Flin Flon
In Colour, Prose and Poetry
Commemorating the 75th anniversary of the incorporation of Flin Flon

THE HEADFRAME OVER THE MAIN SHAFT HOLDS THE TOP GEAR FOR THE ORE SKIPS AND MAN HOIST

Introduction

On a trip to Vancouver in October, 2007, I was visiting an old friend from Flin Flon, Blair Harvey, and as two former Flin Flonners are wont to do, we reminisced on what a wonderful town in which we were privileged to grow up. In the process he showed me an article that had been written about Flin Flon in the June, 1938 issue of *Fortune.* One thing led to another and I decided to put together this small commemorative book.

The first section is a reprint of the article form *Fortune* magazine. It provides incredible details of the early start to Flin Flon including its early trials and pioneers.

Fortune sent an artist with their editor, a water colourist, Hardie Gramatky, who was becoming well known as an illustrator among other talents. He painted a number of pictures which appeared in the magazine and are reproduced here with the family's kind permission.

The booklet also includes articles on C. V. Whitney and Hardie Gramatky. Since C. V. Whitney was the primary financier and without whose money (or rather his father's money) Flin Flon might not have got off the ground, at least when it did, at the beginning of the depression. As everyone knows, Whitney Forum is named after this gentleman. On a personal note, I lived the first 18 years of my life on Whitney Street and summers four years after that. Annual visits for many years were also spent at 256 Whitney Street.

The book ends with an article on Tom Creighton, a short story by my daughter, Lesley Kinsley, *The Night Bus to Flin Flon* and Enid Delgatty Runtland's wonderful poem about Flin Flon, *The Cranberry Tree.*

Brian Kinsley. 2008

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By

Charlie Murphy

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by

Hardie Gramatky

FLIN FLON is the fantastic name of the place. It lies on the raw edge of the Canadian subarctic frontier and is, of course, a mining town-Hudson Bay Mining. Quickest way to get there is to fly from Winnipeg, as some do, although this means chartering a plane. Otherwise you can take one of the Canadian National's thrice weekly northbound trains out of Winnipeg, a twenty -five-hour trip slanting 450 miles across Manitoba. The wheat fields of the prairie soon give way to the knobby hills, the lakes, the wind-warped jack pines, and the tamarack of the bush country. Early in the morning the train slides into the formless huddle of houses on the banks of the Saskatchewan River, called The Pas, which considers itself "the gateway of the north country." Just beyond, the track takes two forks. One, the Hudson Bay Line, veers northeast to Churchill on Hudson Bay, 500 miles away. The other takes an eighty-seven mile jog northwest, depositing you presently at the foot of Main Street, Flin Flon, at Latitude 54° 40" north. And here, smack against the Saskatchewan boundary and 820 miles south of the Arctic Circle, is the end of steel.

Outwardly the town is a little of Bret Harte, a little of Jack London. Stony hills all around, and flimsy-looking houses propped on the slopes. False-front stores on the main street. "Pay-day specials" advertised in the shops. A trapper's dog team hurtling out of a side lot, with the driver cursing and the dogs wild under the cut of the long whip. Temperatures of fifty below during the long winter; muskeg bogs and hordes of flies m the summer; and oceans of mud during the spring breakup, when the frost goes out of the slag and rock ballasting the streets. Inevitably the best eating place is called the Northern Light Cafe; inevitably, too, it is run by a Chinaman. And inevitably the richest man in town is one who arrived, a short ten years ago, with a case of whiskey on his back, a couple of decks of cards, and a gambler's luck.

There isn't much to Flin Flon. It is just a boisterous shout in a wilderness. What there is constitutes the fourth-largest community in Manitoba-four hotels, two weekly newspapers, a radio station, two banks, six churches, two airplanes for charter, a stockbroker's office, about 180 automobiles, a $20,000 hockey rink seating about 1,300 persons, and the largest Elks' lodge in Canada. The place fairly crawls with children. For most citizens the worst dissipation is an ice-cream soda after the movies, beer and traveling salesman jokes at the monthly Canadian Legion smokers, and speculating in penny mining stocks. Sergeant John Joseph Molloy Royal Canadian Mounted Police keeps the peace with four constables and an Indian guide, and reports contentedly that there have been only two shop entries, no rape cases, bank robberies, or murders since the town was formally established in 1933.

