The Indian Gardens

Before it was flooded for ever by the hydro-electric power dam in 1929, this was a pretty glen where the Mersey River flowed out of First Lake -- "Panook" to the Micmacs -- on its way to the sea. The east bank was quite low, and there was a level shelf of tillable soil extending back perhaps 100 yards, and running perhaps 300 yards along the riverside. Behind this rose a steep outcrop of slate rock, from which a large spring gushed forth, an unfailing stream. Above that, as on the west side, arose a ridge covered with hardwood trees, mostly oak.

Stone arrowheads, pot-sherds, stone tools and implements of an ancient and bygone people have been found in great quantity along the sides of this glen, even on the upper slopes where in 1928 there were oak trees growing thickly over the old camp area. On some of these oak stumps, cut by the dam builders, I counted more than 150 annual rings. As the water rose in the dammed area it washed out the stumps, exposing quantities of arrowheads, etc. beneath their roots.

We know from Lescarbot that the Micmacs grew "great store of tobacco", but he does not mention cultivation of any other sort, indeed he says they were too lazy to cultivate the soil for food and were amazed at the Frenchmen's exertions. Yet other tribes in the Abenaqui group cultivated corn and beans in the same latitude and climate, the women doing the work. Why did the white men call this place Indian Gardens? The government surveyor Titus Smith, in the year 1801, learned from William Burke about -- "Indian Gardens, a place formerly cultivated by the Indians, and marked by a large cross."

The large tribe which once occupied this site had vanished when the Liverpool pioneers began to venture up the river. Perkins' Diary and other early documents rarely mention Indians at all, and then refer only to wandering groups or individuals, most of them on the coast. The Liverpool men, being mainly fishermen, had no interest in the regions up-river. Even the lumbermen at "The Falls" (Milton) were able to get all the timber they wanted close to their mills. It was not until

August 1798 that Joseph Barss and others (seé Perkins' Diary) made a journey up the river and explored some of the lakes. In doing so they passed the site of Indian Gardens but there is no mention of Indians or cultivation, or even of the name.

In 1604, when the first recorded white men (Champlain and De Monts) visited the harbor at the Mersey mouth, they found the ship of a Frenchman named Rossignol doing a busy fur trade with the savages there. How long Rossignol had been coming there is not revealed. Probably for some years, for apparently he knew that in spring large numbers of savages came down the river and scattered to their summer fishing camps along the coast. (The Micmac name for Liverpool harbor -- CGOMKEGEAK -- means "Where we go out" or "The going-out place") Obviously there was still a large Indian camp on the Mersey at that time, and undoubtedly at Indian Gardens. Champlain named the harbor Port du Rossignol and marked it so on his map. Thus the Mersey River was known for a long time as the Rossignol, and the biggest lake on its watershed still bears the name.

French and English fishermen, traders and explorers visited the Port du Rossignol at various times in the 17th and early 18th century. So far as we know, none of them left their ships to journey up the river, although the French name Bon Mature ("Good Spars") still survives to show that someone with an eye for mast timber ventured at least half way up to Indian Gardens. Permanent white settlement began in 1759, when New Englanders came to the river mouth and founded the town of Liverpool. A few years later Perkins began his famous diary. By that time the large tribe at Indian Gardens had vanished.

What happened to them in that interval between 1604 and 1759? Something drastic, to be sure. Haliburton's History (Vol.1, page 17) states that the plague amongst D'Anville's soldiers and sailors, carried to Chebucto (Halifax harbor) in 1746, spread amongst the savages. "It destroyed more than one third of the whole tribe of Micmacs." This can only mean that savages, fleeing the pestilence, carried the disease to camps in every part of the province. In a crowded camp like that

"the plague" would have run together ("ship fever" "jail fever") would certainly be carried by lice.

at Indian Gardens the results must have been frightful, especially during the winter, when the savages lived huddled together in wigwams of skins and bark, in the most unsanitary conditions, and in a state of semi-starvation. By the spring of 1747, when the ice went out of the river and enabled the survivors to scatter away to the coast, the Indian Gardens must have been a place of death so terrible that none of them ever camped there again.

Under the old French regime in Nova Scotia the Micmacs were much influenced by Roman Catholic missionaries and professed themselves Christians. In the year 1801 a surveyor named Titus Smith traveled about the interior of western Nova Scotia at the expense of the N.S. government, exploring and reporting on the forest, the nature of the soil, etc. At South Brookfield, Queens County, he talked with pioneer William Burke, who had settled there in 1799. Burke described to him a place called Indian Gardens, formerly cultivated by the Indians, and marked by a large wooden cross. As Burke's house was near the upper waters of the Medway River, Smith assumed that Indian Gardens was on that river; but Burke was talking about the Mersey. Presumably the cross was erected by Indians of the Christian faith to mark the place where so many had died.

