

THE "INDIAN DEVIL COUNTRY".

The wooded country west of the Mersey River, and below the hydro-electric power dams built in 1928-1929 at Indian Gardens and Lake Falls, contains three small lakes lying quite close together. Kempton (or Cranberry) Lake lies 2 miles SW of Indian Gardens, and flows through a crooked brook into the Mersey River just below the Lakes Falls ("No.2") hydro-power dam. From the south tip of Kempton Lake there was a portage ~~trail~~ trail of about 1 mile to the north end of Long Lake, which in turn stretched southward about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles, dotted with small islands and surrounded by low pine ridges. Long Lake empties from its NE tip through a stillwater brook into the SW corner of Eagle Lake; and Eagle in turn empties from its ~~NE tip~~ north tip in a rushing noisy brook to the head of "No. 3 pond," an artificial lake in the Mersey River, created by the Big Falls hydro-electric power dam. Kempton, Long, and Eagle lakes form roughly an isosceles triangle 5 miles by 3. In the 1930's a man could reach them on foot by narrow trails, the shrunⁿ and overgrown remains of logging roads winding through the woods to the Mersey River.

This area was logged for its virgin pine between 1840 and 1865. In the same era a family of Milton lumbermen named Ford cut large quantities of oak from the ridges on both sides of the river at Indian Gardens. In the decade between 1900 and 1910, the Milton ~~firm~~ firm of Harlow & Kempton logged the area again for the remaining spruce and hemlock, and for pine left by the former loggers because in their time it was too small to cut. (An old Milton logger in 1924 told me, "In the old times, any tree you could put your arms around was too dam' small to cut.") As late as the 1960's the crumbled remains of the Harlow & Kempton camps and log dams, and the faint traces of their logging roads, could still be found. In 1915 the Macleod Pulp & Paper Company, of Milton, sent a pair of contractors (Herbert Minard and Cecil Brown) to build a log camp and stable near the NE tip of Eagle Lake, where they cut a wide acreage of second-growth spruce and fir, for pulp-wood. From then until now (1970) there has

been no logging in the area of these three lakes, and the sapling timber has grown to a good size and covered all of the old choppings. It is traveled by a few deer hunters in Fall, and by one or two casual trappers in winter. The old trails are faint and hard to follow, and most have disappeared altogether.

The area about Kempton, Long, and Eagle lakes was known among the old-time loggers as "the Injun Devil Country", because the Micmacs told them it was haunted by weird and noisy spirits. No Micmac would camp overnight there, although they would travel through it on their hunting expeditions for moose and caribou.

When Milton loggers entered this area in the 1840's, ~~making~~^{making} tote-roads, building camps, cutting the virgin pine, and driving the logs down the Kempton and Eagle brooks to the Mersey River, nobody seems to have heard or encountered the mysterious "devils". After a time the younger generation of Micmacs entered the area to hunt or fish, and to stay overnight in brushwood bivouacs.

In the early 1880's the group of Micmacs who lived near Potanoc on the Mersey River included a family named Tony. One Fall, a Tony man and two or three other Micmacs went to Long Lake and camped near its south end, intending to hunt moose. In the evening light, Tony walked some distance along the lake shore, looking for moose. Returning in the early dusk, he noticed a small stump of red pine, washed up and left high and dry by the summer drought. The stump and its roots were full of resin, ideal fuel for the camp fire, and Tony put it on his shoulders. Two of the roots were in his hands. Two others protruded above his head and shoulders. His companions, seeing these against the last of the evening light, with his body in shadow, mistook him for a bull moose, and fired. Tony fell dead. His body was brought out to Milton by ox-wagon over the old tote road from the S. tip of Long Lake to Schoolhouse Hill. Francis Tupper told me in 1936 that he could remember Tony's body on the wagon going past the schoolhouse, and all the boys running out to see it.

This affair revived the old superstition among the Indians, who shunned the woods about the three lakes for many years. It mattered nothing to the whites. In the 1890's a party of white men from Milton traveled to Long Lake for a moose hunt. One was a young man named Seward Coombs. (See my typescript "Memoirs of Seward Coombs".) Another was Robert Lloyd, who also told me about the hunt 30 years afterwards. (See also my typescript, "The Haunted Bog".)