As for the name, probably not one Flin Flonner in a hundred could tell how it came to be. Strangers, thinking it must be French, pronounce Flin Flon in a way to make inhabitants flinch. Actually it is the nickname of one Josiah Flintabbatey Flonatin, Esq., who was the central character in an old English penny shocker called *The Sunless City*. The book describes how the gentleman, employing a submarine, penetrated to the bowels of the earth through a mysterious cave at the edge of a bottomless lake, and discovered a Mountain of Gold. Years ago a prospector, Tom Creighton by name, chanced upon the discarded remnants of the novel along a

portage, far north of The Pas, and brooded over it for a whole winter. And when he found where Flin Flon now stands, an outcropping of ore on the edge of a lake, with a cave near by, he decided, "Well, that must be old Flintabbatey Flonatin's hole."

That very hole has since been swallowed up by the workings of the Hudson Bay Mining & Smelting Co., Ltd., whose symbol HBM flashed across the Big Board in New York for the first time late last March. Like all frontier towns, Flin Flon is a one-industry town, and its one industry is Hudson Bay. That industry diffuses a monthly payroll of $250,000 into an economy centered on 2,200 families, all but a few of which have at least one member among the Hudson Bay's 1,650 workers. It is represented by a massive geometry of buildings on the east shore of the lake; by the mining going on a third of a mile deep in the earth's crust; by the smoke from the smelter stack, which the winds may lay over seventy-five miles of virgin bush; and finally by an $8, 000,000 hydroelectric plant (now being increased to 82,500 horse-power) about sixty miles to the north, which generates light and power for the mine and town. From a deep-plunging vein, which lies about half in Manitoba, half in Saskatchewan and contains ore reserves estimated at approximately 27,000,000 tons, Hudson Bay last year mined almost 1,650,000 tons of ore, from which it produced almost 57,700,000 pounds of copper. And 65,000,000 pounds of zinc. And 1,633,,000 ounces of silver. And 133,600 ounces of gold. Plus considerable amounts of three other rare metals--cadmium, selenium, and tellurium, variously useful in pigments and alloys.

For these metals Hudson Bay last year reported gross revenues of slightly more than $17,000,000 (including $280,000 miscellaneous income). And net profits of nearly $7,500,000 (before depletion) or twice those of 1936. The stock which sold as high as 42 on the Curb last year, opened on the Big Board at 23, was presently driven below 21, in April reached a year's high of 28 3/4s. In 1932 you could have bought HBM for seventy-five cents a share.

Hudson Bay the corporation is less than eleven years old, and as a metal producer, less than eight. It has climbed into second place among Canada's zinc producers, behind Consolidated Mining & Smelting; third in copper, after International Nickel and Noranda; third in silver, after Consolidated and International Nickel; and seventh in gold, ranking far below Lake Shore and Hollinger. The company's gross has increased 215 per cent since the first year's business of $5,400,000 in income; and its net, after a lumped deficit of about $600,000 for that year and the following, has risen even more sharply. In gross metal sales only three Canadian producers outrank Hudson Bay. First comes International Nickel, which does not publish gross sales but whose net profit, last year, was over $50,000,000. Then Consolidated, with metal sales of $40,500,000, and Noranda, with nearly $20,000,000.

A tale without a villain

Who created this money-maker? Who built this town? The names are spectacular names. Most spectacular of all is that of the late Harry Payne Whitney. Everything started with him, his engineers, and his millions. Then there is the Newmont Mining Corp. of New York, a mining development company founded by the late William

Boyce Thompson, which owns pieces of Kennecott, Phelps Dodge, Magma Copper, Rhodesian Anglo American. Then there is a group of Canadian capitalists represented by the Mining Corp. of Canada, Ltd. Even J. P. Morgan was m the game for a while, having underwritten a $5,000,000 convertible bond issue besides lending Hudson Bay $1,200,000 when it needed cash, debts since discharged.

