthy frequent canoe portages carrying food and furs over high and rocky dense virgin forest inhabited by an enormous variety of wild animals, large and small, who occasionally were ferocious... Besides, the River and lakes of the region had high rocky bluffs (especially in the Algonquin area) and deep treacherous often swampy valleys (according to Gary Long), the whole system of water routes (unlike the direct paths presented to them by the St. Lawrence and Severn Rivers) being a maze where getting lost could be assured without a detailed map (not available then) or an experienced Native guide. They could also describe winter cold snaps when the temperature could drop to a bone-chilling negative 32 degrees. Pesky and dangerous mosquitoes and blackflies were always there in the warm months, especially in low swampy areas, but without repellents could eat you alive when they hatched in epidemic numbers in May and June.

Fortunately, for Muskoka, the French and English saw the north (especially the hinterland south and west of Hudson Bay) as prime fur trading country, and if exploration suggested a more direct water route to this area through Muskoka, this area might also be valuable for future lumbering.

In the period (1534 – 1760), the earliest French fur traders, explorers, and missionaries knew that extensive uncharted waterways existed in the area, but they also knew that indigenous natives made their home in these northern forests. In the years 1609 – 1615, the French explorer, Samuel de Champlain, arriving by a route down the St. Lawrence to the Lake Ontario area, headed north, traversed Lake Simcoe, and made contact with the Woodland Indian bands (the Cree and Ojibwa), who survived by hunting, gathering and fishing in the Muskoka region. He formed a fur trading alliance with them, providing them with manufactured items they admired (for example; cooking implements, rifles and knives, fishing and hunting tools, blankets). In exchange, the natives were to guide the traders through the dense forests towards Hudson Bay and teach them the ways to survive in the forests, lakes and rivers of the north. These traders respected the natives and some even intermarried with them. These were the first white men to travel up the important Severn River by crossing Lake Couchiching, and by portage to reach the Muskoka River system. It is likely that they even saw Lake Muskoka. Sadly, however, only a very few mapped their travels.

French explorer, La Salle, traveled the Severn River four times in 1680, using it as a short cut from Lake Ontario to Georgian Bay. He traveled the French River (which runs into Georgian Bay) on the north side of the Algonquin dome, to the Mattawa and Ottawa rivers. He reported, however, being interrupted by many waterfalls and rapids. In the late 1600's French fur traders, who had traveled through Muskoka, discovered that the beaver, found in greater numbers further north, had finer, denser coats of fur than the smaller fur-bearing animals of Muskoka. On December 1671, the first public sales of furs, by the Hudson Bay Company, occurred at Gunaway's Coffee House in London. At this sale the stylish Beaver pelt hat was the hottest item. The hat had become a fashion craze all over Europe. Finally British interest in Ontario's other possible resources had been awakened.

However, to Britain, who was engaged in thirty years of territorial (in Europe) and naval and imperial competition for colonial expansion abroad in the Far East and in the seaboard Americas with her French, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese and Austrian rivals, Muskoka's riches were far too difficult to reach and therefore hardly worth the effort. Dominance in these wars required well-disciplined armies and dominant sea power.

Development of Muskoka was also slowed by the fact that (with a few notable exceptions) the arrogant and racist white rulers (both French and English) never cared to learn what the Native Peoples of our area had to teach the surveyors, military planners and pioneer settlers, who would follow, as the fur traders had done.

The fur traders had found their Algonkian guides physically fit, admired them for their uncanny senses of vision, hearing and smell. They could endure hunger for up to fifteen days, had incredible spacial awareness, and virtually never got lost in the dense forests. (R.E. Thwaites ed. *The Jesuit Documents* Vol.8, 78-79, quoted in Santor, 10). In Santor, page 10 he lists many of their survival teachings: by 1500; the Hurons, an Iroquois tribe on the north shores of Lake Huron, could heal wounds, set broken bones, and treat dislocated joints. Most tribes could identify and use both poisonous and non-

poisonous plants for both food and medicine (hemlock bark and needles were used to cure scurvy and colds); juniper berry oil was used as an insect repellent; bulrush roots and maple tree sap were sources of starch and sugar; fur trader friends were introduced to a plethora of edible berries (blueberries, cranberries, wintergreen berries etcetera) and plentiful freshwater fish (bass, trout, pickerel, perch etc.). They taught them how to make vehicles of travel, suitable for riding on water and lightweight enough for long portages (varieties of canoe craft: the birch bark canoe, the long boat made from sealskin, sinews, bone and rope, and the kayak). Snow shoes in various shapes for walking on snow, toboggans to pull light loads or people, larger wooden sleighs for heavier loads, were all ingenious designs. Clothing, made from animal skins, and the sturdy warm moccasin footwear, made from moose hides lined, in winter, with rabbit fur, was an important necessity of life. Dwellings ranged from the Inuit igloo, to the Ojibwa rawhide or birch tipis or the Micmac-Algonkian wigwams, larger structures made of animal-skin pole-supported frames, to the huge communal Huron longhouses (home to thirty or more farming families) of this corn-growing and wheat farming, hunting and fishing tribe. These Indians who lived in northern Ontario even had written languages that should have been easily deciphered by educated European pioneers ( the Ojibwa used symbolic characters similar to Roman writing and the Micmac scripts were like those of ancient Egypt) (Santor, 25). Sadly, however, this early peaceful friendship between the simple fur traders and natives was considerably wounded by the time of the late seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries when the first real white pioneer settlers, surveyors and military families arrived, by the arrogant attitudes of the early men with power.

Champlain and his luxuriously-clad entourage approached the Cree and Ojibwa Chiefs of the Lake Simcoe area as inferiors, warning them that their services as guides, and survival instructors to the traders were required. His directives included the expectation that they also convert to the teachings of the Jesuit Roman Catholic missionaries, as a precondition for providing them with some of the trade items he carried that were immediately admired as desired by them (blankets, metal pots and pans, guns and ammunition, iron knives and metal traps for hunting and fishing, salt and tea etc).