The town of Liverpool was founded at the mouth of the Mersey River during the years 1759 and 1760. The diary of Simeon Perkins, a careful observer, makes no mention of Indians except in small wandering groups. In 1798 he recorded the first exploration of the Mersey lakes by a party from Liverpool, but there is no mention of the Indian Gardens.

As I noted on page 1 of this typescript, in the year 1928, when contractors began to build hydro-electric dams and plants on the Mersey, I counted annual growth rings on several newly cut oak stumps on the slopes of Indian Gardens. They were at least 150 years old. And later, when the rising water in No. 1 dam began to wash away the topsoil, we found great numbers of stone arrowheads,

stone chippings, stone tools, and fragments of Indian pottery, under the roots of the oaks. So this oak grove had begun to grow over the old camp site before the year 1778. One cannot count tree rings right back to the original shoot from an acorn. I think it a fair guess that young oaks, and certainly bushes, had covered the old camp site by the time the first settlers came to the river mouth in 1759.

A Milton lumberman named Seward Coombs, born in 1876, speaking of Indian Gardens, told me the following:- "There were no signs of a big camp site there when I first saw it, and the oldest men couldn't remember any trace of one. About the year 1905 I was with a gang cutting white pine beside the old West Brook hay road, where it left Indian Gardens. The lot had been logged previously by Curtis Kempton (Philson Kempton's father) about the year 1840. The oldtime loggers took nothing but the best, so in addition to a good second-growth stand of timber we found a number of virgin pine which had been left by the oldtimers because of a slight crookedness or some other fault in the tree. One of these had a peculiar shiny patch on the bark, the sure sign of an old injury that had grown over in the course of time. Out of curiosity I took my axe and chopped into the tree at that point. Sure enough, deep in the tree I found a niche with an Indian stone tool or chisel in it. It was just the sort of niche we used to cut in a sapling pine when we wanted gum for patching a birchbark canoe. (When I was a young man the loggers were still using Indian-made bark canoes on the lakes.) So I concluded that one of the old-time Indians at the Gardens had been patching or making a bark canoe, and for some reason left his job and the tool, and never came back."

The growing demand of the sawmills at "The Falls" (Milton) sent loggers farther and farther up the Mersey River. By 1810 some were cutting in the region of Indian Gardens. Between 1830 and 1860 there was a scramble to take up Crown grants of timberland allabout the lakes beyond.

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The grassy flat beside the east bank of the river, and the spring of fresh water that poured out of a rift in the slate bedrock at the foot of the wooded slope, all that remained of the ancient camp, offered a useful base camp for loggers operating about the lakes. A rough toe-road, passable only by ox-wagons, the so-called River Road, wound along the east side of the Mersey from Milton to the Gardens, a distance of about 15 miles. From the Gardens the loggers boated their supplies up the lakes. On the ancient flat they built a few huts for the storage of supplies and equipment, etc.

At some time between 1840 and 1850 they decided to use a longer but easier way of hauling supplies to their base at the Gardens. This was by the Liverpool-Annapolis highway as far as the farming hamlet of Pleasantfield, a point long known as "the Sixteen Mile"

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because it was that distance from tidewater at Milton. From Sixteen Mile they cut a tote-road through the woods to Indian Gardens, a distance of 8 miles. This became known as "the Garden Road".

According to Owen Teal, who came to live in Pleasantfield in 1898, the original "Garden Road" was actually 12 miles long. It went almost to George's Lake before turning towards the Gardens. This was to avoid a long swamp on the direct route, known since as Turnpike Swamp or The Turnpike. About the year 1890 the loggers laid a log causeway ("corduroy") across this swamp (humorously called The Turnpike Road) and reduced the distance to 8 miles.

The Ford family of Milton had timber holdings about the Indian Gardens, the best source of oak on the river, and for many years they maintained a logging camp at the Gardens. Oak wood is heavy and dense, it does not float well, and the Fords lost many of their logs which sank on the way down the river.

The river itself, except in years of long and heavy rainfall, ran low in the summer time and through the Fall. Just below Indian Gardens lay a long stretch of rapids called Lake Falls. Below these lay another ~~awkward~~ rough stretch called Big Falls. These rapids were studded with ~~knuckers~~ boulders, and when the water ran low it was impossible to drive logs down them. If you hadn't got your drive in the sawmill booms by June, you had to leave ~~them~~ the logs jammed on the falls or boomed in one of the stillwaters, and usually you had to wait until the following spring to finish the job. Thus it often took two years (two driving seasons) to bring a large drive from Lake Rossignol to Milton.

On August 22, 1860, William Ford of Milton wrote in his diary, "The firm of Johnston have put a temporary dam across the foot of the Lake which has raised the water about 8 inches in the Lake. They intend driving logs down the river."