What percentage of Hudson Bay is now owned by these men individually would be hard to say. Originally they owned all of Hudson Bay. Newmont retains about 10 per cent of the roughly 2,760,000 shares of outstanding no-par common stock; Mining Corp has about 3 per cent; and the Whitney family owns between 18 and 20 per cent. Young Cornelius Vanderbilt (Sonny) Whitney is Chairman of the Board. There is a group of men obviously accustomed to success, and success has come to them again in the shape of a corporation returning, last year, 44 per cent on sales. It did not come easily.

Conceived in good times, the newborn company slogged into the depression in its first productive year. Copper was sliding toward an all-time low of less than five cents a pound, and zinc to less than two and a half cents. Mr. Whitney and his friends sank $27,500,000 in Hudson Bay before a penny started back their way. Perhaps never before had a comparable sum been dropped all in a lump in an untried mine. Early in the century Haggin, the elder Morgan, Frick, Phoebe Hearst, and a few others put close to $25,000,000 into Gerro de Pasco. But they had little idea of what they were in for, And the money went out by spurts over a period of ten years. Whereas the the Hudson Bay crowd knew. There is the difference.

Although situated, in the great Canadian shield, a formation of Pre -Cambrian rock that curves in a great U across Canada, the Flin Flon ore body is anything but high grade. The average assay for the deposit shows only 2.10 per cent copper, 3.86 per cent zinc, 0.08 ounces of gold per ton, and 1.28 ounces of silver. Or, put another way, the average ton of ore contains (at London prices in April) about $4.00. worth of copper, $2.35 worth of zinc, $2.80 worth of gold, fifty-five cents' worth of silver, plus about twenty-five cents worth of cadmium, selenium, and tellurium. Total, about $10 a ton. But metallurgy can recover economically only 80 per cent of the copper, 44 per cent of the zinc, 65 per cent of the silver, and 75 per cent of the gold. The recoverable values, then, stand today nearer $7 a ton. Hudson Bay can afford to work such low-grade ore only because, by developing cheap waterpower and big tonnages, it became one of the world's low-cost producers. At the present milling rate of 1,643,000 tons a year, the operating costs (before depreciation) run about $3.50 a ton, sometimes considerably less; and the total costs, $5.80. By any standards Hudson Bay is a classic example of creativeness. North of Fifty-four, money and brains and manpower have created industry where none existed before. And in so doing manned one of the last big foreign outposts set up by U. S. capital before the depression and fear of foreign political uncertainties checked such ravings. The mining world can exhibit few new projects of comparable size for the last fifteen years. Necessarily almost, the story of Hudson Bay is a story of heroes - from the prospector who found the outcrop twenty-four years ago, to young Sonny Whitney, not long out of Yale, who cut his capitalist's eyeteeth on the option.

Tom Creighton's Strike

Long before the Whitney millions started to penetrate the bush, the men in possession of the original strike had become discouraged and sold out. One was Jack Hammell, who now controls the Pickle Crow gold mine and other properties, then a flamboyant promoter who had breezed into Canadian mining via the professional prize ring. He had put up part of the original grubstake. Another was the Tom Creighton who found the mine and named Flin Flon. In 1914, with John Mosher and a few other trapper prospectors, Creighton wintered at Phantom Lake, about three miles southwest of what is now Flin Flon. On this particular trip he was looking for "fur sign." A long way out, he broke through rotten ice. Anxious to get back to camp before he froze to death, he took a short cut that brought him to a lake he had never seen before.

Running out from the southeast shore was a 600-foot peninsula. Moose tracks caused Creighton, who was short of meat, to veer that way. He never saw the moose, but he did see, in a pothole, the brass yellow glints of chalcopyrite. Deep snows concealed whatever else was to be seen. Besides, Creighton was too cold to linger. In the summer he went back, this time with Partner Mosher. The ground was bare, and chunks of brown rock, iron gossan, lay about. At one point a heavy sulfide ore had outcropped. This had been partly oxidized, and the deposit of copper, which had been pushed to the surface geologic ages ago, had leached away. But a reddish streak of iron outcrop running along the reef hinted at the vein's extent; and there was evidence of gold.