Probably to the Natives who had an entirely different approach to the environment and to land ownership from that of the European attitudes of occupy, claim, fence, own and defend for exclusive personal use. The land had been provided by the Great Spirit (their god) for the use of all men, throughout the ages. There was no concept here of property ownership. Men were to roam freely on it alone or in kinship groups, extract from it what was needed for survival and nothing more. Its resources were not to be squandered, and wherever possible, should be replaced and replenished. Tribal elders (the protectors and disseminators of oral survival traditions) took their leadership from the strongest and wisest member of the tribe, the Chief. The Chief was the arbiter of justice inside the tribe and the tribal leader in conflicts that would infrequently arise with neighbouring tribes. Territorial spheres of influence for hunting and gathering were generally worked out cooperatively with neighbouring tribes, unless these foreign tribes showed warlike intentions and were larger in numbers and carried superior weaponry.

Champlain's men, though few in number, clearly had come from some superior tribe, their weaponry, dress and possessions spoke to this. They could not be kept from exploring and profiting from the land and they should be trusted until proven otherwise. The Natives clearly has no sense of how important their knowledge and services were to

the success of the fur trade. The French, as the English who followed them, showed little gratitude to the natives, exploited and lied to them for their own purposes. In 1617, Jesuit Father Sagard, reported at Tadoussac, that the Montagnais

“were surprisingly honest compared to Frenchmen. They saw no risk in leaving their boats on the beaches and they never stole the boats brought by the French.” (Canadian Historical Review) demonstrated that surviving off just the land, water, and forest resources of Muskoka in all seasons of the year was possible. This is what the early settlers would often have to do, in the challenging first years after their arrival, before their shelters were constructed.

Once again, in the late 1750's, Britain's external problems interrupted the settlement of the French northwest. Mercantile trade relations with Britain's thirteen seaboard colonies to the south of Quebec were beginning to unravel. Britain had profited greatly from a trade, organized on her terms, with these colonies. By her mercantile policy, colonists could only cultivate raw materials on land east of the Appalachians (where the British navy and British governors with a small land army, could easily enforce the law) for shipment to England alone. They had to purchase all manufactured products from England and could be expected to pay taxes for shipping goods to London, port handling taxes there for receiving their raw produce, and further shipping and handling taxes for unloading the manufactured goods the colonists needed back in American ports. The Americans rebelled in 1775 and France, upset by the many colonial gains made by Britain in America, in the preceding Thirty Years War, happily encouraged the French in Quebec and her native allies to the north to assist the Americans. In 1748, France had given up its rights to Acadia and Newfoundland, keeping only the Island of St. Jean (P.E.I.) and Grand Bank fishing rights. In 1748, French fort Louisburg, previously captured by Americans, was given back to them. The French had given up all rights to Hudson Bay in return for the territory of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. In response, in 1749, the British began construction of a military base at Halifax.

When open war was declared by Britain against France in 1756, the Seven Years War had begun. In its first major battle, the attack on Quebec in 1759, General James Wolfe swiftly defeated French General le Marquis de Montcalm on the Plains of Abraham because France had abandoned its colony to its fate. British North America had been born. One would have thought that the end of French rule would have been a good thing for Muskoka development. Nothing could be further from the truth.

A curious bargain was forced upon these new conquerors of BNA. While the military wanted to immediately seize the spoils of victory (end seigneurial system of land holding, grab the property and goods of the French farmers). Britain refused to let them do it. The military were vastly outnumbered, and with trouble below the border Britain would not send reinforcements. The military may have had the guns, but the French farmers had the food and skills to survive the Canadian winter. The Freezing of the St. Lawrence for four or so months was upon them. All that had been gained could have been easily lost. With growing hostility below the borders, protection of the French-held land in exchange for food and shelter was the only possible bargain.

In Britain and the European continent the lower classes, angry at their exploitation at the hand of absolutist monarch like George III and Louis XIV, who had marched thousands to their deaths in their wars and taxed them into poverty in their greedy struggles, began to cry for an end to poverty. Writers like Rousseau, Mills and Paine were

educating the masses in alternatives to despotism and were urging peasants to take up arms to tear down these monarchs and institute democracy. The Americans in the Thirteen Colonies were the first to take action. The American Revolutionary War began in 1776 and ended in the creation of a new independent nation, our new hostile and aggressive neighbour to the south, a free territory recognized in the Treaty of Paris of 1783, as the United States of America (USA). By their success, the colonists had thrown off the yoke of the British mercantile system (which incidentally would still bind us in BNA) which had placed on them one-sided trade restrictions, denied them rights of manufacturing and western expansion, and imposed on them excessive double-taxation at both British and American ports. It was a humiliating defeat for the British military (defeated by guerilla tactics on land) and navy (whose Atlantic blockades had been penetrated). The new Constitution established in the new Republic denied the British model in every way. It was to be a loose union of regional states, all of which would be governed by a democratic responsible form of government and a unique new style of law.

The fear that this new model struck in the more conservatively-minded colonists, fortunately for us in the north, caused over 40,000 Loyalist settlers to flee and settle in the fertile land in all parts north of the St. Lawrence and in the Maritimes. Although most chose the areas of Quebec and the Maritimes, because these areas had more fertile farm land, work to be had in the Maritime fisheries and merchant marine, as well as prospects of winter lumbering for shipbuilding; a considerable number did choose to settle the fertile areas of the Niagara peninsula and around the Bay of Quinte, but few came north to the wilderness lands of lake Simcoe and the Severn River. These southern Ontario loyalist families took a serious interest in government, would become our political leaders in Upper Canada, and would lead the fight for responsible government from which all Canadians would benefit. On the negative side for settlement in the north, their focus for development would be on the areas in which they lived, around the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes.