This seems to have been the first attempt to store water in the Mersey lakes against the drouth of summer. There was another recorded in 1887. There were several others, all makeshift affairs, built to last only a year or two, or for

a particular drive. According to Seward Coombs, who first saw the Gardens about 1890 as a boy in his teens, the then existing dam did not cross the river entirely: it consisted of two wings built out from each side of the river, leaving a gap in the middle. This was enough to raise First Lake an extra foot or two during the log-driving season. Probably all of the early dams at the Gardens were of the same sort.

Lacking real water storage, the river ran low from June to November. This affected not only the log drives but the sawmills, which were shut down for several months every year. In 1893 the newly formed Acadia Pulp & Paper Company built the first wood-pulp mill on the river, at Rapid Falls, about a mile above the village of Milton. In 1900 they completed a second at Cowies Falls, closer to the village. During the years 1902-1903 the town of Liverpool built a dam and a hydro-electric plant at The Guzzle, about two miles above Milton.

This dam began to store water in May 1903.

In 1902 a group of Liverpool and Milton men formed the Mersey Hydraulic Company, and in 1903 completed a ~~built a complete~~ wooden dam at Indian Gardens for the storage and regulation of water in the river. It raised the water in First and Second lakes about 8 feet, and it had six wooden gates to control the flow. In times of flood the "flowage" caused by this dam affected the shores of First Lake, Second Lake, and Lake Rossignol to the mouth of Kejimkujik River. The top was wide enough to drive a wagon across, and the dam thus formed a bridge for teamsters hauling supplies to logging camps west of Indian Gardens.

This dam crossed the river at the foot of First Lake. Thus it did not flood the ancient camp site at Indian Gardens, which lay just below. The Mersey Hydraulic Company built a house for their dam attendant on the west side of the river. The first attendant was Edward Rhyno of Milton, who stayed from 1903 to 1914. Then came Peter Croft or Kraft of Buckfield, a remarkable character who built a stable and barn, kept a horse and cow, and cultivated part of

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(6-a)

the ancient Gardens on both sides of the river. He remained there, lord of all he surveyed, until the N.S.Power Commission built their big hydro-electric power and storage dam half a mile further down Lake Falls, thus flooding the Indian Gardens for ever, in the year 1929.

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The Mersey Hydraulic Company was not a financial success. It had planned to charge a water-storage fee to every industry using the river, including the log drivers. Once the dam was built, however, various loggers and millers welshed on the agreement and refused to pay. Log-drivers, sluicing their logs over the Indian Gardens dam, opened or closed the water-gates as they pleased. The keeper was helpless. When the M.H.Company sought legal remedy it found itself trapped in the matter of "riparian rights".

In 1908 the wood-pulp mills at Milton were purchased, at a bankruptcy sale, by the newly-formed Macleod Pulp Company, which was financed partly by Frank Stanfield of Truro, ~~XXX~~ F.B.McCurdy of Halifax, and John R. Macleod, who became manager. Soon afterward they purchased all the out-standing stock of the Mersey Hydraulic Company and thus became owners of the Indian Gardens dam. Henceforth they maintained the dam [redacted] for the benefit of their mills, and the other millers and the Liverpool electric-light plant got their water free.

Mr. Burdy was the controlling interest

F.B.McCurdy was a canny financier with a long vision. He saw the rapidly growing market for electric power. The Mersey River, with its large available water storage, and the undeveloped power of Lake Falls, Big Falls, etc., looked like a valuable property. He had a vision of developing the whole hydro-electric power of the river, and carrying it by transmission lines to Halifax and elsewhere. To this end, in 1910, he engaged the services of Frederick Yorston, of Montreal, one of the best hydraulic engineers in Canada; and Yorston made a survey of the river and its lakes in the period 1910-1911. Amongst other things his report recommended a permanent (rock or concrete) and much higher storage dam at Indian Gardens. The cost of the projected power developments seemed very large at that time, and McCurdy delayed action. (He had plunged into federal politics, being elected M.P. for Queens County in 1911.) When the First World War broke out in 1914 the whole plan was shelved. It was still on the shelf in 1919, when McCurdy and his fellow shareholders in the Macleod Pulp & Paper Company sold out to a syndicate consisting of Frank J.D.Barnjum and a group of Boston interests.

Barnjum planned to promote a large newsprint paper mill, using the hydro-electric power of the river. However he and his associates put such a large price on the Macleod timberlands that the scheme proved difficult. In 1928 the Canadian financier I.W.Killam seized the opportunity for himself. He promoted and built the large mill of the Mersey Paper Company at Brooklyn during 1928-1929. To provide his mill with electric power the Nova Scotia Power Commission expropriated the properties of the Mersey Hydraulic Company, and paid the Macleod Pulp & Paper Company (Barnjum et al) $60,000 for their equity in the M.H.Co. Their No.1 storage and power dam was built at a place called The Ledges, half a mile below the old wooden one. As the water gradually rose in this new tall dam it flooded the little glen of Indian Gardens. The lapping of the water in every wind washed out the turf and the tree stumps, exposing ancient Indian tools etc.

