

# Kenora, A History

## A Work in Process

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## Contents

Kenora, A History.....	1
Early Kenora .....	1
1760 - 1763 .....	2
Royal Proclamation of 1763 .....	2
The Treaty of Paris 1783.....	3
Constitutional Act of 1791 .....	3
1836.....	3
Act of Union 1840 .....	3
Gold and Silver Act Ontario and Mining Act of Canada.....	4
The Dream - Opening the West .....	4
British North America Act 1867.....	5
Manitoba Created.....	5
1870.....	6
Negotiation of Treaties .....	7
The Natives .....	7
A Growing Town .....	7
In what Province is Rat Portage ?.....	7
Keewatin Mills and Rat Portage .....	9
Hudson Bay.....	11
The Boundary Dispute .....	12
Bibliography .....	13

## Early Kenora

Kenora is a situated on the north shore of the Lake of the Woods. The City of Kenora is as old as the century dating from January 1 2000. It was created with the amalgamation of the three constituent municipalities, the Town of Kenora (formerly known as Rat Portage), Keewatin and Jeffray Mellick.

Little is known of the Lakes first residence prior to the coming of the White Man.

When the French arrived, they found the Mosonis (or Moose People), a sub-tribe of the Cree (They lived in the Rainy Lake area up to Hudson Bay) and the Cree. The Dakota Sioux Tribes had gained control of most of what is now Minnesota and well entrenched in the Dekotas. The would conduct raids into the Lake of the Woods area. The Algonquins (including the Ojibway (Chippewa), Cree,

Ottawa, Sac, Fox, Illinois, Potawatomi, Shawnee, Miami, Kickapoo, and Menominees) conducted their own raids and in the 1770 had driven out the Sioux.

According to written records first white man to visit the Lake of the Woods was Jacques De Noyon around 1688. In 1732, Pierre La Verendrye established Fort St. Charles on the North West shore of the lake. In 1736 Jean Baptiste La Verendrye, Father Aulneau and 19 others were massacred by Sioux. The Fort was abandoned in 1763.

The Hudson Bay Company, incorporated by Royal Charter in 1670 was granted a trading monopoly over the Hudson's Bay" watershed, known as Rupert's Land. From its headquarters at York Factory on Hudson Bay, it controlled the fur trade throughout much of what is northwest Canada. Undertaking early exploration, its traders and trappers forged relationships with many groups of First Nations. It had for many years been successful in securing the goodwill of the various tribes. Other than fur traders there were few visitors to the west.

### **1760 - 1763**

150 years of French British conflict in North America ended in the Seven Years' War and the British conquest of Canada. Governor Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil, Marquis de Vaudreuil surrendered New France (what is now Quebec, and other French territories in North America) to a British invasion force at Montréal by the Articles of Capitulation on 8 September 1760. New France was under military occupation and military rule until a definitive treaty of peace was negotiated. That treaty, the Treaty of Paris was signed on 10 February 1763 by France, Britain and Spain. By the terms of the treaty, Britain obtained the French possessions of Ile Royale (Cape Breton Island), Canada (Quebec), and the Great Lake Basin and the east bank of the Mississippi River. Britain received Florida from Spain. France retained fishing rights in Newfoundland and the Gulf of St Lawrence, acquired the small Gulf islands of Saint Pierre and Miquelon and had her lucrative West Indian possessions, trading centres in India and slaving station on the Île de Gorée (in present-day Senegal) restored. Britain would later lose the southern North American colonies in the American Revolution. The northern colonies would become the modern country of Canada.

At the time of the Treaty of Paris, France held territory included the Great Lakes Basin and territory "running from a corner of Pennsylvania, along the Ohio River, westward, to the Bank of the River Mississippi, and northward to the southern boundary of the Merchants Adventurers of England Trading into the Hudson's Bay". The drafters of the Treaty of Paris believed the that the Mississippi River flowed north to the Arctic sea and hence the western most boundary of British North America would be the center of the Mississippi River. Later in the 1880s, Ontario would lay claim to the land West of what is now Thunder Bay, stating that it had originally been part of Upper Canada which, in turn became the former province of Quebec. In Ontario's opinion, this old Treaty between France and England established Ontario's boundary due north from the western most end of the Mississippi River. As the Mississippi River has its beginning somewhere near Wadena, Minnesota, a line drawn due north from there places Ontario's western most boundary somewhere near where it lies today, about 50 kilometers west of Kenora (Rat Portage).

### **Royal Proclamation of 1763**

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 was issued October 7, 1763, by King George III following Great Britain's acquisition of French territory in North America. It forbade all settlement past a line drawn along the Appalachian Mountains. The Royal Proclamation continues to be of legal importance to First Nations in Canada. It eventually ensured that British culture and laws were applied in Upper Canada after 1791, which was done to attract British settlers to the province.