Our new British rulers had to quickly devise policies to deal with four difficult issues: how to structure a government for a colony that was now British in a remote land with an overwhelming French population; how to retain valuable loyalist settlers and prevent rebellion among them when they learned that British institutions of government and law would have to be delayed until the English-speaking population had grown significantly; how to settle native land claims in the north-west areas (the Algonkian tribes in 1763 made a formal claim to the lands north of Lake Simcoe); and, how best to settle and defend the undefined territory of the west (lands of present-day Ontario), lands south and west of the Appalachians, and lands of the far western prairies, against the aggressive American pioneers who were rushing their stake in this land. Lack of enthusiasm in Britain for colonial expansion in America had certainly taken root in the motherland. Investment in the colonial west, which would involve taming the rough St. Lawrence River as well as penetrating the virgin heavily-forested wilderness would be much more costly and risky, because the quantities of desirable raw materials in these areas was yet unknown. The West was a hostile environment, expensive and difficult to defend militarily. By contrast, seaboard resources were easily assessed and defended; so from the start the voices of Maritime shipbuilders, lumbermen and farmers were heard loudly in any debate involving financial investment.

Britain learned one significant lesson at least from losing the American revolutionary war. It was that the successful Americans had gained strength through unity; therefore in BNA their approach was to establish a strong military presence in all the regions of BNA and to divide the potentially dissident elements from one another in order to rule in a subtle autocratic fashion. Two acts, the Proclamation Act of 1763 and the soon to follow Quebec Act of 1774 quickly established this policy.

The Proclamation Act especially had a profound effect on the region of Muskoka. It settled the Indian problem in a way which initially may have appeared to the natives to be a fair and gentlemanly way. The act recognized their claims to unceded lands, yet at the same time created the first Native Reserves supervised by a white government (on second-class tracts of land) where non-natives were forbidden to reside without purchasing the land from the Natives. Britain's real purpose, recognized after the fact, was to push the Natives on to these lands and to encourage them to cede primary quality land to be surveyed for white settlement. The local natives were lured, with unconscionable land payoffs, gifts of cheap material goods (liquor and cigarettes), and promises of a better lifestyle if they chose to live on the Reserves (free education, free improved health care, and free military protection). For these benefits they surrendered their independence for a life of dependence on the English governors who replaced their own chiefs, and accepted placement in an apartheid system which made them second-class citizens. George Simpson, one of these early governors articulated the British purpose well when he said:

“I am convinced they must be ruled by a rod of iron, to bring and keep them in proper subordination...and to let them depend on us.” (D.A. Muise, ed. Approaches to Native History in Canada, p.33, quoted in Santor)

In 1785, the Cree and Ojibwa of the Lake Simcoe and Severn River areas granted to the British Crown the right to make roads and carry on trade through their territory, including purchasing land one mile on either side of the Severn River. In 1818, another such transaction involved the Mississauga Indians of the Haliburton area, who ceded a tract of 1,951,000 acres of land which (according to Coombe) included parts of Muskoka south of the 45<sup>th</sup> parallel up to approximately the present town of Bracebridge.

While this policy certainly promoted the opening up of future water and transportation routes to Muskoka, and assured future white settlers access to the best of the land and water resources important to the building of communities here, once the land had been surveyed, these opportunities came at two awful costs. First, financially, the cost of supporting the dependent Reserves was likely built in to the already exorbitant costs of all the services and materials provided to the settlers by the British government. And socially, by the time of Confederation, MacDonal's edict that Indians could own no land other than what was necessary for their homes (Santor, 32), the natives had learned that their white “Christian brothers” had no intention of treating them as brothers, nor had any intention of delivering on their promises of a better life. The attitude of willingness to befriend and assist white pioneers settle the North was seriously This seeded feelings of distrust and even hatred between the races lasting to the present day.

A similar consequence of setting the stage for conflict between neighbours (this time the French and English) happened with Britain's second divide and rule policy, the divisive Quebec Act of 1774. This act ended Britain's policy of French assimilation in

BNA. It kept the seigniorial system of French landholding in Quebec, recognized the status of the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec (which meant giving the church clergy reserves), and greatly expanded Quebec's territorial borders south into the Ohio and Mississippi river valleys. Given the then overwhelmingly larger French population in BNA, and the need to block American expansion west, it achieved both British colonial defense and cultural accommodation goals well. The Quebec French were thrilled; but the English felt that this practice carried cultural accommodation way too far, and correctly feared that the structure of the new BNA government would not be a democracy structured like the familiar one in England, since the French in Quebec were not being schooled to fit in to such a structure. The Constitutional Act of 1791 confirmed these fears. It created two new provinces French Lower Canada and English Upper Canada, with democratically elected assemblies with the limited power of policy suggestion, but with the ultimate decision-making powers in the hands of two appointed upper class cliques; the Family Compact in U.C. and the Chateau Clique on L.C. For Muskoka's development, this was a sad move, because, located in the considerably lower populated Upper Canadian province, its politicians and businessmen located in its new capital, York, even with the support of their Family Compact, could not compete with the entrepreneurs in Montreal and in the Maritimes, who continually favoured a St. Lawrence to the Great Lakes travel and trade route to the west. By the mid-1800s, lumbering, the result of clearing fertile lands along the St. Lawrence and the St. John Rivers (New Brunswick region today) had joined fur and fish as desirable exports, and some very successful farmers were offering surplus wheat as well.

Before the War of 1812 (primarily for military purposes) British military officers and independent surveyors (appointed government agents), still using native guides, began to map and survey the limits of British holdings in Upper Canada. In 1780, General Haldimand published a detailed description of the Severn River. He travelled downstream on the Severn, turning north through Baxter Lake, he entered Georgian Bay at Honey Harbour, and then returned to the Severn River where he traveled upstream to Lake Simcoe. Upper Canada's first governor, Lord Simcoe, in the 1790's devised a plan to open up a military defense route against expected American invasion from Lake Ontario to Georgian Bay. He had personally traveled the route through Lakes Simcoe and Couchiching up the Severn River into Georgian Bay where he visited Beausoleil Island. His plans were scuttled when the War of 1812 broke out.