In cultivating the old flat of Indian Gardens, Peter Croft often found such relics, but he thought them of no value and threw them away. I often fished and hunted at the Gardens between 1923 and 1929, and my wife and I spent our honeymoon there in 1927, in a hunting lodge belonging to the Macleod P. & P. Company, for whom I worked. Like everyone else in those days I assumed that the ancient Indian camp had extended no further than the tillable flat on the east side of the river, where the fine cold spring gushed out of the hillside and flowed through the flat to the river.

However, as the water stored by No.1 dam rose up the sides of the glen it continued to expose Indian relics in quantity, on both sides of the river but chiefly on the east side. Even now (1959) when the glen has been flooded for thirty years, people still find relics along the shore line, high above the old flat. Thousands of relics have been found during these years and carried off by loggers, river-drivers, tourists and curiosity-hunters. It is the largest and richest prehistoric camp site known in Nova Scotia or for that matter the Maritime Provinces. It covered not only the flat by the river, but extended

up the ridge to at least the present water level, and it lay along the east side of the river for half a mile. On the west side, (as on the east) the camp site began on the shore of First Lake, just where the river began its descent of Lake Falls; but on the ~~west~~ west side it extended no more than a quarter mile down the bank. On the west side the bank was fairly steep -- i.e. there was no easily tillable flat. Peter Croft cleared and cultivated a field there, but I doubt if the Indians did. Oddly enough the richest site for relics on the west side, as the rising water exposed them, was the knoll on which the Macleod hunting lodge had stood, and where I spent my honeymoon.

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During the latter half of the 19th century a number of wanderers moved up the River Road and lived for a time at Indian Gardens. The first of whom I can find record was a British Army officer named Stamer. (pronounced STAY-mer).

Statement of Molly Watson, widow of T.E.D.Watson, Liverpool, Oct.3, 1957:-

"My mother was Eva Knaut, who was born in Liverpool in 1846. She married a retired English naval officer named Frederick O.L.Patch, and I was their only child. When my mother was about 17 (i.e. about 1863) a Captain Stamer and his wife came to Liverpool. Like other British officers in the Halifax garrison Captain Stamer had visited the Mersey district on fishing and hunting trips, and had camped at Indian Gardens. Now he had retired, and he had decided to build a hunting lodge at the Gardens. His wife was a Prussian woman and they had no children. He procured ox-carts and workmen, went up the river road to the Gardens, and built a rather romantic structure of logs which the river men called Stamer's Castle. I don't know whether the Stamers lived there all year round. I have an idea that they spent the winters in Halifax or abroad. Anyway they stayed at the Gardens for several years and then went away and never came back. I don't know what became of them. While in Liverpool they made the acquaintance of the Knaut family, and when their "castle" was built at Indian Gardens they invited

Eva Knaut to visit them every summer. She was an active athletic girl. She used to drive a riding wagon along the Annapolis road as far as Pleasantfield, and then walk 8 or 10 miles over the loggers' road to Indian Gardens. Sometimes she came back that way, after staying a week or two. But several times Captain Stamer provided a birchbark canoe and an Indian guide, and she came down the river, running the rapids the whole way, a thrilling experience."

Statement of Owen Teal, Pleasantfield, September 1957:-

"I've heard old men talk about an English officer and his wife, named Stamer, who lived some years at the Gardens. They had a fancy log house by the river that the log-drivers used to call Stamer's Castle. Eva Knaut used to come out there to visit them as a young girl. She used to drive a riding wagon to Pleasantfield and get one of the men to walk in to the Gardens with her, in case she met a bear. Once they were caught in a bad storm of wind and rain. It was springtime and cold, and they had to take shelter in an old logging camp and stay the night. Her guide was a gruff old fellow. He lay down in some hay in a corner where the roof didn't leak, but the girl stood away, scared-like. He said, "You needn't be afraid of me. And you'd better come and lie down here with me or you'll freeze." She wouldn't at first. But after shivering in the dark for a time she did. People used to tease the old fellow about it afterwards, but he was a strict-living man and would flare up if they said anything real off-color. I don't think the Stamers lived there very long. He was just interested in the fishing and hunting, say from early spring to late fall."

"Stamer's Castle" rotted down and vanished, as such abandoned buildings do.