### **The Quebec Act of 1774 formally known as the British North America (Quebec) Act 1774**

This Act of the Parliament of Great Britain included several components:

- The colony's territory was expanded to take over much of what is now southern Ontario, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, and parts of Minnesota,
- Reference to the Protestant faith was removed from the oath of allegiance and a guarantee of the free practice of the Catholic faith,
- It restored the use of the French civil law for matters of private law except that in accordance with the English common law, it granted unlimited freedom of testation.
- It maintained English common law for matters of public law, including administrative appeals, court procedure, and criminal prosecution,
- It restored the Catholic Church's right to impose tithes.

### **The Treaty of Paris 1783**

This treaty signed in Paris by representatives of King George III and representatives of the United States of America on September 3, 1783, ended the American Revolutionary War. Britain acknowledged the United States to be sovereign and independent. The treaty set the boundaries between the British Empire and the new country.

### **Constitutional Act of 1791**

Drafted by William Grenville, secretary of state for the colonies, provided for the division of colonies into two sections, Upper Canada and Lower Canada. Grenville explained Great Britain's motivations for the partition was "to reduce "dissensions and animosities" among two : "two classes of men, differing in their prejudices, and perhaps in their interests,". The act provided for an elective Assembly which could raise taxes for local expenditures. Member's of the Legislative Council, the assembly's upper house in both divisions were appointed for life

In 1821, there was a merger of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company

In 1823 the International Boundary Commission surveyed Lake of the Woods for the US/Canada Boundary. David Thompson, Surveyor, and John Bigsby, Secretary, for the British, Joseph Delafield, Agent, and James Ferguson, Surveyor, for the US. Map rejected by the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1824 David Thompson and his son Samuel repeat survey of Lake of the Woods finding North West Angle. Map resulted in final definition of boundary. In 1825 Ludwig Tyarks, surveyor for the British, confirmed that the North West Angle is more north-westerly than Rat Portage.

### **1836**

In 1836 Hudson's Bay Company established a post on Old Fort Island, replacing the post at the Dalles. Donald MacKenzie was appointed to take charge of the business. His son James Mackenzie succeeded him possibly around 1850 and remained there until 1858 until George McPherson took over. In the summer of 1861, the post was moved from Old Fort Island to the North East corner of Fort Street later names Fist Street South and Main Street South.

Between 1836 and the 1890's, the Rat Portage post was managed by several Métis individuals. From the 1890s onward there are references to Métis individuals at Rat Portage, and three more were reported to occupy dwelling houses in Rat Portage. Between 1882 and 1897, at least 11 commercial fishermen in this area were identified as Métis.

### **Act of Union 1840**

The British North America Act, 1840 (3 & 4 Victoria, c.35), commonly known as the Act of Union 1840, is passed in July 1840 , proclaimed 10 February, 1841. It abolished the legislatures of Lower Canada and Upper Canada and established the Province of Canada to replace them.

In 1842, Webster-Ashburton Treaty ratified North West Angle as the most northerly place on the US/Canada boundary and the connection due south to the 49th parallel.

Mr. R.J.N. Pither comes to this part of the country in a birch bark canoe .

In 1850 Gold is discovered in the area. In 1857, Henry Youle Hind Expedition, sponsored by the Canadian government, passed through Lake of the Woods, searching out an emigrant route from Lake Superior to the Red River. Samuel J. Dawson was with this expedition. Palliser Expedition, sponsored by the British government, passed through Lake of the Woods, on a three-year expedition to survey the resources of western Canada to establish the suitability of the general area for settlement.

## **1861**

In 1861, Hudson's Bay Company post opened on the mainland on what then was called Fort St. and Main, now the North East corner of Main Street South and 1 St South. Kenora.

### **Gold and Silver Act Ontario and Mining Act of Canada**

In 1866 the government of Upper Canada introduced the Gold and Silver Act, and a Statue was passed during the last day of sitting of Upper Canada's last parliament. In the haste of the debate a royalty of 2 to 10% was agreed to for the mining industry. The Mining Act of Canada of 1869 required a 5% royalty by Mill operators. Which act applied depended on whether a particular area such as the Lake of the Woods was within the Province of Ontario or outside in the Dominion of Canada.

### **The Dream - Opening the West**

Interest in the west increased through out the 1800s. In 1863, a group calling itself the International Financial Society (IFS) led by Edward Watkin, bought up Hudson Bay stock by offering £300 for every £100 of stock – at a time when the market price was £190. The new owners hoped for a windfall based on selling or leveraging the Company's vast land holdings. Britain promote it, but fundamentally settlement and the fur trade were at cross-purposes. In 1866, following a shareholders' revolt the Company embarked on negotiations to sell its territories, first to Britain, and then to the United Province of Canada which had no means to purchase them. Britain began to grow weary of its colonial responsibilities and was prepared to have the lands annexed to the Dominion.

Sir John A McDonald also looked to the West for expansion and settlement. The United States was settling its west and talk from time to time suggested that the states might wish to expand its borders into the North West. The New Country of Canada was interested in acquiring the Rupert's Land and forging a railway or other land corridor that would tie the Young Dominion together. The delegates from British Columbia who came to consider uniting with Canada would have been satisfied with a wagon road from the Rockies to the pacific. The conservative politicians encouraged them to ask for more. Sir John A. McDonald's offered the delegates a railway to be constructed in 10 years.