An attack on the Niagara Falls area by a large disorganized American naval and military force, expecting little resistance, overestimating rumored Loyalist discontent with their British rulers, was launched. Greatly outnumbered, but blessed with brilliant leadership of General James Brock, who outmaneuvered them and in short order stopped their advance at the Battle of Queenston Heights, setting the Americans to flight. Although hardly a skirmish, in the annals of British military history, for Canadians it ignited our first real sentiments of nationalism. Joined in this victorious defeat were the Iroquois Six Nations Confederacy (led by Chief Joseph Brant), the English loyalists of the peninsula, and the English and French settlers south of Montreal (who had repelled similar American raids). These disjointed groups had been rallied to support a common cause of defeating American border aggression; this anti-Americanism feeling, a national unifying force still present as a powerful motivator of action today. Canadian confidence in BNA was boosted, and loyalty to our British connection was reinforced.

Britain, who in 1802 entered actively into the European war against Napoleon, was now anxious to draw more British settlers to the Canada north-west but was preoccupied until after the defeat of Napoleon in 1815. In 1826, Lieutenant Henry Briscoe, using native guides, was commissioned to map the southern Muskoka region. His party traveled down the Severn River, up Morrison Creek to Morrison and Muldrew Lakes, overland by portage to Lake Muskoka, using the south branch of the Muskoka River arrived at the Lake of Bays and finally reached the Ottawa River by way of Oxtongue Lake and by traversing a series of small lakes and many portages finally reached the Ottawa River. His journey proved that a military and trade route could be carved out through the north, avoiding long distance travel on the St. Lawrence and avoiding the Great Lakes altogether. In 1836, Lieutenant-Governor, Sir John Colborne had fifty to sixty miles of land in the Georgian Bay area surveyed for settlement, because his surveyors had reported this area had some excellent potential for farming, lumbering, mining, and had excellent water transportation routes. Navy officer, John Carthew, and geologist, F.H. Baddeley ran a 77 mile survey line in 1836 which formed the eastern boundaries of lakes Morrison, Muskoka, Watt, (crossing crater-formed Skeleton Lake) and ended in Parry Sound. They also had explored the Black, Severn and Muskoka rivers, and reported many smaller Muskoka lakes for the first time. Being very impressed by the numerous stately pines and hardwood trees of the area (somewhat incorrectly) they reported pockets of good farm land with deep soil in the valleys of Muskoka. Then came the incredible map-maker, David Thompson in 1837. He plotted a water route between Lake Huron and Ottawa; starting in Penetanguishene to the mouth of the north Muskoka river, through Go Home lake and into Lakes Muskoka, Rosseau and Joseph, up the South Muskoka River to the Lake of Bays, and then by way of many small lakes to the Madawaska and Ottawa Rivers, totally opening up Muskoka to survey and settlement possibilities.

But in that same year, progress was halted once more by the outbreak of rebellion in Upper Canada, led by William Lyon Mackenzie, who, a short time later was joined by French Lower Canada rebels led by Louis Joseph Papineau. The peasant farmers and workers who supported the rebellions all had similar grievances about the land policies of the autocratic ruling cliques and the Anglican Clergy, who grabbed all the best land for themselves, and refused to spend tax dollars on road repair and extension to the north, or to pay to survey northern lands for settlement. Both the rebellions were speedily put down, and both these heroic leaders had to seek asylum in the USA, but these rebellions served to raise consciousness of the greed of the appointed elite leaders and to initiate a movement for achieving real responsible government in the near future. The rise in this sentiment of colonial frustration was being echoed by a faction in British parliament which began pushing for a free trade foreign policy. Why give settlers in BNA preferential trade rights when they were acting so irresponsibly?

Still the 1820s and 1830s saw the completion (primarily again to quell the rebellion) of a rudimentary road system from York to the site of present-day Orillia. The road was narrow and rough, and over swampy areas a “corduroy” system of setting logs side by side (that quickly rotted and sunk in the mud) had to be used.

Serious, slow but steady, immigration from the British Isles happened in this era. The wealthy came in packet ships powered by steam; the poor came often under sail in the steerage of crowded immigrant ships or in the hulls of steam-powered timber ships. In

1821 Lord Selkirk made his first of four voyages to bring poor Scottish farmers to a number of areas in BNA one of which was Upper Canada. In 1823, John Galt, the secretary of the new Canada Land Company, had, in the Huron Tract of land he had been granted, brought over settlers who formed the small villages that we know today as Galt, Guelph, and Goderich. About the same time, Colonel Thomas Talbot brought in 30,000 settlers to the London and St Thomas areas. Although these happenings may seem to have been of little consequence to the Muskoka region of this era, it was the rapid growth of these early Lake Huron and St. Lawrence communities that swelled the Upper Canadian population to about 400,000 by 1830, and by 1850 had contributed enormously to the English province almost equaling the population of Lower Canada (that had virtually a zero growth), and gave the whole area more political and economic clout.

These early Upper Canadian newcomers included the famous settler and author, Catherine Parr Trail, who settled first in the Peterborough and then in the Belleville pioneer communities with her retired military husband and her famous sister, Suzanna Moodie, artist and writer. These ladies kept important diaries, including drawings of local flora and fauna, of their everyday pioneer experiences, that were published in this era, full of helpful survival tips, that helped many prospective immigrant arrive prepared for the realities of pioneer life here. In Catherine's The Female Immigrant Guide, published in 1854, outlined in great detail the work expected of every member of a pioneer family. In one priceless description, in her article, "The Backwoods of Canada", she described the joy of getting out of bed on an early winter morning:

"The mercury was down to twenty-five degrees F (-4 Celsius) in the house. Outside it was much lower. The morning was very painful and made us shudder and feel shaky in the chest. Our breaths were congealed in hoar-frost on the sheets and the blankets. Everything we touched of metal seemed to freeze our fingers" (p.161: Parr Trail) quoted in Brown and Fair Fairbairn, p.24)

In the peaceful period in Europe between 1815 and the beginning of the main thrust of the Industrial Revolution (late 40s and 50s), a great tide of British immigration came to Canada. Land was scarce in Isles for the younger sons of large families, and life in the dirty crowded towns, where garbage collected on the streets to mingle with dog and horse droppings, the infant factories spewed filth, and poverty-ridden, poorly-paid workers lived in shanties, and crowded the streets spreading diseases they barely knew they carried (any Dickens novel tells the tale) made enduring a trip across the Atlantic to a land of plenty where a new start was possible very attractive. During the severe Irish Famine of the 1840s the poor incapable of supporting themselves, were forced to emigrate. Irish paupers and weavers, Scottish artisans and dispossessed crofters, poor English factory and farm workers, travelling missionaries (Methodists, Quakers, Mennonites), dock workers, and military families swelled the population of the English areas of BNA. Over 800,000 immigrants came.