They bivouacked at the end of a dry wooded "island" in the bog that runs ^usoth from Eagle Lake almost to the shore of Long Lake. It is a narrow swamp, wet even in midsummer, enclosed by ridges of Hemlock, spruce and pine trees. The site of their bivouac was ideal for "calling" bull mo^ose. It had a screen of small hackmatack trees, from which they could shoot in almost any direction, and a bull mo^ose deluded by the birchbark horn was bound to venture across the open bog. It was an ideal morning, too, frosty, with thick wreaths of mist over the bog, and not a trace of wind that might carry their scent to the bog edge.

Suddenly they heard a bull answer the "call", with the typical coughing grunt of a lovesick male. It was coming towards the hunters but still invisible in the mist. Then came another sound, from the same direction, but very different. All of the hunters agreed ~~afterwards~~ that it was a sound like "some animal would make if it was being tore to pieces". It lasted about a minute, and the yells went echoing along the frosty ridges. Then the morning sun broke through the mists, and in a few minutes the whole area of the bog was plainly visible. There was no sign of a moose or any other beast -- and no tracks.

Woodsmen all, they were not scared easily, and none of them believed in the old legend of an "Injun ~~sun~~ devil". With ~~sun~~ sun-up, the morning breeze arose, carrying their human scent to the bog edge, so further "calling" was useless. They spent the day "still-hunting" (moving quietly among the trees) on the wooded ridges above the bog. That night as they sat about their fire, the weird outcry came again from the bog, lasting about a minute as before. In the morning there were no tracks to be seen. That day they moved away, and camped

at a place well south of Long Lake, on a spot known to the loggers as Split Rock. There the nights were peaceful, but they had no luck in the hunt.

Will Freeman was a thin dry wisp of a man when I knew him in Milton in 1923-29. He was then about 60 or 65, working as a cook in lumber camps. All his early life he had spent in the woods as a professional hunter and trapper. He and a partner would contract with a firm like Harlow & Kempton to supply one or more ~~times~~ of their logging crews with meat for a whole season. There were plenty of moose in those days; but of the caribou (much easier to find and kill) only a few remained.

Will Freeman said that he and his partner killed the last caribou in Queens County, in 1910 or thereabouts. They were traveling through the woods to a logging camp at Sixth Lake. It was winter, with the lakes and bogs frozen, and the usual route from Indian Gardens was by way of Kempton Lake and the long bog which drains into it from the west. On this bog, about 2 miles from the lake, they came upon five or six caribou, and shot them all. They did this out of sheer habit, for it was impossible to haul these carcasses all the way to Sixth Lake. They cut a few steaks from the fattest ones, and went on to Sixth Lake. There were plenty of moose ~~in~~ in the region about the camp, and the pair of hunters worked successfully there all that winter.

These caribou were shot on the westerly fringe of the "Injun devil country". Before this, Will Freeman, as a lone trapper, had suffered a weird experience of his own on the Haunted Bog. Operating from a brushwood bivouac near the south end of Long Lake, he had a trap line up the east side of the lake. One evening, near the end of the trap line, it was too late to ~~and~~ return to the bivouac before dark. He knew that the Haunted Bog was only a short distance away, and that there was plenty of good dry firewood in some dead pine snags on the "island" in it. So he made his way there, cut a night's supply of fuel, made a big fire, and curled up with his back against a log. Drowsing through the night, he was awakened by an uproar from the bog. Again it was the sound

of a big animal in agony. Although there was moonlight, Will could see nothing on the bog. After a long silence he drowsed again -- and again came the wild yelling, this time apparently moving at great speed past his fire and away towards Eagle Lake. In the morning Will left the Haunted Bog, and for that matter the whole area, abandoning his traps. "I don't say there's an Injun devil. I just know there's something mighty queer about that country, and I wouldn't spend another hour there."

Will Freeman was a teetotaler, not much given to talk, with a reputation in Milton as a man of truth. I knew him well, and never heard him tell a tall story.