During the early 1880's an Irishman named Knox turned up in Liverpool, accompanied by his wife and children, and the wife's sister. He appeared to be a man of education, strongly built, healthy and boisterous, and with a private income from the Old Country. He never revealed anything about his origin, or why he

Note: Memoirs of Seward Coombs:-

"The first white man to live at Indian Gardens was a man named Beazley who built a house on the east side, about half way between the big spring and the river. I don't know when it was -- probably in the 1860's or 70's -- before my time anyhow. I don't know what became of Beazley, The house was deserted for some years. Then a man named Knox moved in with his family. They were Irish. Knox was a well educated man and appeared to have some money. They came to Milton first. Then Knox and his older boys, Ainslie and Herbert, started up the River Road to look for a place to farm. It was early winter, with snow on the ground. Night overtook them near Big Falls, and they built a fire and sheltered in the lee of a huge boulder, on the west side of the old River Road, near where the end of No.3 dam is now. They thought they heard bears, and spent much of the night on top of the rock, watching, with an old gun they had. Ever afterwards the rock was known to the river men as Knox's Rock.

They found the old Beazley house at Indian Gardens in fairly good shape, and went back to Milton and fetched the rest of the family with their furniture and baggage. Knox farmed there several years. I knew the older boys, Ainsley and Herbert. They were fine men. Eventually the family moved over Chelsea way."

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Note: Cecil Baxter, of Maitland Bridge, in May 1966, told me the following:-
"Knox and his family came to Nova Scotia and settled at the Indian Gardens shortly after ~~the~~ the murders in Ireland, In Phoenix Park, Dublin, and in other parts. People here always believed that his name was not Knox, that he was an informer in one of the Irish outrages, and had to flee under a false name and hide away in this country."

Note by THR:- The murder of Lord Frederick Cavendish in Phoenix Park was in 1882. There were many other outrages in Ireland in that year, and several informers were also murdered. The chief Phoenix Park informer, James Carey, fled for ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ South ~~xxxxxxx~~ Africa with his family, under the name of Power; but a Fenian named O'Donnell boarded ~~the~~ the ship and on the voyage shot Carey dead.

came to Canada, or why he chose to move up the river to Indian Gardens and make a small farm on the grassy flat at the foot of First Lake. It was said that he had been forced to leave Ireland on account of the land troubles there. (It was about the time of the Irish nationalist "Plan of Campaign", which made the name of Boycott famous.)

At all events he had a house and barn at the Gardens, and cultivated the old Indian flat, and enjoyed the excellent fishing and hunting. He and his wife were hospitable, and passing loggers and river-drivers were always entertained royally at the Knox house. Amongst Knox's foibles, he shared with the Chinese and Victor Hugo a high respect for the value of human manure in the raising of garden produce. The contents of his back-house were always spread on his garden in the spring; and whenever a gang of river-drivers camped at the Gardens he invited them to use his back-house, with that end in view. Knox and the two women were jolly in the easygoing Irish fashion; they seemed perfectly at home in the wilderness of the Gardens.. Amongst the river-drivers there was a rumor that Knox slept with both women alternately, and had children by both; but this was probably a typical bit of river-drivers' humor.

In 1924, Ingram W. Freeman of Milton, at that time Superintendent of the Macleod pulp mills, told me the following:- " As a young man I was a log-driver on the Mersey. It was always a long and hard business, bringing the booms of logs down through the lakes, and when we came to Indian Gardens we were always glad to see the Knox house. When a log-drive arrived at the Gardens the Knoxes always held a party for us, and if anybody could play a fiddle there was a good oldfashioned square-dance, with the two women joining in the fun. I remember one time a dance at the Knox house, and the two women dancing with us, and Knox laughing and joking in that merry Irish voice of his. Mrs. Knox wore the usual women's clothes of those times -- you couldn't tell much about the shape of the person inside -- and although she was as merry as ever she seemed a trifle slow and cumbersome about the floor. All of a sudden she made an excuse , looked

significantly at her sister, and left the room. The sister followed her quickly. So did Knox. We didn't know what to make of this, but we went on with the party. In less than half an hour we heard the cry of a new-born baby. Mrs. Knox had stayed on her feet to the last minute."

In April 1887 the Knox house at Indian Gardens was destroyed by fire. After that, apparently, the family settled in the Chelsea district of Lunenburg County, where some of their descendants remain.

Some time after this, probably in the 1890's, a man named Telfer built a dwelling and barn on the east side of the river at Indian Gardens, and cultivated the flat. He also cleared an acre or so on the higher land and used it for pasture. He died or departed after a few years. The pasture, which lay beside the River Road, was always afterward known as the Telfer Field.