A timely revolution in travel and transport vehicles and the opening up of new travel routes to the north, meant that Muskoka claimed some of the new settlers. The first Quebec-built steamship crossed the Atlantic in 1833. Military roads like Yonge Street from York to Lake Simcoe (built to quell the Rebellions), Dundas Street to present-day Hamilton, and Danforth Road to Kingston and Montreal, provided the first land alternatives. Springless stage coaches plied these roads, which roadside land owners were

required to service, and when mud devoured sections of the road or the coach broke down, passengers had to be prepared to hike, carrying their possessions to the nearest steamer port. In the 1830s small steamers (some even built like wooden boxes on rafts) opened up the smaller northern lakes. But, often, in the early years, one could expect some form of portage, carrying possessions or children, fighting attacks of blackflies and mosquitoes, as part of the trip north in the summer months. And in the winter months, travelers had to use traditional snowshoes, toboggans and sleighs for the trip. Bateau, large open boats pushed forward by poles or sweeps, and Durham boats, bigger craft with sails appeared of the Great Lakes.

Canal building, that had begun after 1815 in both Britain and her thirteen American seaboard colonies, preceded the coming of railways, and the same was true of BNA. The first canal, the Erie Canal was built between Lake Erie and the Hudson River. Reacting to the growing “free trade” rumors then growing popular in London, many merchants and businessmen in both York and Montreal had eyes on the rapidly rising population of New York. It had fledgling shipping and manufacturing industries that could provide us with desired finished goods and its large population would appreciate lumber, wheat, fish, minerals and furs from Canada. By 1850, according to Canadian historian, J.M. Careless, New York’s population had grown to eight million, whereas Montreal’s one million was not increasing, and York had fewer than 500,000. Therefore the focus was on further development of the St. Lawrence route to the West and not on a northern route that Muskoka promoters would have preferred. In 1829, the first of the Well and canal diggings was completed joining Lake Erie and Lake Ontario to avoid the monstrous Niagara Falls. In 1831, the Rideau Canal linked Ontario at Kingston with the Ottawa River, avoiding the rapids of the upper St. Lawrence (another essentially military project). But now, small vessels could sail to Lake Ontario from Montreal, going up the Ottawa River and connect by the Rideau Canal to the St. Lawrence.

Another important development, with consequences for all Canadian pioneers, was that Samuel Cunard of Halifax secured the British mail service contract in 1839 and in 1840, the first Cunard steamship crossed the Atlantic.

In that same year, because the debate over responsible government had grown in fervor, Britain dispatched Lord Durham to settle the political unrest in the assemblies of Upper and Lower Canada. In his report he said he found two factions “warring in the bosom of a single nation”. His report recommended a political union of Upper and Lower Canada into one provincial parliament, organized as a responsible government, using English as the language of parliament, ending the seigniorial system of landholding and instituting instead British individual freehold land practices and British law. Clearly Lord Durham knew that he was favouring a growth in power for the English Upper Canadian politicians, familiar with British politicians but he felt they needed this advantage until population numbers equaled themselves out (the French still held the balance of power numerically) but he correctly anticipated that a growing English population would soon catch up and surpass that of the French. He also strongly recommended reducing the land territory of Quebec, so that in a very short time both cultures would claim an equal number of seats in the united parliament. To this end, in 1842, Durham engineered the Webster-Ashburton Treaty, fixing the new Canadian border at its present 49th parallel. The Act of Union had been enacted in 1841 with the reluctant governors, Baldwin and Lafontaine signing over their autocratic powers. Ten

years later, the Act of Union, when it did happen that population parity had been achieved and both cultural sides of the house had equal numbers of elected seats, the wisdom of the Act came in to serious question. Parliament, permanently stalled in a situation of political deadlock between John A. Macdonald's English faction and Etienne Cartier's French faction for the next ten years, was incapable of making any dramatic decisions for the development of the West. Furthermore, as luck would have it, British Prime Minister, Lord Grey, delivered the anticipated free trade blow, ending any preferential treatment in the international marketplace for raw materials from BNA.

A specific blow came to the Muskoka area when in 1852, J.W. Brigland, having been commissioned to survey the area from the east of Muskoka in Haliburton to around Lake Muskoka and the southern banks of Georgian Bay for the purposes of settlement, published a very negative report (at least as compared to the earlier Carthew and Baddeley opinion or 1839, claims author Geraldine Brooks). Brigland said that most of Muskoka land was rocky and broken, and therefore not fit for future surveying for townships and farm lots, and that Carthew's and Brigland's previous assumption about lots of fertile land in the low lying valleys was totally incorrect.

This was a serious turning point for the development of Muskoka, as parliament accepted Brigland's point of view. Had it not been for three key factors: determined elected local politicians like Angus Morrison pushing for the development of the lands north of Lake Simcoe; inroads made as a result of the establishment of a postal service to Muskoka; the entrepreneurial efforts of simple pioneers who had fallen in love with the area, and the few among them able and willing to invest large sums of their own capital in the development of towns like Gravenhurst. Britain had lost interest in development of the Canadian west and in owning colonies in general. The repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 destroyed the protected market in Britain for colonial flour and grain. And in 1852, when Britain's Lord Elgin signed the Reciprocity treaty with the Americans for complete free trade of all natural products between them, it included our products in BNA as well. It also instituted a policy of free navigation on the then American-controlled Lake Michigan and the then Canadian-controlled St. Lawrence, and gave free entrance to them to our Maritime fisheries. Britain was reestablishing ties with her wealthier and more populous American "friends" at our expense.