Another Milton man, Ingram W. Freeman, then superintendent of mill operations for the Macleod Pulp & Paper Company, told me he had heard the strange sound one night in 1919 or 1920, while camped at Kempton Lake for moose hunting. He and his companions were sitting in the tent, whose open door faced the lake. It was a clear starlit night. Suddenly they heard a wild and terrible scream on or above the surface of the lake. They seized their rifles and rushed out to the lake shore. The sound moved away at a great rate southward, towards the outlet of the lake. They fired a couple of shots, in defiance I suppose. There was nothing visible to shoot at. Freeman, a prosaic man whose job dealt entirely with mechanical problems, did not believe in the "Injun devil" or any other kind of spirits -- he was a teetotaler like Will Freeman. His own theory was that the sound came from some foreign bird, storm-driven to Nova Scotia perhaps from the tropics.

No one has heard the "Injun devil" since. I, myself, often camped in this country, on the shore of Kempton Lake, and on Eagle Lake. I have "called" for bull moose by moonlight on the Haunted Bog more than once. Some cronies of mine built a log cabin at the north tip of Eagle Lake, and I have spent days and nights there with them, in all seasons of the year, over a period of more than thirty years. We never heard a sound other than the natural sounds of the forest creatures, including screech-owls. We often called up owls at night by imitating

their cries.

Kempton, Long, and Eagle lakes, which comprise the "Injun devil country", are so close together that on a winter day of stark frost you can stand on the ridge between them and hear the woomp-woomp of pressure cracks forming in the ice of all three.

I tried to trace the origin of the Indian superstition, but had no success until a summer day in August 1933, when I met two elderly Micmacs on the east bank of Broad River, Queens County. I was spending a summer holiday with my wife and children at Summerville Beach, at the mouth of Broad River, which is nowhere near the "Injun devil country". Mike Mokony lived with his old squaw in a shack in the woods about a mile above the highway bridge. (Some white folk said he was descended from a squaw and a white man named McEwan, at Bear River. Others called him "McCooney". His own pronunciation was Mokony or Mo-ko-ne.) With him as a guest ~~xxxx~~ was William Paul, a Micmac who apparently made his winter home near Dartmouth, N.S., but spent the summers traveling about the province and visiting the scattered Micmac families to be found in almost every county in Nova Scotia. Paul was, on his own claim, a "chief", and in the course of his travels of a lifetime he had stored away a remarkable knowledge of the Nova Scotia rivers, lakes, and woodland. And like the Mokonys he had a first-rate knowledge of the Micmac language and traditions.

As we sat on the ground outside the shack, Paul recounted a hunting journey by canoe with a famous old Indian named Jeremy, whose name is still borne by a bay in Lake Kejimikujik. This journey took place when Paul was quite young, probably in the 1880's. They took their canoe up the Mersey River to Kempton Brook, and then followed up the ~~xxxxxx~~ brook to Kempton Lake, which they reached at dusk. Young Paul wanted to camp for the night on the natural meadow at the outlet of the lake, but Jeremy would not hear of it. The place was haunted, he said. So they pushed on in the dark, with some damage to the canoe (Kempton Lake is shallow and rocky) and went on up Cranberry Brook, which flows into

Kempton Lake from the west. There Jeremy consented to camp.

Over their fire, young ~~Paul~~ Paul quizzed Jeremy about the "haunted" spot at the foot of the lake, and this is what Jeremy told him:- In the old, old, time, a big tribe of Indians lived at Indian Gardens on the Mersey River. Whenever somebody died, they took the corp through the woods to that old beaver-meadow at the foot of Kempton Lake. They dug a shallow grave, and over it they built a platform of dry wood. They put the body on this wood, and went away till the flesh was gone off the bones. Then they came back, and set the wood afire. The bones dropped down into the grave. Then they filled in the grave, and put back the turf very carefully. (See "VAULT" in Rand's English-Micmac dictionary.)