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The spring of 1860 was very dry. In one period of four weeks not a drop of rain fell. The river shrank, and the log-drivers had hard going. Suddenly there were forest fires all over the province. On May 4th in Queens County a fire was running, from the 18 Mile mark on the Liverpool-Annapolis road, towards Brookfield; eventually it burned all the way to Caledonia. At the same time occurred what was always called " Dan Moody's fire". I met Daniel Moody soon after I came to Milton in 1923. He was then a spry old man of about 80, ~~with~~ with long white hair, a gaunt face, frosty blue eyes, and a flowing white moustache. In May 1860 he was a boy employed by the river-drivers. One day he was posted at a "wing" of logs. His job was to watch for other logs coming down the channel, in case one of them should swing broadside-on and start a jam in the channel. It was hot weather and the blackflies were at their worst. As he sat there armed with a pike-pole he decided to make a smudge fire on the shore, to keep off the flies. He failed to watch his fire carefully and suddenly the flame got away and began to run in the woods. This fire burned for many days, destroying good timberland

in a wide area. This included a fine stand of white pine along the Indian Garden Road from Pleasantfield. In the other direction it burned down to Milton, where the village men had to turn out and fight it, in order to save the houses and mills about Potanoc. It also burned across to the Medway River and threatened the villages of Greenfield and Mill Village and Port Medway. A few showers fell during the latter part of May, slowing down the forest fires, but they were not wholly extinguished until heavy rains fell early in June. It was the most destructive fire ~~known~~ ever known to the ~~XXXXXX~~ lumbermen of Queens County, and its effects had no small part in the decline of the Mersey lumber industry, which began to set in a few years afterwards. I mention it here because it destroyed much timber in the Indian Gardens area. In 1923 you could still see along the Indian Gardens Road the huge and hollow charred stumps of what once had been magnificent white pines.

In 1923 you could drive a car two miles along this road from Pleasantfield. At that point a brook called Bear Hole flowed across it, and from there you had to take an ox wagon or ~~xx~~ walk the remaining 6 miles to the Gardens.

In 1923 there was no telephone line up the river. When the Milton pulp mills' manager wanted to know the height of water stored by the Indian Gardens dam it was necessary to motor a man as far as Bear Hole; from there he walked to the Gardens, noted the water gauge, had a chat with "Pete" Croft, and then returned with his news to the car. In spring and late fall, when all the roads were deep in mud and impassable for cars, it was customary to hire one of the Micmacs at Two Mile Hill near Milton. (Usually it was a wiry brown fellow named John Francis.) This man would trot away up the River Road, which was never passable for cars beyond the electric-~~xx~~ power plant at The Guzzle. He would leave at daylight and return with Pete's figures at dark, a ~~xxxxxx~~ round trip of 30 miles, all on foot and the very worst of going.

However, during the fishing and hunting seasons the mill manager and I often

went to Indian Gardens ourselves, walking in from the Bear Hole and spending a week-end in the Macleod Company's hunting lodge on the west side of the river. The stretch of rapids (Lake Falls) that roared past the Gardens was the finest water for trout fishing in the country, and in Fall there was excellent moose-hunting at Kempton Lake, a few miles west of the Gardens. The best time to fish at the Gardens was just when the river-drivers had brought a boom of logs down the lakes and were busy sluicing them over the dam. Big lake trout used to follow these booms for the sake of the bugs etc, dropping from the bark, and many of these trout were sluiced over the dam with the logs. In the rapids and eddies of Lake Falls these trout combined with the ordinary river trout (same species but smaller in size) to make an angler's dream. In weight the trout ran from 2 to as much as 5 pounds, and with the right conditions it was possible to catch four or five dozen in a week-end of leisurely fishing.

After the McCurdy-Macleod interests had bought the mills and timberlands of the bankrupt Acadia Pulp & Paper Company in 1908, Mr. F.B.McCurdy built the hunting lodge at Indian Gardens in 1910, an unpretentious board-and-shingle dwelling with four small bedrooms, a kitchen, and a large living-dining room with a stone fireplace at one end. It stood on a small bluff on the west side of the river, in a clump of shady birch trees. McCurdy brought a fishing party there in the spring of 1919, shortly before he and his associates sold out the Milton mills and timberlands to the Barnjum group. The guests included L.S.Brown, then superintendent of the Canadian National Railways in the Maritimes, with headquarters at Moncton.

The river was in flood, hence there was rather poor fishing. The party had come by car to Pleasantfield, and thence by foot and ox wagon to the Gardens. On the return, however, they decided to go straight down the river in two boats and a canoe. The guides tried to talk them out of it, but they insisted. McCurdy cannily took the canoe, with a pair of Indians to do the paddling, and they reached Milton safely after a wild and thrilling rush down the rapids. The boats, which sat deeper in the water, struck submerged rocks in the torrent of Lake Falls and

overturned. Fortunately the boatmen were experienced river-drivers and swimmers. They managed to get their guests ashore, half drowned. Then these castaways had to make their way down to Milton on foot along the River Road, a distance of 14 miles or more. They arrived weary and footsore, and badly bitten by black-flies. Their comments were sulphurous.