There was a more insidious reason for this new attempt to curry favour with the industrial States of North America, as early in the 1850's a tremendous Civil War was brewing between the free economy of the industrial northern States of the Union and the plantation-run economy of the Southern states based on the work of kidnapped Black African chattel slaves. BNA's Lord Simcoe owned slaves until he freed them, as a number of wealthy citizens here did, but they were not defined in the law as chattel and had to be treated with human dignity. But in the Southern States chattel negro slaves were pieces of property to be bought and sold were treated brutally by their masters and did not have the dignity of a dog. In fact the Fugitive Slave Act of 1852 made it a crime to harbour runaway slaves. And Canadians who welcomed them were committing an act of aggression against the USA. The Abolition of slavery was a crusade for justice, as seen by the North (which did not need slaves to run a profit, in its urban-centered economy) while its Southern State economic competitors considered it a necessity (for freemen would never endure the brutal labour conditions of the cotton or sugar plantations). Both North and South were Britain's trading partners, but Britain favoured the South as they

provided the raw cotton necessary to one of Britain's paramount manufacturing industries, her cotton mills. In the war the British navy actively participated on the side of the South, and this infuriated the majority of the population in BNA, who had welcomed Black refugees coming via the Underground Railway to destinations in Nova Scotia (like Africeville) and to the Windsor - Chatham regions of Ontario, where they made valuable contributions. Also some Canadians had to suffer repeated annoying American Fenian raids on eastern Canadian borders, as a result of Britain's support of the South, when, in fact, the majority of Canadians quietly supported the North. Canadians generally desired to distance ourselves in some way from a shameful British nation who had supported a slave economy, yet realizing our destiny was linked to Britain, who still remained our ruler, our main trading partner, and our principal financial investor. By making stronger independent decisions of our own, Canadian leaders felt, they could protect Canada better than relying on a defeated and disinterested Britain. Defense against possible armed retaliation from the Americans when the South was defeated in 1865, became a central argument for once more cooperating with all sections of our country to form a strong national union of our own. The political deadlock was finally broken and time was right for strong leaders like Macdonald and Cartier, from the West, and Tilley and Tupper from the Maritimes to work out a Confederation agreement, and begin the job of nation-building.

The Railway Age arrived in BNA between the years of 1850 - 1857. Investment in railway building took off. Lines were built from Halifax to St. John, from Toronto (old York) to Georgian Bay, and from the present-day Hamilton to Detroit in this time frame. A greater scheme, initially financed by the British Baring Institution, as a line to link all areas of Canada from the then west of Canada (Ontario) to the ocean at Halifax (a 1,100 mile enterprise, called the Grand Trunk) was soon bankrupt, and left Canadians with a thirteen million dollar debt. On the positive side, the line had brought the Industrial Revolution to the towns along its path. Iron foundries, locomotive shops, and rolling mills brought employment to many. The negatives were that it brought higher tariffs for using it and increased taxation for everyone in an attempt to pay the debt. A worse consequence for all, and especially for Muskoka (that did not enjoy railway service yet) it tied government policies to the fate of railway companies and caused greed and corruption in politics (Careless, J.M)

Northern Ontario had already acquired second class industrial status inside of Ontario. With the railway debt being the paramount government concern in the years before Confederation, getting financial backing from government for lumbering and mining projects, or for the extension of roads, or for the building of more steamers on the rivers and lakes to promote settlement required very hard bargaining. Also, as one must recall, the government had even suspended surveying land in Muskoka for settlement. Unless funds could be obtained from wealthy risk-takers, who valued the intrinsic beauty of Muskoka, and appreciated the potential of the Shield's undeveloped virgin forests for lumbering and possibly for mining, large scale processing of the region's natural resources was just not going to happen at this time. Also incredibly valuable to attracting the needed manpower to the region, were the successes of the first determined settlers. By now a considerable number of tough pioneers had carved out a successful life in the North. They had done so by cooperating with the native peoples and had learned many of their hunting, fishing and gathering ways; had been willing to endure the longer

distances trade required, and found ways to remain comfortable in the isolated cold conditions of the northern winters. Their approach to their neighbours was friendly and cooperative, and their welcome to strangers hospitable. Their reward for staying was a peaceful life in gorgeous surroundings; a quality which, unknown to them at the time, would become Muskoka's key to a successful tourist industry.

In 1833, a Parliamentary Representation Act had divided the Simcoe area into two electoral ridings: North Simcoe, which included the Muskoka area; and South Simcoe which included lands around the Severn River up to Lake Simcoe (the Orillia area). North Simcoe had the good fortune of being represented for three consecutive terms (elected in 1854, in 1857, and in 1861) by the visionary Angus Morrison.

He was an excellent promoter of building colonial roads to Muskoka. Rama Indians led Morrison through Sparrow, Morrison (a lake named in his honour) and Muldrew lakes. His 1853 survey led to construction of minor roads to these lakes, as well as to the construction of a bridge over the Severn River. His main coup was the completion of the construction to the completion of Muskoka Road north of the Severn to the Gravenhurst area without waiting for the completion of Muskoka Road to be completed from Orillia, up the Lake Couchiching shore to the Narrows at Washago. By so doing pressure had been put on the Ontario government to finish this final link. In these enterprises, he was assisted greatly by Rama Chief Yellowhead (also called, "Mesqua Ukie", after whom legend has it that Muskoka was named), and also by Crown Lands Inspector, David Gibson. Morrison convinced Gibson, in 1859, to open up three new settlement areas in the region: one was called Muskoka (the land north of the Severn to Lake Muskoka); another was called Muskoka Road (because that part of the road that had been planned to end in the Huntsville area had not yet been completed); and the third was in the Lindsay - Kawartha Lakes area. Finally, land in these areas could be purchased for settlement.