On July 1 1867, the Dominion of Canada comes into existence as a result of the British North American act 1867. There are four provinces Nova Scotia New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario. Ontario's boundary is believed to be near current day Thunder Bay. Current day Alberta, Saskatchewan, Northern Manitoba, Northern Ontario and Northern Quebec was then known as Rupert's Land until 1869 when it was sold to the Canadian government. After the transfer it is named the Northwestern Territory.

## **British North America Act 1867**

Section 6: The Parts of the Province of Canada (as it exists at the passing of this Act) which formerly constituted respectively the Provinces of Upper Canada and Lower Canada shall be deemed to be severed, and shall form Two separated Provinces. The Part which formerly constituted the Province of Upper Canada shall constitute the Province of Ontario; and the part which formerly constituted the Province of Lower Canada shall constitute the Province of Quebec

In 1867 the British North America Act(B.N.A. Act) of 1867 established Canada as a self-governing country. Section 146 provided:

It shall be lawful for the Queen ... on address from the Houses of the Parliament of Canada and from the Houses of the respective Legislatures of the Colonies or Provinces of Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and British Columbia, to admit those colonies or Provinces ... into the Union, and on address from the Houses of the Parliament of Canada to admit Rupert's Land and the North-western Territory ... into the Union, on such Terms and Conditions in each Case as are ... expressed and the Queen thinks fit to approve ...

In 1869-70 the Hudson Bay Company relinquished much of the authority it received in its original charter of 1670 to the Canadian Government in return for 3000 pounds and 15 million acres of land which was to be selected in various parts of Canada. 20 acres was selected in the Rat Portage area.

In 1868 the British Parliament passed the Rupert's Land Act, "An Act for enabling Her Majesty to accept a Surrender upon Terms of the Lands, Privileges and Rights of 'The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay' and for admitting the same into the Dominion of Canada." Rupert's land was surrendered to Great Britain in 1869 and Canada purchased it. By the terms of the Deed of Surrender, Hudson Bay received £300K in cash compensation from Canada, 1/20 of all lands to be surveyed in the Fertile Belt – an area bounded by the 49th parallel, the Rockies, the North Saskatchewan River and the Lake of the Woods/ Winnipeg River waterway and lands – or reserves – around each of its posts. Selling its land was to become its primary source of income for the next 50 years.

The Company signed the Deed of Surrender on Nov. 19, 1869. The Canadian government ratified the deal December 1st. Just days later London received word of the North West Rebellion. Jumping the gun, the Canadian government had sent an advance party of surveyors to Red River to measure up its new territory – without even notifying the Métis inhabitants. Ensuing events delayed the finalization of the Deed until the following summer. Hudson Bay delivered the executed Deed to the Colonial Office on May 7, 1870. On May 11th Canada's London representative instructed its bankers to pay the compensation to Hudson Bay which had been on deposit since November. Finally, on June 22nd 1870 the Queen accepted the Surrender from HBC. The following day, June 23rd, an Order in Council was passed transferring Rupert's Land and the North West Territories to Canada, effective July 15th, 1870. The Manitoba Act, which had been negotiated in the winter and spring and passed by the Canadian government in May, came into effect the very same day, July 15, 1870.

To put down the resurrection in the Red River Colony Canada sent an expedition of over 1200 soldiers called the Worsley Expedition. They were denied the right to cross over into the United States and had to cross the Canadian wilderness to do. In arriving in Fort Garry their mere presence ended the conflict. However, the fact that they had not been allowed to cross over the US border increased the desire for an all Canadian route to the west.

## **Manitoba Created**

On July 1 1870, the tiny Province of Manitoba is created. It is no bigger than the size of the settlements along the Red River Valley, making it the smallest province in the Confederation.

Rat Portage was regarded as part of the territories. Initially the administration of justice for the Northwestern Territory was placed under the control of the Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba.

## 1870

In 1870 Wolseley Expedition arrived at northern end of Lake of the Woods.

Colonel Garnet Wolseley left Toronto in May to put down the Riel rebellion in the west. He was refused permission by the United States government to take troops across the American border and so had to take an all Canadian route. The Dawson Road had been mapped out three years earlier but was far from complete. The expedition included over one thousand with provisions and weapons including cannons.