After Paul told this tale, I asked him the Micmac name for Kempton Lake. (In those days I was compiling a list of place names in Queens County.) Both Paul and Mike agreed on the name, which I jotted down phonetically -- "Ulnoo-ge-le-zool-te-a-ditch-k' ". But they argued in Micmac about the exact meaning of it. Finally Paul turned to me and said, " Mike says it means The-place-where-men-were-laid. I say it means The-place-where-men-were-burned. Well, we are both right. That was the place where the people from Indian Gardens laid and burnt the dead ones. "

Mike Mokony then told a weird tale of a pair of Indians, strangers in that part of the country, who found themselves overtaken by night and a snowstorm at the foot of Kempton Lake "in the el-time" -- i.e. the olden time. They found a wooden thing "like a little camp", and crawled under it for the night. After a lot of trouble they got a fire going, and built it up big to keep them warm in the storm. Bye-and-bye a drop of something like water fell on one man's face . He said, "The fire is melting the snow on the roof". The other man held out his hand and caught the next drop. "This is not water," he said. "This stuff is blue." They ran outside then, and found they had taken shelter under a corp platform, and the fire was melting the dead man's fat.* And that was the end of the story. Mokony knew no more. It was a very old story, he said.

In the 1920's and 30's a foot trail, kept open by hunters, ran southwest from the Indian Gardens to the north tip of Kempton Lake, possibly on the site of the original Indian trail, although in that case the Indians must have carried their dead by canoe down the lake to the burial place at its outlet. Some time after I heard these tales I visited that outlet, and dug here and there in the old beaver meadow. It was a wild meadow, quite common in Nova Scotia, formed by centuries of silt behind a beaver dam. When the beavers finally were killed off, the dam rotted away, the lake level dropped, the silt emerged, and soon was covered with tussock grass. The silt was at least 4 feet deep, and there were places where you could shove a sharpened stick down six or ~~sixty~~ eight feet. I found no charred bones, in fact I found nothing to prove Paul's story except a few scraps of charred ~~wood-~~wood-knots in one place at a depth of about 15 inches. It is quite possible that bones (and stone arrowheads, earthenware pots, and such-like things placed with the dead for use in the Good Hunting Place) would sink in this black silt and vanish in the course of time. And I merely dug in a few places.

The ancient Micmacs, according to Lescarbot and other early French explorers, had a practice of cremating their dead and hiding the burials at a distance from their camping places; first because they were afraid of ghosts, and second because they believed that their enemies could work a mischief on the living tribe by tampering with the bones of their ~~dead~~ ancestors.

The ancient camp at Indian Gardens was a large one, evidenced by multitudinous arrowheads, spearheads, adzes, "gouges", and fragments of pottery, which have been found on both banks of the Mersey River for a distance of at least a ^{half} ~~quarter~~ mile below the original outlet from First Lake, and extending up the slopes from the river for at least 200 yards. The quality, design, and workmanship of these artifacts vary greatly, so there is good reason to believe that the site must have been occupied by several successive peoples, of whom the Micmacs were the last.

The tillable soil on the narrow flat by the river was cleared, ploughed, and farmed by various lone white men between 1880 and 1929, when the present (1970)

water-storage and hydro-electric power dam was built by the N.S. Power Commission. The only human remains found on the site were two or three skeletons wrapped in birchbark, unearthed in 1902 by workmen building a wooden dam for the Mersey Hydraulic Company. Undoubtedly these had been buried there within historic times, when the Micmacs had long abandoned the Indian Gardens as a camping place, and had adopted simple earth burials from the French. Hence, too, the wooden cross standing in a cairn of stones which was to be seen there in 1801. (The N.S. government surveyor Titus Smith, writing in 1801, spoke of "Indian Gardens, a place formerly cultivated by the Indians, and marked by a large wooden cross." He did not see it himself, but got his information from William Burke, the pioneer settler of North Queens County.)

The care with which the Micmacs ~~ought to keep~~ sought to keep white intruders out of the region about Kempton Lake, with their warnings of devils and haunts, seems to confirm Paul and Mike in their statement that this was the ancient burial place. By checking with the published works of Silas T. Rand, the 19th century missionary and interpreter of the Micmacs, I have been able to check many things told to me by Paul and Mike. I never found anything false, and I have no reason to doubt their account of the burials at Kempton Lake.

Other Micmacs in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick had similar beliefs in a place haunted by a fearsome spirit or ghost, which screamed, and traveled like the wind, but could never be seen. See my paper entitled SOME MICMAC PLACE NAMES WITH THEIR ENGLISH MEANINGS, ~~XXXX~~ which is filed in buff envelope No. 3.