Many of the first pioneers who took advantage of this opportunity came to the shores of Lake Muskoka and made an outstanding success of settlement by combining farming for sustenance with small scale risky ventures (running a tavern or restaurant out of their home or offering their homes as post office or even taking in a border or two) or with paid winter work in lumbering, milling, hunting, or construction....etcetera). Being flexible and handy paid off in the North. The McCabes were an excellent example of this ingenuity. In the late 1850's (their names are found in the 1871 census), Irishman, "Mickey McCabe" and his Scottish wife, called simply, "Mother McCabe", owned two properties: one, near the historic Calidor Sanatorium, where he constructed a wharf he called McCabe's Landing. At the south end of the present-day Gravenhurst, in 1861, he built a roomy log house called "McCabe's Tavern", where Mother McCabe served up her fine hearty meals. She was also known to offer a stranger a bed for the night. The McCabes were the first settlers of Gravenhurst. In 1867, McCabe sold the tavern to a Mr. Horton, took a new wife (after the death of Mother McCabe), and turned to farming. Mr. Horton turned the property in to the "Queen's Hotel". The hospitality industry in the town had begun.

In 1860, surveyor, Vernon Wadsworth, camped at the Severn where he met a John Harvie, in the stage coach business. Wadsworth went on his way up the Muskoka road to where it ended in the center of Gravenhurst. Construction workers, engaged in the road's extension had gone home. In the next few days, with Harvie's help (dragging supplies, and the boys from Orillia, they cut out a road to Lake Muskoka's south bay. They

camped overnight on the Bay and celebrated with a picnic of barrel pork, tea and beans provided by Harvie. (Historical Committee: Cecil Porter 9-10). This is a good example of how northern hospitality and teamwork got things done in the North. Later Wadsworth and these fellows passed through the Muskoka Lake "Narrows", noticing the beauty of the calm lake, the stately pine and hemlock trees and on one of the many islands they witnessed an Indian encampment.

Later (Cecil Potter) in 1860, two young lads from Toronto, eighteen year old James Bain Jr. and twenty year old, John Campbell, passed through the Narrows and camped overnight on one of the islands. While they greatly enjoyed the adventure, they complained of the mosquitoes and blackflies, and of a terrible thirst (they had been afraid to drink the dark, deep Muskoka Lake water) when they stopped at McCabe's for food and drink. These two young men may have been Lake Muskoka's first tourists. Another traveler, Thomas McMurray, having visited McCabe's praised Mother McCabe's food, hospitality, cleanliness, and marvelous way of keeping the mosquitoes out with curtains.

James Scott, who the community called the "Willy Scot", was appointed the shipping agent or wharfinger - the man in charge of the dock - for the newly-formed Navigation Company located at the Muskoka Wharf. He also was appointed the Inspector of Weights and Measures for the Districts of Muskoka and Parry Sound. He quickly became a prosperous and powerful Gravenhurst leader. In 1872, he had his holdings on both sides of Muskoka Road surveyed into lots which he sold cheaply. A very large part of the early town was built on his holdings. He helped build the first school and the first Hotel called the "Caledonian" on the southeast corner of Muskoka Road and Sharpe streets. When Dougald Brown arrived in 1867, he too built a hotel called "Steamboat and Stage" on the site of the present day post office. It became the center of the community. Clearly then, by the time of Confederation the village of Gravenhurst had a pretty solid footing, with enough children for a school, and enough visitor traffic to warrant two hotels.

John T. Harvie, of Orillia, got his training with stage coach travel assisting his father in the running of Royal Mail Stages. Lake steamers carried the mail from Orillia to Washago, where, in the summer stages received it and took it north to Gravenhurst. But in the winter the stage coaches, with the lakes and rivers frozen, ran it all the way. Before the coming of the railroad, Harvie's lines ran up to a hundred teams. Susan Sheffield, author of a detailed account of Muskoka District Post offices, tells us that the first post office opened on the Severn River in 1861. Early mail delivery was on foot, then on horse, horse and wagon or cutter. These early postal carriers had to be strong, determined, hardy and resourceful men. to tolerate the springless carriages and cutters of the Harvie line, all of them open-air vehicles, offering no protection against the incessant insect attacks or winter chills, and prone to getting stuck in the seasonal mud.

The mail was delivered into the hands of licensed postal officers, who had offered part of their farm house, tavern, hotel, general store or mill to be the post office. These offices were places where friends met to gossip, where town meetings were held, and where important services such as banking or the witnessing of legal documents took place (the Post Master could perform all these duties), as well as the receiving of liquid refreshments. Some of these centers evolved into small resorts, especially the ones located in grand hotels or at scenic spots (like Bigwin Inn). Which came first the resort or the post office is an obscure question; likely they grew at the same time. Both brought

settlement and tourism to the area. After 1861, post offices were located all over Muskoka (at Bracebridge, Port Carling, Huntsville and Parry Sound, to name a few). A Mr. Jackson, who traveled weekly from Toronto to Orillia, was the first Post Master. John Harvie became Muskoka's first resident mail contractor for Muskoka Falls, a thirty-three mile route. He eventually moved to Gravenhurst, where, in 1887 he became the Town's first mayor.

It was the Cockburn family, headed by Peter Cockburn, that is credited with being the paramount entrepreneurial force in the town at the time. In 1865 - 1866 Peter started an infant lumbering operation on Lake Muskoka. He purchased logging rights from settlers in return for winter employment. Cockburn proved that logging local pine was profitable and that seasonal logging made sense. But, before Confederation, larger scale lumbering operations did not develop because it was just too costly. This industry awaited the development of more efficient water transport technologies as well as experience in getting around the numerous currents, rapids and waterfalls of the Muskoka River. The money to support such ventures was just not yet available.

Peter's son, John, interested in the area's mining potential, took samples of Muskoka rock to Montreal for appraisal. The merchants there gave him good reports on the iron, silver, gold and copper found in the area, but once again development of these resources could not be financed at this time.