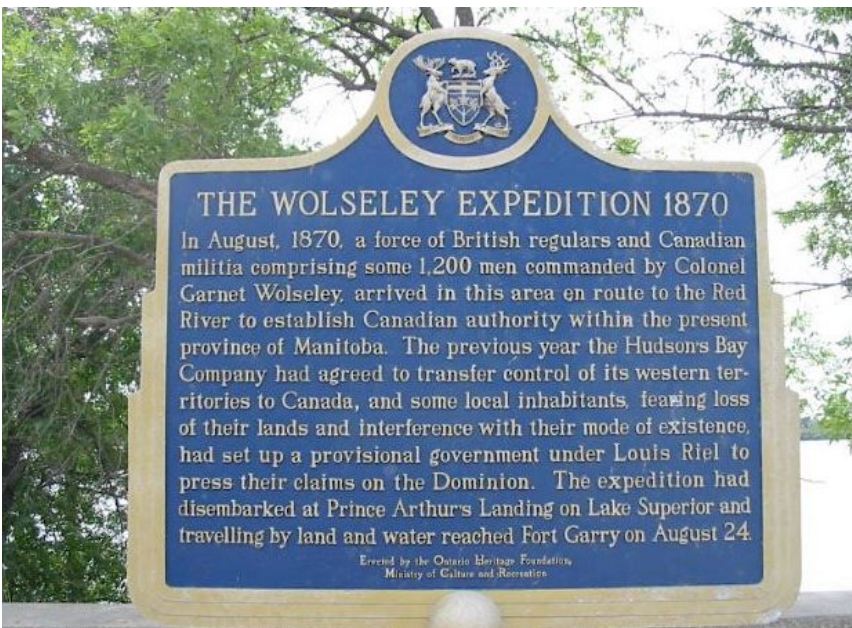
The expedition travelled to Georgian Bay, then by steamer across Lake Huron to the Sault Canal, across Lake Superior to the Department of Public Works station at what is today known as Thunder Bay. Wolseley named the area Prince Arthur's Landing on May 25, 1870. From Port Arthur, small boats carried the troops to Lake Shebandowan They passed through Fort Frances to Lake of the Woods.

The Hudson's Bay Company's post at Rat Portage is but a small affair, three log houses roofed with bark and enclosed by a wooden palisading. The Company maintained thirteen men at this post, but nine of them are employed at small outlying posts in the vicinity. Mr. MacPherson, the official in charge, was most civil and obliging. He is a Scotch half-breed, a quiet, gentlemanly, elderly man, who has received a good education in Montreal. He had been for thirteen years buried alive at this post! It is not a most extraordinary thing, that men of any education can be found to stand a life like that, utterly cut off from the rest of mankind, receiving news from the outside world only once or twice a year, to all intents or purposes dead or sleeping? ... I ventured to question Mr. MacPherson on this subject, and he replied simply that he had long since ceased to feel anything of the kind; he had his little farm and his wife and family, and was quite happy and contented... Mr. MacPherson had a few acres of wheat, barley and potatoes, some pigs and cows, and any number of mangy-looking pariah dogs. These dogs are of all sizes and colours, nasty-looking brutes, but very useful. They do all the winter work, galloping for miles over the frozen snow, dragging small sledges. (Lake of The

Woods Museum Newsletter Volume 14 No 2)

They then headed down the Winnipeg River, across the south basin of Lake Winnipeg to Red River and arriving at Fort Garry in late August. Wolseley immediately began his advance on Upper Fort Garry. Riel and his followers abandoned the fort without a fight.

At numerous portages, corduroy roads had to be constructed. As these jobs were being done, the troops had to endure life in the bush for over two months, in summer heat and the inevitable plagues of blackflies and mosquitoes.



## **Negotiation of Treaties**

The Indians in Manitoba in the fall of 1870 applied to the Lieutenant Governor Archibald of Manitoba and the North-West Territories to enter into a treaty with them. They were uneasy owing to the influx of settlers. Treaty 1 & 2 were negotiated and concluded on August 3 1871. Its principle features were the relinquishment of Indian title to Her Majesty and the reserving of lands sufficient to furnish 160 acres of land to each family of five , providing for schools, prohibition of the sale of alcohol and an annuity of \$3 00 per head. Treaty 3 after protracted negotiations was signed on October 3 1873. Treaty 3 largely covered the route of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) in North Western Ontario.

On March 17 1871, the resolution bringing British Columbia into Confederation was put before Parliament. It was confirmed on May 16.

Before the railway can be built multiple treaties with the natives must be negotiated. Before the railway, in 1871, Dawson Trail opens.

## **The Natives**

With the entry of British Columbia into Confederation on the condition of the construction of a national railway, there are increased hope for future expansion of the west. Since the fur trading days had begun, fur traders had to negotiate with small bands to use water transportation system, make small payments and respect agreements made. Aboriginals exerted jurisdiction over the land and played an important role in the fur trade from which they benefited. They wouldn't necessarily benefit from the railway. The conservatives under Sir John A. MacDonald passed the first Indian Act in 1876. Indian Reserves were begun to be set up and treaties negotiated in haste. The government believed that Natives had surrendered their rights over the land and hence the government could grant rights of way to the Canadian Pacific Railway and sell lands to immigrants who were prepared to farm in the west. The natives did not have the similar view. The construction of the railway was to have considerable economic impact for Rat Portage. and the surrounding area. In 1873, Treaty #3 was signed at the North West Angle.