By luck, Jack Hammell was summering at nearby Beaver Lake. Creighton hurried over with samples. And Hammell, in turn, was so impressed that he set off to consult with his partners in the grubstake, two Toronto lawyers and brothers, Alex and Dave Fasken. For guaranteeing food, gear, recording fees, they shared, with Hammell, a 50 per cent interest in whatever the prospectors found.

El Dorado rejected

For six years Hammell labored to find capital. Hayden, Stone took an option in 1915, spent $50,000 trying to develop the ore body, but let the option expire. E. P. Earle, New York financier, picked it up and then withdrew with smarting fingers. William Boyce Thompson of the miraculous touch tried in his turn, only to decide, after spending $350,000, that the ore wasn't rich enough to pay its way. So in 1921 Hammell and Creighton sold out to the Mining Corp. Only the Fasken brothers, whose interest then amounted to 32 per cent of the property, continued to hold on. By the time Mining Corp. got through experimenting, close to $1,000,000 had been spent-and lost-on the Flin Flon ore body.

One fact after another discouraged the early promoters. Flin Flon's remoteness was as disheartening as any. The nearest railhead was at The Pas, only seventy-five miles away in an airline but about 150 miles as the trail went, following the lakes and portages. Under good conditions you might make the trip in four days or less; under bad conditions you might take ten days or more; and there would be periods, during the breakup and freeze-up seasons, when you could

not travel at all. But more discouraging than the geography was the metallurgy.

Some 25,000 feet of drilling had been done, two shafts had been sunk, and various crosscutting and rifting had been carried on. They revealed an ore body at least 2,600 feet long, 900 feet deep, and (counting "waste horses" or un-mineralized rock) 450 feet wide at the center-a tremendous body. The assays showed, besides 1.71 per cent copper, 3.45 per cent zinc, 0.04 ounces per ton gold, and 1.06 ounces per ton silver, traces of a wide variety of minerals: selenium, tellurium, cadmium, lead, arsenic, cobalt, antimony. In short, a little bit of everything, but in little bits. That was the trouble.

The ore was divided into two types: disseminated and solid sulfide. The disseminated ore, richer in copper but poorer in precious metals, could be concentrated fairly easily and treated in the reverberatory furnace. But the solid sulfide, which was a mixture of pyrite, chalcopyrite, and sphalerite, and comprised 80 per cent of the ore body, defied economical treatment, for the reason that the existing techniques could not make a clean separation of such fractional quantities of zinc and copper. Nobody knew what to do about the zinc. Indeed, the first exploiters proposed to throw it away. As for the pyritic smelting of the copper concentrates, which this kind of ore would normally call for, the cost of freighting coal and coke to Flin Flon, together with the scarcity of local fluxing materials, precluded any chance of economical treatment.

This was the state of Creighton's strike when Bill Koerner, engineer for Mining Corp., wrote to his friend Erich Weber, complaining that he had 1 8,000,000 tons of ore in sight, "and I don't know what to do with it." Weber, now assistant secretary and treasurer of Hudson Bay, was then with Magma Copper. He took the letter to a Magma executive, Alexander J. McNab, now a Hudson Bay Vice President. And one of J. McNab's close friends was his present boss, "Rock" Channing, who is endowed with a mining man's catlike curiosity.

Roscoe Henry Channing has lived a more exciting life than most professional explorers. A Princeton halfback during the days of the immortal "Snake" Ames, Edgar Allan Poe, and Hector Cowan, he made Walter Camp's first all-America in 1889. As a mining man he has come from mucker up through foreman, superintendent, General Manager, to President. He has worked on the Mesabi and the Comstock Lode. Years ago, when the Gerro de Pasco syndicate feared losing its shirt, H. C. Frick dispatched him to high Peru as General Manager, paying him $60,000 a year plus a percentage. That story, however, belongs to the past, and, as with all stories about himself, Channing shrinks from having it told. To hear him talk, one might think he never did anything but sit in his office and smoke a pipe.