My bride and I spent our honeymoon in this lodge in June 1927, when trout fishing was at its best. The Mersey Paper mill manager, J. Austin Parker, drove us as far as Pleasantfield in his car, and there we took horse and buggy for the Gardens. I drove the buggy across the old wooden dam and nearly scared my bride to death. Old "Pete" Croft regarded us with a surly eye during our stay. He liked his loneliness and no one had ever interrupted it for so long -- two whole weeks. His wife and children were living then in Buckfield, Queens County, where he had his home farm. They used to join him at Indian Gardens for the summer season as a rule, but this June they were absent.

The dam-tender's small wooden house stood on the cleared west slope of the river, about 150 yards below the dam, with a large barn behind it. The hunting lodge stood two or three hundred yards away across a field, and downstream. My wife and I used to watch deer stealing out of the woods at dusk to munch Pete's vegetable shoots in a cultivated patch of the field. He often tied his dog, a stupid collie-mongrel, to a stake in the middle of the patch, but it did no good. The dog was lonesome and enjoyed the company of the deer. We often saw the dog lying peacefully with deer munching away within twenty feet.

On the east bank, just below the end of the dam, stood another barn, where Pete stored the hay he cut in the old Indian fields. I fancy this barn was a relic of Knox or Telfer, who had lived on that side. There was a shallow ravine on this (the east) side, between the Indian flat and the oak slope, which acted as a waste channel for the river when there was high water in the dam. To prevent this, the Mersey Hydraulic Company had built a stone causeway, which led from the Indian Gardens Road to the dam itself.

Peter Croft was a tall rangy man with red hair, a straggling red moustache, and an expression of perpetual worry. Whenever you saw "Pete" you got the impression that he had just suffered a calamity. Nevertheless he was talkative in certain moods, with the imagination of a first-class liar -- a backwoods Munchausen. His wife was a strict woman, and Pete had to mind his language when she was present. For self-expression he evolved a language of his own that served all the useful purposes of actual profanity. One Fall I journeyed to the Gardens to see about the water supply in the dam ; it was just after a long and heavy rain.

"Pete," I said, "I guess you've had a rain at last."

"Rain!" bellowed Pete. "I tell you, mister, I've had a most gorramighty, ghostly, jehovally rain!"

Pete invented word-combinations, too, and they were effective. Thus he combined "gigantic" and "Immense" in "jimmense" -- one of his favorite words, for everything that happened to him was superlative.

For years he was a game warden by special authority of the Department of Lands and Forests -- the Indian Gardens region was famous hunting and fishing country. He watched all sportsmen with a jealous eye. In his early days he had been a professional hunter, supplying moose meat to the lumber camps; and he was not above bowling over a fat fallow cow moose for his own consumption in the winter season, even in his game warden days. But he was a most exact informer on the sins of others.

The Macleod Pulp & Paper Company (which owned all the stock of Mersey Hydraulic Company) paid Pete $50 per month and provided his house and food. The vegetables he produced at Indian Gardens he sold in Milton. His wife continued to manage the home farm at Buckfield. They were thrifty people. Between 1914 and 1929, when the new hydro-electric storage dam ~~was constructed~~ flooded the Indian Gardens, they must have ~~had~~ deposited at least $5,000 in the bank at Liverpool.

Pete had lived so long at the Gardens, monarch of all he surveyed, that he had come to regard the familiar fields as his own. By 1929 his mind was getting queer.

When the dam-construction crew arrived on the scene and built a large camp in the summer of 1928 Pete considered the whole thing an outrage. He went to Lawyer John Cameron in Liverpool and got him to draw up a large claim on the Nova Scotia Power Commission for the house, barn and fields at Indian Gardens, and for the loss of his living wages as dam-tender. The claim was rejected, of course. But the Power Commission gave him a minor job at the new dam. Pete built a small board-and-tar-paper shack near the east end of this dam, and lived there till the end of his days (about 1935), keeping a few cows and tilling a bit of ground.

During his latter years he got into a lawsuit with a man in Buckfield (where Mrs. Croft still maintained the home farm) over the title to a piece of adjoining land. He had no more legal claim to it than he had to the Indian Gardens. But this time he was not dealing with the Power Commission. His antagonist was a hard-headed Lunenburg County farmer. Pete pursued the case stubbornly through the courts, pouring the savings of years into the facile hands of lawyers, and when he died there was little left in his Liverpool savings account.

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From 1908 to 1915 the resident manager of the Macleod Pulp & Paper Company at Milton was a Newfoundlander named Sidney Downer, a clever but unscrupulous man of 30 or 35. He was fond of hunting and fishing, and spent much time at Indian Gardens. One Fall he was sitting outside the dam-keeper's house with a new rifle and two drinking companions. On the old Indian flat across the river they noticed a white horse. It belonged to a Negro named Dixie Warrington in Liverpool. Dixie had turned it loose for the summer in the river-meadows above Milton, a common custom in those times, and the old horse had wandered up the River Road to the Gardens. One of Downer's companions guessed the range at 300 yards and bet five dollars that he couldn't hit the horse with his fancy new rifle. Downer promptly sighted on the horse, pulled the trigger, and down it went, as dead as Abraham's goat. Downer had to pay Dixie $50 for it.