## **A Growing Town**

In 1872 the first steamboat had arrived on Lake of the Woods. Mr. Frank Gardner is the builder of the large passenger and towing steamboat, the "Algoma", which is now owned by Mr. John Gardner, the senior member of the JOHN GARDNER & CO. The members of the firm are John, Frank and William Gardner. Frank Gardner started his business in Keewatin in 1876, but moved his business to Rat Portage in 1879. He later self acknowledges himself as the first permanent white settler in the area. In 1877, Joseph Derry, George Derry, Charles McMurdie, Frank Moore, arrive in Rat Portage. William Heaney and F.T. Hooper arrive.

Township of Keewatin was founded in 1877.

## **In what Province is Rat Portage ?**

The Government of Manitoba believed that the Federal Government would eventually enlarge her borders to include parts of the Northwestern Territory. The first such request was made on April 24, 1873, when the Conservative Government of Manitoba sent several members of her cabinet to Ottawa to press for an enlarged boundary from the federal conservatives. If Manitoba's request had been granted the province would have been enlarged to nearly 300,000 sq. miles, with ports on both Hudson's Bay and Lake Superior.

In 1875, R. Fuller, a Hamilton Lumberman was granted a Lake of the Woods timber lease by the Dominion.

On April 12, 1876, prior to being voted out of office, the MacDonald Government passed "An Act respecting the North-West Territories to create a separate territory out of part thereof" (39 V, c21) [known locally as The Keewatin Act] The Act created, within the North-West Territories, an area the size of Manitoba's request (basically all of northern Manitoba and Ontario today). The Act stated that the land

shall be and is hereby set apart as a separate district of the said North-West Territories by the name of the District of Keewatin [and that] the Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Manitoba, or the person acting as such, shall ex-officio be Lieutenant Governor of the said District of Keewatin ... and shall make provision for the administration of justice in the said district, and generally to make, ordain and establish all such laws, institutions and ordinances as he may deem necessary for the peace, order and good government therein.

The act, proclaimed in force on Oct 7, 1876, only weeks before MacDonald was voted out of office, made Manitoba responsible for the 300,000 square miles of land it wanted, but without title to it. Except for the prohibition of intoxicants, the laws in the District of Keewatin were basically the same as in Manitoba.

The Ontario Government also had its eye on the District of Keewatin. They entered into negotiations with the newly elected Federal Liberal Government. Ontario claimed the land, stating that it had originally been part of Upper Canada which, in turn became the former province of Quebec which Britain had acquired from France in 1759 after the Battle of the Plains of Abraham. The Treaty of Paris, signed on Feb 10, 1763, ceded all French possessions in North America to the English. At the time, French held territory included the Great Lakes Basin and territory "running from a corner of Pennsylvania, along the Ohio River, westward, to the Bank of the River Mississippi, and northward to the southern boundary of the Merchants Adventurers of England Trading into the Hudson's Bay". Ontario believed this old Treaty between France and England established Ontario's boundary somewhere west of the Lake of the Woods. Ontario's interpretation of the Treaty was that her boundary lay due north from the western most end of the Mississippi River. As the Mississippi River has its beginning somewhere near Wadena, Minnesota, a line drawn due north from there places Ontario's western most boundary somewhere near where it lies today, about 50 kilometers west of Rat Portage.

The Federal Government, under John A. MacDonald, believed the Treaty established that Ontario's western most boundary lay along a line drawn due north from where the Ohio River (traveling westward) meets the banks of the Mississippi River. As these two rivers meet near Cairo, Illinois, a line drawn due north from there places Ontario's most westerly boundary somewhere near the towns of Port Arthur and Fort William (currently the City of Thunder Bay). MacDonald's claim that the Ontario boundary lay near Thunder Bay was based on an 1817 court decision stemming from the trial of Charles de Reinhardt who was accused of a murder near the Dalles, a narrowing of the Winnipeg River about 19 kilometers north of Rat Portage. De Reinhardt was tried in the Criminal Court of Lower Canada (now Quebec) because it was thought that the Lake of the Woods region lay in "Indian Territory" beyond the edge of Upper Canada (now Ontario). De Reinhardt's lawyer argued that the Court had no jurisdiction in the case because the Lake of the Woods was actually part of Upper Canada. After listening to historical arguments about the frontier boundaries of Canada, Chief Justice Jonathan Sewell ruled that the western boundary of Upper Canada (Ontario) ended between Port Arthur and Fort William and that de Reinhardt was properly tried in Lower Canada.

John A. MacDonald is voted out of office a few months later. The new Liberal Government under Alexander MacKenzie declined to grant Manitoba's request.

When Alexander MacKenzie came to power, he appointed a Board of Arbitrators to settle the Ontario western boundary. MacKenzie, being openly sympathetic to Ontario's claim to the area, chose a



Board that did not contain a single representative from either Manitoba or the District of Keewatin. On August 3, 1878, the Board ruled that Ontario's boundary lay somewhere west of Rat Portage (now Kenora).