The Whitney safari

When the Flin Flon ore body was first brought to his attention Channing had charge of all of Harry Payne Whitney's mining properties, including mercury mines in California, lead-zinc mines in Oklahoma, gold mines in Colorado, California, and Nevada, and gold prospects in Siberia. Among these was a research company called Complex Ores Recoveries, partly staffed by faculty men from

the Colorado School of Mines. It had been formed to study processes for treating complex sulfide ores, and so the Flin Flon ores seemed apropos. Moreover, scattered among the Whitney mines were men who had dealt with all manner of problems. Hard, resolute men like Channing's chief engineer, Robert E. Phelan, who had been with him for fifteen years. And Waldron A. (Baldy) Green, who had mined tin at 17,000 feet in the Bolivian Andes. And S. P. Lowe, a crack millman, who had once run the cyanide plant at the old Tonopah Belmont. And young Parnell Caulfield, a wartime pilot, then a foreman on the Comstock and Maurice Roche, superintendent at Idaho Maryland. And Henry Koenig, a laboratory man, now dead, who had worked under Madame Curie. There were these, and others; and for each of them Channing has an affection and trust that leaven the stern realities of mining.

Harry Payne Whitney said to Rock Channing: "Go ahead. See what there is in it." As for Sonny Whitney, he had once worked under Channing as a sampler on the Comstock, and his father thought it was time he got some practice in managing the fortune he would inherit. Sonny was sent to Toronto, in1925, to secure a two-year option from the Mining Corp., together with drill records and assays covering the earlier work. That same summer Phelan and Baldy Green were sent to Flin Flon to make certain no mistake had been made in the tonnage and assays, and to locate a source of hydroelectric power. Phelan's investigations confirmed the tonnage estimates, and the values promised to run even higher than indicated. In the search for a power site he was successful beyond expectation. Pushing toward the Churchill River, he heard one day the pounding of white water. At the place now called Island Falls, about 500 miles above the river's mouth at Hudson Bay, he came upon the rapids that promised what he needed.

The next job was to find out whether the laboratory men could work out an economical treatment for the ore. Phelan and Green freighted fifty tons of ore by barge to The Pas, where it was entrained for Denver. Phelan believed that satisfactory concentrates of copper and zinc could be obtained by flotation, the tailings could be cyanided for gold and silver, and the rest of the operation would conform to standard practice. That is the copper concentrate, could be smelted, and the zinc concentrates treated by roasting and electrolysis. Phelan had as many as twenty men on research in Denver. Generally speaking, the theory was proved, but it took thousands of tests, 300 tons more of Flin Flon ore, two years' work, and $175,000 of Mr. Whitney's money.

Prelude to an Investment

Only a student of metallurgy would have the patience to follow the laboratory steps. For the lay reader it is enough to know that Phelan's research coincided with new refinements in the art of fine grinding and differential flotation. Flotation is done in water-filled tanks churned by paddle wheels and air under pressure, and doctored by oily substances called reagents. The reagents stick to the valuable metals in the ground ore or pulp; the air bubbles lug them to the surface, where they form an over-flowing froth. New organic chemicals like xanthate improved the process. With these and other reagents Phelan's technicians produced, first, a satisfactory copper concentrate; and then, with the tailings from the copper flotation

cells, a satisfactory zinc concentrate.

Most people think of mining as reckless, blindfolded speculation; but the care and preparation brought to bear on the problem were in accordance with the best practices of U.S. capital. First Phelan's men tested the recovery process on a laboratory scale. Then they went a little bit further, built a two-ton mill (daily capacity) in the back of the laboratory, and struggled with that for four months. Then they went further still, putting up a thirty-ton pilot mill at Flin Flon. That way they were able to work with freshly broken ore, test the local water available for flotation, and prove up on a semi- commercial basis the most uncertain stage of the treatment. Baldy Green slaved through the fall and winter of 1926-27 to put the mill up; by this time nearly $1,000,000 had been spent on preliminaries.