Son, Alexander Peter, turned out to be the most imaginative entrepreneur of all. He started the Navigation Company at the Muskoka wharf, where it has existed for well over a hundred years, right up until today. He bargained with Darcy McGee, promising to put the first large steamship on Lake Muskoka in return for the building of an improved road right to the wharf. He also urged that a railway to Muskoka be considered in the near future. McGee improved the road access and Cockburn completed the building of the "Wenonah". This sixty-two ton, side-wheeler, had a wooden hull and was fuelled by wood, and had the inscription "Royal Mail and Express Post" painted on the curve of her top. In size, it was comparable to today's "Seguin". The Wenonah, built right here at the wharf, was launched in 1866 and took her maiden voyage up Lake Muskoka to the Grand Falls at Bala. Now, finally, Muskoka had a boat serviceable and classy enough to carry both goods and tourists to destinations all over the Lake. Alexander Cockburn was the first innovator to try to implement part of his vision. To him it was obvious that road, steamer and rail transport had to be improved from southern Ontario to Muskoka to entice tourists here. Then offer them the romance of luxury steamship travel on the Muskoka lakes to destinations at pleasure resorts offering hospitality (good accommodation, meals and recreation) in gorgeous natural settings, this could make Muskoka the first real pleasure region of Ontario. Cockburn also supported the completion of the Port Carling Locks and the Port Sandfield Cut, with the vision of one day seeing a Muskoka Lake steamship make its way into Lakes Rosseau and Joseph and even, one day to Georgian Bay. He understood the value of marketing the area and wrote pamphlets and toured and distributed them on tours to southern Ontario and the United States. He even opened up a "gift" and grocery store, "The Montreal Store" in Gravenhurst. In 1905, the year of his death, he published a book, The Political Annals of Canada. Certainly he earned his reputation as the real "father of Muskoka"

Certainly by the time of Confederation, due largely to our own industrial revolution, a middle class had developed in Canada, which as well as the much smaller

upper class, had enough money to enjoy vacations in the North. The welcoming summer climate in Muskoka began to draw southern visitors, wishing at least a small respite from the stresses of their more hectic urban and town lives. Tourism had become the most promising lucrative industry of Muskoka, and the Town of Gravenhurst was at its hub.

In conclusion, little credit for the development of Muskoka can be given to the British governors of the Muskoka region, during their period of rule. The French had played more of a formative role because of their interests in exploring and mapping the region for purposes of the fur trade. Although some French leaders treated the Indians with arrogance, they formed a positive partnership with them, and the ordinary traders themselves (many of whom were English) respected and befriended them, and thereby learned valuable survival skills. By the time British rule began, the peak years of the fur trade were nearing an end and their manipulative policies towards the Native Peoples created a fear and mistrust between the white settlers and the Natives that probably discouraged a number of white families from choosing the north. Few local British military and political leaders visited the north out of curiosity about its development, as Lord Simcoe had done. They came when military defense against the Americans demanded it, or when commissioned by the British to complete the necessary mapping and surveying of its holdings in the west. Although, some of these early British agents published very good reports of the resource, settlement and water transport potentials of Muskoka, it was the negatives (environmental obstacles requiring financial investment) that Britain chose to hear. This was not surprising given the greed of the monarchy, which caused it to be involved, for most of this time frame, in European wars, an American colonial revolution they lost, and then in a defensive war in BNA, followed by the reform rebellions here, and finally, in a totally destructive liaison with the South in the American Civil war. For the absolutist monarchy of the time, if valued colonial natural resources were sufficiently plentiful, and could be extracted in exchange for British manufactured goods in a mercantile arrangement favourable to the mother country, and the overwhelming future profits estimated would easily pay for colonial defense, settlement and transportation improvement, then were worth having. Also were the profits to be gleaned by taxing every service provided exorbitantly? But when, in the 1830's and 1840's the colonists became politically rebellious, and questioned Britain's divide and rule policy, Britain quickly abandoned to their economic fate, a free trade approach and bargained away valuable, previously protected, waterway accesses and resources.

The internal policies regarding settlement and economic development of a St. Lawrence-centered investment strategy, could until the late 1840s be blamed on the business interests of Montreal and the Maritimes, who by virtue of their population and financial power drove the economy. Even earlier, when the Loyalists arrived, few of them were inclined to venture into the undeveloped north, and chose the more moderate and soil-rich lands close to the St. Lawrence probably anticipating further development of this waterway. Also our Upper Canadian politicians, in the era of canal building rejected the north for development in favour of investing in enhancing the St. Lawrence system. And when population equity was finally achieved in the united parliament with their French rivals, and the rage of railway building began, our leaders still invested greedily in schemes to build lines that would parallel the St. Lawrence, and not extend to the north. The overwhelming debt these foolhardy railway dreamers incurred, was, of course passed

on to all Canadians, including Northerners, adding to the financial burden they already carried that in no way equaled the services they received. Any funds from the government for northern development had to be pried out of it in the era of debt.

So the job of making Muskoka the attractive venue for travelers it fell to the early pioneer settlers and to entrepreneurial individuals like those described in this paper. The need for the government to at least develop a postal service in the area and to complete the transportation arrangement to make it happen, drew a number of government agents; controllers in charge of surveying Crown lands for settlement, individuals commissioned to provide mail transportation and to run post offices, wharf managers of steamer navigation and construction workers to build roads to the area. Many of these individuals fell in love with the north and settled there, providing their support and leadership talents to the development of permanent communities in the area.

Of all the transportation vehicles that contributed most to the opening up of Muskoka to settlers and eventually to tourists, the steamship has to be given the greatest credit. It carried the trade tonnage and the human cargo that neither the stage coach, nor personal water craft could carry. While the canoe facilitated the exploration and the first mapping and surveying of the north, essential to settlement, until a railway was finally built to the region, no other craft could compete with the steamship. And steamship travel on the Muskoka lakes would continue to help Gravenhurst grow as a vital and commercial centre.

Carol S. Evans, Gravenhurst, February 2011