Shortly after the Board's decision was released, Alexander MacKenzie's Liberal Government was voted out of office and John A. MacDonald's Conservative Party was returned to power. When asked to ratify the Board's decision, MacDonald refused to ratify the Board's decision indicating the Board had shown an "utter disregard to the interests of the Dominion as a whole [in their decision]".

Notwithstanding that the land had not been granted to Ontario, the Ontario Government passed an "Act Respecting the Administration of Justice in the Northerly and Westerly parts of Ontario", declaring that it was "of the highest importance ... to secure the peace, order and good government of the area". Ontario would not appoint any provincial constables in the area for another three years but did complain to the Federal Government that "lawlessness abounded in the area".

While the Federal Government refused to recognize Ontario's claim, effectively voiding their Act. In May 1880, the Conservative Party pass an "Act for the Administration of Criminal Justice [in the Disputed Territory]" (43V, c36). The Act provided that persons arrested in the Disputed Territory could be tried and punished under the laws of either Ontario, Manitoba or the District of Keewatin, however the Act was only to remain in force until the end of the next Session of Parliament and no longer. In providing an automatic expiry date, it was presumed that a decision respecting the boundary question would be resolved in that time.

In 1878 in Rat Portage lots had been surveyed by the Hudson's Bay Company.

### **Keewatin Mills and Rat Portage**

In February 1879, John Mather blazed on a tree the future site of Keewatin Mills. The same year a post office is established in Keewatin Mills with John Mather as Post Master and Frank Gardner as Deputy. John Mather, who had applied for post office seals, switched seals and kept "Keewatin Mills" for the western railway stop and sent "Rat Portage" to the eastern stop. The first sawmill operation began at Keewatin Mills, owned by John Mather. A cut is made from Portage Bay to Winnipeg River for the sawmill. The sawmill owned by John Mather promises a great future for Keewatin Mills. Rat Portage has a more uncertain future.

Rideout House, is built in 1879, is located on the West side of Main Street. The fire Hall is located at the end of Second Street. The first doctor in Rat Portage, Dr. Thomas Hanson, arrives in 1879. The First library is established in Rat Portage. The Sultana vein of gold is discovered. First roundhouse with a turntable built by the CPR.

Excerpts from Pierre Berton, the National Dream, The Great Railway 1871-1881 Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited describe Rat Portage in less than glowing terms:

The one really permanent town along the half-constructed line and by far the largest was Rat Portage on Lake of the Woods. With true chamber of commerce fervour, it called itself "The Future Sarasota of America". A less subjective description was provided by a correspondent of the Winnipeg Times in the summer of 1880:

"For some time now the railway works in the vicinity of Rat Portage have been besieged by a lot of scoundrels whose only avocation seems to be gambling and trading in illicit whiskey and the state of degradation was, if anything, intensified by the appearance, in the wake of these blacklegs, of a number of the demi-monde with whom these numerous desperadoes held high carnival at all hours of the day or night"

The town itself, in the words of another observer, seemed to have been "laid out on designs made by a colony of muskrats." Shanties and tents were built or pitched wherever the owners fancied and without reference to streets or roadways. As a result, the streets were run between the houses as an afterthought so that there was nothing resembling a straight thoroughfare in town "but simply a lot of crooked, winding trails that appeared to go nowhere in particular, but to aimlessly wander about in and out of shanties, tents and clumps of brush in such a confused and irregular manner as was extremely difficult for the stranger to find his way from one given point to another, even though they might not be over 150 yards apart."

Rat Portage, with a floating population sometimes bordering on three thousand, was headquarters for Section B – the famous Contract Forty-two under the control of Manning, Shields, MacDonald and Company. The expense of the administration was borne by the contractors, who built the jail and organized the police force. All fines, however, went to the government. Between April and November of 1880, six thousand dollars was collected in fines. The convictions - highway robbery, larceny, burglary, assault, selling illicit whiskey, and prostitution - give a fair picture of Rat Portage as a frontier town.

With both the contractors and government in the law business, a state of near anarchy prevailed. At one point the company constable, a man named O'Keefe, seized four barrels of illicit liquor but instead of destroying it took it back to his rooms and proceeded to treat his many friends. He was hauled before the stipendiary magistrate who fined him for having intoxicating liquor in his possession. O'Keefe paid the fine and then as soon as the magistrate left the bench arrested him for having liquor in his possession, an act he was perfectly entitled to perform since he was himself a policeman. When he popped the protesting magistrate in jail and when that official asked for an immediate hearing O'Keefe denied it to him, declaring that he meant to keep him behind bars for twenty-four hours because the magistrate "had treated him like a dog and now it was his turn" With the only magistrate in jail, another had to be appointed to act in his place; when this was done the hearing was held and the new magistrate fined the old magistrate one hundred dollars. In the end the local government remitted both fines. (Pages 295-6)...

[In] 1880 it was the roughest town in Canada, the headquarters of the illegal liquor industry with eight hundred gallons pouring into town every month, hidden in oatmeal and bean sacks as disguised as barrels of coal oil. It was figured that there was a whisky peddler for every thirty residents, so profitable was the business. "Forty-Rods" – so called because it was claimed it could fell a man at that distance – sold for the same price as champagne in Winnipeg from illegal saloons operating on the islands that speckled the Lake of the Woods.