In 1928 the contractors for the power developments on the Mersey River, the Foundation Company of Canada, built a new River Road from Milton to Indian Gardens. It was farther back from the river than the old one, and it ran with long straight stretches and few curves, a good motor highway. With this done they built construction camps at Big Falls, at the foot of Lake Falls, and at Indian Gardens -- these in addition to the road-makers' camps. The camp at the foot of Indian Gardens was called Camp Six. It was a group of huts and barracks covered with grey felt-siding, and it housed 300 men. For easy communication with the Liverpool-Annapolis highway they reconstructed the old Indian Gardens road to Pleasantfield, cutting out many of its windings, dumping rock-fill into the Turnpike Swamp crossing, and in general making a narrow but practical motor road.

The crew of Camp Six had the biggest job on the river. It was the construction of Dam No. 1, the great storage dam, which would flood the Indian Gardens and miles of low woodland above, transforming First Lake, Second Lake, Rossignol and various other lakes into one vast sheet covering one hundred square miles at the least.

No. 1 is an earth dam with a concrete core and a face of piled and fitted rocks. It raised the old river level to a height of 70 feet. The old wooden dam above, built by the Mersey Hydraulic Company in 1902-1903, was destroyed by dynamite when the new dam was ready for operation. The site of No.1 dam was a place known to the river-drivers as The Ledges, where there was a steep outcrop of slate rock on both sides of the river. In their preliminary surveys the Power Commission's engineers assumed that this slate bedrock extended across the river bottom, and their cost estimates were based on that. They were wrong. When the contractors' wooden coffer-dam bared the river bed it was found to consist of a layer of loose slate rocks, and then layer after layer of silt. In short there was a huge rift in the slate bedrock at this point, and the river had been filling it with mud for thousands of years. The contractors had to dig an enormous hole in all this before they came to what they called "an impermeable stratum" on which

to build the dam. Thus No.1 was a very expensive dam.

Some of the Indians at Milton grumbled when they learned that the new dam would flood the Gardens. They had a sentimental feeling for that old home of their people, even though no Indians had lived there in historic times. They muttered darkly that something bad would happen to the men who built the dam, that there was a curse on the place, and so on. The costly error of judgement in the engineers' survey seems almost to confirm what the Indians said.

When No.1 dam was almost complete, gangs of men were sent to clear away the old buildings of the Mersey Hydraulic Company at Indian Gardens, and to prepare the demolition of the M.H.C. dam. They razed the old barn on the flat at the east side of the river. They moved the hunting lodge and Pete's house up the west slope to a point above the calculated new water-mark. [redacted]. (Pete's house stood rotting for years, perched up on wooden blocks in the edge of the oak woods, with the faded sign of the Mersey Hydraulic Company still nailed to the front.)

About 1935 the hunting lodge was hauled on sleds by a tractor, across the winter ice of No.1 "pond", and down the River Road to the little village of the power station operators at No.3 (Big Falls). There it was converted into a neat little double house.

The new "flowage" of No. 1 created a fringe of water-killed trees, standing like skeletons on the edge of the old Indian Gardens glen, and indeed all about the new huge lake which goes by the name of Rossignol. Eventually these will disappear by the natural process of decay, and then Rossignol will have a normal shore line. But in 1959, thirty years after No.1 flooded this great area, there was still a notable fringe of grey wood-skeletons.

When the contractors converted the old River Road and the old "Garden Road" for motoring purposes the remoteness and comparative privacy of the Indian Gardens site completely vanished. It was now easy to attach a trailer to a car and haul

a boat plus outboard engine to the spot, and from there to cruise the lake country right up to the mouth of Kejimkujik River. A swarm of fishermen and hunters descended on the whole area. The river itself was vastly changed. The long rapids of Lake Falls, Big Falls, Third Stillwater Falls etc. became a series of dammed ponds, like a string of sausages, which eventually extended all the way from Potanoc to the Gardens. During the 1930's a swarm of firewood and pulpwood cutters, operating with trucks, hacked away at the woods along the River Road and the old Garden Road. The beautiful stands of birch and maple along the Garden Road, gorgeous in autumn, vanished almost completely.

J.H.R.

Note:- After World War Two, when oil stoves & furnaces came into general use, (even in logging camps) the demand for hardwood fuel ceased, except for parlour fireplaces, & the hardwood stands along the roads were able to grow anew. By the year 1969, hardwood stands along what had become known as "The Old Garden Road" had recovered remarkably.