Here on a smaller and more primitive scale was foreshadowed all the anarchy of a later prohibition period in the United States - the same gun-toting mobsters, corrupt officials, and harassed police. One bloody incident in the summer of 1880, involving two whiskey traders named Dan Harrington and Jim Mitchell, had all the elements of a western gun battle.

Harrington and Mitchell had in 1878 worked on a steam drift for Joseph Whitehead but they soon abandoned that toil for the more lucrative trade. In the winter of 1879-80, a warrant was issued for their arrest at Cross Lake, but when the constable tried to serve it, the two beat him brutally and escaped to Rat Portage where the stipendiary magistrate, F.W. Bent was in their pay. The two men gave themselves up to Bent who fined them a token fifty dollars and then gave them a written discharge to prevent further interference from officials at Cross Lake. The magistrate also returned to Harrington a revolver that had been confiscated.

[Harrington was shot in a gun battle with a Company constable within a week and Magistrate Bent was removed within another week and the Winnipeg Times reported] "he is now actively engaged in the illicit traffic of selling crooked whisky himself. He has now become an active ally [with] those

whom he was at one time to be at variance in a legal sense, whose pernicious vices he was expected to exterminate but did not.”

It was these reports, seeping back to Winnipeg, that persuaded Archbishop Taches of St Boniface that the construction workers needed a permanent chaplain; after all, a third of them were French-Canadian Catholics from Manitoba. He selected for the task the most notable of all the voyageur priests, Father Albert Lacombe, a notable nomadic Oblate who had spent most of his adult life among the Cree and Blackfoot of the far West. In November 1880, Lacombe set out reluctantly for his new parish. [He arrived at Rat Portage on November 2 1880.]

Father Lacombe was a homely man whose long silver locks never seemed to be combed; but benevolence shone from his features. He did not want to be a railway chaplain. He would much rather have stayed among his beloved Indians than have entered the Sodom of Rat Portage, but he went where his church directed. On the very first day of his new assignment, he was scandalized by the language of the navvies [men who build railways]. His first sermon, preached in a boxcar chapel, was an attack on blasphemy.

“It seems to me what I have said is of a nature to bring reflection to these terrible blasphemers, who have a vile language all their own – with a dictionary and grammar which belongs to no one but them selves,” confided to his diary. “This habit of theirs is -diabolical!”

But there was worse to come: two weeks after he arrived in rat Portage there was “a disorderly and scandalous ball” and all night long the sounds of drunken revelry dinned into the ears of the unworldly priest from the plains. Lacombe even tried to reason with the women who sponsored the dances. He was rewarded with jeers and insults.

“My God”, he wrote in his diary, “have pity on this little village where so many crimes are committed every day”. He realized that he was helpless to stop all the evil that met his eyes and so settled at last for prayer “to arrest the divine anger” ... “My God, I offer you my sufferings” “My God”, he wrote in his diary, “have pity on this little village where so many crimes are committed every day”. He realized that he was helpless to stop all the evil that met his eyes and so settled at last for prayer “to arrest the divine anger” ... “My God, I offer you my sufferings” ... Please send me back to my missions”

In 1881. During the past year, the first newspaper in Rat Portage is printed. It is called The North Star.

### **Hudson Bay**

In 1881 Chief Trader Alexander Matheson is at the helm of the Hudson Bay Post located on Main St. Early the next year the Company will move into another building alongside and then in 1886 will build a stone building after this building is damaged by a fire which burns down the Rideout House.

On February 15, 1881, the contract to build the Canadian Pacific finally received royal assent. The next day the Canadian Pacific Railway was incorporated.

The Western line of the CPR between Rat Portage and Winnipeg was completed by 1882. The First railway station had been built in Rat Portage. The First Roman Catholic Church had been built in Rat Portage. The Eastern line of CPR from Thunder Bay completed in 1883.

On July 22, 1882, as a result of a petition to the Manitoba Government, the town of Rat Portage was incorporated under the laws of Manitoba. The incorporation of the town gave the municipality the power to raise money, through the sale of business licences, to make local improvements and hire town officials. On September 25, 1882, the Manitoba Government approved a request from the new

Mayor and Town Council of Rat Portage, requesting that the provisions of the Manitoba Intoxicating Liquor Act, regarding the sale of liquor licenses, be extended to their town.

In 1883 polling took place in Rat Portage to elect members to the Provincial Legislatures of both Manitoba and Ontario.

First municipal government is formed in Rat Portage and W.L. Baker is the first mayor.

In September 1883, the first school in Rat Portage opens in a 50th foot log school house on Hennepen Lane behind what in 2013 was the Salvation Army Citadel, the playground where the children played, presently in 2013 is occupied by Italian Restaurante. The School teacher was Janet Clarissa Crooks "Miss Crooks" to the students, until she marries Mr. Pirrie Thompson in April 1886. She is joined in the spring of 1886 by the second teacher Melvin Seegmiller who teach a total of 70 students.

## **The Boundary Dispute**

National Dream:

The situation got more complicated when Manitoba's boundaries extended in 1881 and a dispute arose between that province and Ontario over the jurisdiction in which Rat Portage lay. Both Provinces built jails and appointed magistrates and constables. So did the federal government. For a time, it was more dangerous to be a policeman than a law breaker. Since there were several sets of liquor laws, the policemen began arresting each other until both jails were full of opposing lawmen. Ontario constables were kidnapped and shipped to Winnipeg. The Manitoba jail was set on fire. Anyone who wished could become a constable, and free whisky and special pay were offered to those who dared to take the job. For a time, Rat Portage witnessed the spectacle of some of its toughest characters- men who bore such nicknames as Black Jim Reddy of Montana, Charlie Bull-Pup, Boston O'Brien the Slugger, Mulligan the Hardest case- actually acting as upholders of the law, or their version of the law. The situation came to a head in 1883 when both provinces called elections on the same day and two premiers campaigned in Rat Portage with such persistence that the Premier of Manitoba actually got more votes than were registered voters. The confusion did not end until 1884 when Rat portage was officially declared to be part of Ontario.

In 1884 the Manitoba Ontario Boundary Case decided in favour of Ontario. Ottawa rules in favour of Manitoba in the Ontario Manitoba Boundaries dispute. This however would not be the last word.

When the Province of Ontario was established in 1867, no defined boundary separated it from the Hudson's Bay Company lands to the north and west. Canada's acquisition of these lands in 1869 raised the issue of provincial and federal jurisdictions and the ensuing dispute was submitted to arbitration. In 1878 a decision favourable to Ontario placed the western boundary at its present location and the northern at the English and Albany Rivers. The federal government rejected the award and in 1881 involved Manitoba by ruling that its eastern limit would be Ontario's still undetermined western boundary. The dispute was settled in 1884 when the Privy Council in Britain upheld the 1878 award.

Excerpt from <http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/pageant/01/boundaries.shtml> Manitoba Historical Society:

While this settlement was largely brought about in a friendly manner there were some lively disputes over the problem as to whether Rat Portage, now Kenora, was situated in Manitoba or in Ontario. Each of the provinces proclaimed its laws in force in the district and each built a court house and a jail and appointed magistrates and constables. Rat Portage, because of the hundreds of men in the district constructing the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway, was a wild and wide-open town. Prisoners committed to jail by one province were released by the

other; constables who made arrests were themselves arrested by constables of the other province; the Manitoba jail was stormed and burned and Manitoba's Premier Norquay, along with a force of police, travelled by special train to arrest those responsible and to bring them back to jail in Winnipeg; and when each province held an election on the same day Manitoba sent a militia force to Rat Portage to protect its polls. Before the disputed district was given by order of the Canadian Government to Ontario in 1884, Rat Portage had the most, but undoubtedly the worst, government ever known in Canada.

The first Presbyterian Church in Kenora was Knox Presbyterian Church was on the North side of First St. North, just east of Matherson St. in 1884.

Services for Anglicans begin in Rat Portage. The first church was built in 1884 across the street from the Catholic Notra Dame on 1 St. North. Rev. Arthur Stunden was the first resident Clergyman. The church burned down in 1892 and a new Church build on West side of Main Street South.

In 1886, the first ocean to ocean train came through Rat Portage. in 1887 Norman threatened to withdraw from the municipality of Rat Portage, citing taxation without adequate return as the reason.

Rollerway Dam built at the western outlet to the Winnipeg River.

Norman's first school was built.

In 1888, Lake of the Woods Milling Company began production of flour.

Keewatin lots were surveyed by the Keewatin Lumber and Manufacturing Company. In 1889, Kenora officially became part of the province of Ontario in 1889. In 1889 the Rat Portage Curling Club is formed. In 1890, Rat Portage Rowing Club formed.

In 1891, First Rat Portage Regatta was held. Thistles hockey team organized. Census of Canada shows Rat Portage 's population as 1,806. In 1892, Rat Portage dam and powerhouse built on eastern outlet to Winnipeg River.

The first telephone system was operated in Rat Portage by the Citizen's Telephone and Electric Light Company. Services for Anglicans begin in Rat Portage. The first church was built in 1884 across the street from the Catholic Notra Dame on 1 St. North. Rev. Arthur Stunden was the first resident Clergyman. The church burned down in 1892 and a new Church build on West side of Main Street South.

In 1892 the Township of Norman was founded (Amalgamated in 1905 with Rat Portage). In 1893 Western Algoma Brick Company was established. The Local Humane Society organized. The Norman Dam was built by the Keewatin Lumbering and Manufacturing Company.

In 1894 Jaffray is a township. It will amalgamate with Mellick (1902) in 1908, and amalgamated into Kenora in 2000. The same year Rat Portage receives a visit from Sir Wilfred Laurier.

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