Even then the difficulties kept piling up. For days the pilot mill would run sweetly. Then, for no good reason, the flotation circuits would run wild, overflowing the mill with an uncontrollable, gummy froth. This was due, they discovered, to talc (magnesium silicate) in the ore. That problem nearly drove them out of their minds before they hit upon a way of floating off the talc ahead of the copper. By November, 1927, just before the option was due to expire, Channing knew that the ore could be mined and treated at a profit. Provided he could have a big enough mill-one capable of treating at least 3,000 tons of ore a day plus a smelter and zinc plant. On the basis of fifty-year price averages (fifteen-cent copper, six-cent zinc, gold at $20.67 an ounce, and silver at fifty cents) Charming reckoned he could make a profit, before depreciation and depletion, of $3.60 a ton. At a production of 3,000 tons a day, this meant that the 18,000, 000 tons of ore would last about seventeen years and yield a total profit of $63,000,000, which would pay back the original $27,500,000 capital plus about 130 per cent. So the Flin Flon ore body looked like a safe bet, but was anything but a bonanza as mining potentialities are calculated. But Channing was counting also that more ore would be found below the 900-foot level. And that if new strikes were made in the neighborhood, as seemed likely, he could expect to do custom smelting on the side and pay off some of the smelter investment. Which was what happened. The indicated` ore reserves have doubled. And a copper-zinc deposit, now worked by the Sherritt-Gordon interests, was found about forty-five miles north- west of Flin Flon. For treating upwards of 160 tons of Sherritt- Gordon's concentrates daily Hudson Bay is paid around $6 per ton.

"I'm willing to go along," Mr. Whitney said-that simply. Invited to come in, Newmont took a 35 per cent interest, Mining Corp. 15 per cent, and Mr. Whitney the rest. Hudson Bay was incorporated in December, 1927. The Manitoba and Saskatchewan governments, anxious to encourage new capital, discharged the company from liability for smelter-smoke damage over a forty-mile radius. Manitoba guaranteed up to $3,000,000 in bonds to finance a railroad extension from The Pas. Both the Dominion Government and Manitoba forfeited all royalties up to 1947; Saskatchewan, however, wouldn't do so, and collects a royalty rising to five cents per ton of ore. Considering the export taxes and other assessments levied by many countries upon foreign capital exploiting their natural resources, the arrangement is certainly a reasonable one. (Hudson Bay's income taxes, Dominion and provincial tax last year totaled $1,150,000. The Dominion tax is 15 per cent of net income.

(The Manitoba tax has just been raised from 3 to 10 per cent.)

The Railroad Goes Through

In the cold and gales of January, the railroad gangs, assembled at The Pas, started pushing steel toward Flin Flon, laying the rails across the frozen muskeg and then, before the surface thawed, returning to drop ballast underneath lest the track sink out of sight. A horrible uncertainty centered around the power plant at Island Falls, fifty-nine miles past Flin Flon. That would require about 35,000 tons of cement, steel rails, generators, turbines, structural steel, and lumber. The only feasible route then, as now, was over the frozen lakes and portages in the wintertime. But if anything went wrong-if the railroad failed to reach Flin Flon in time to deliver supplies for the winter hauling; or if, for example, the fourteen-ton generator shaft had the bad luck to plunge through rotten ice on the way-then the power plant, and with it the whole operation, would be delayed for a costly year.

Nothing went wrong. The railroad pushed into Flin Flon that fall. All that winter and the next, and into the second fall, some 1,700 men worked as under a lash.. The first winter a fleet of 100-horsepower tractors hauled 23,000 tons to Island Falls, with the driving crews taking turns sleeping in a caboose behind the cargo sleds. A transmission line was strung over 356 double-circuit steel towers. Cold did queer things to machinery, causing gears and pinions and bolts to snap off. One summer a forest fire swerved between Island Falls and Flin Flon, missing the power plant by a few yards. "But everything climaxed at the right time," Green remembers. In June, 1930, the last rivet went into the headframe.

That same month the switches were thrown at Island Falls. The smelter wasn't ready, but the first trial batch of ore soon tumbled into the gyratory crusher. By October the copper smelter and the zinc plant were going, and yellow smoke was fuming over the lip of the stack. "When I looked up and saw that," Roche recalls, "it seemed as if we'd all been working a hundred years."

Strife in paradise

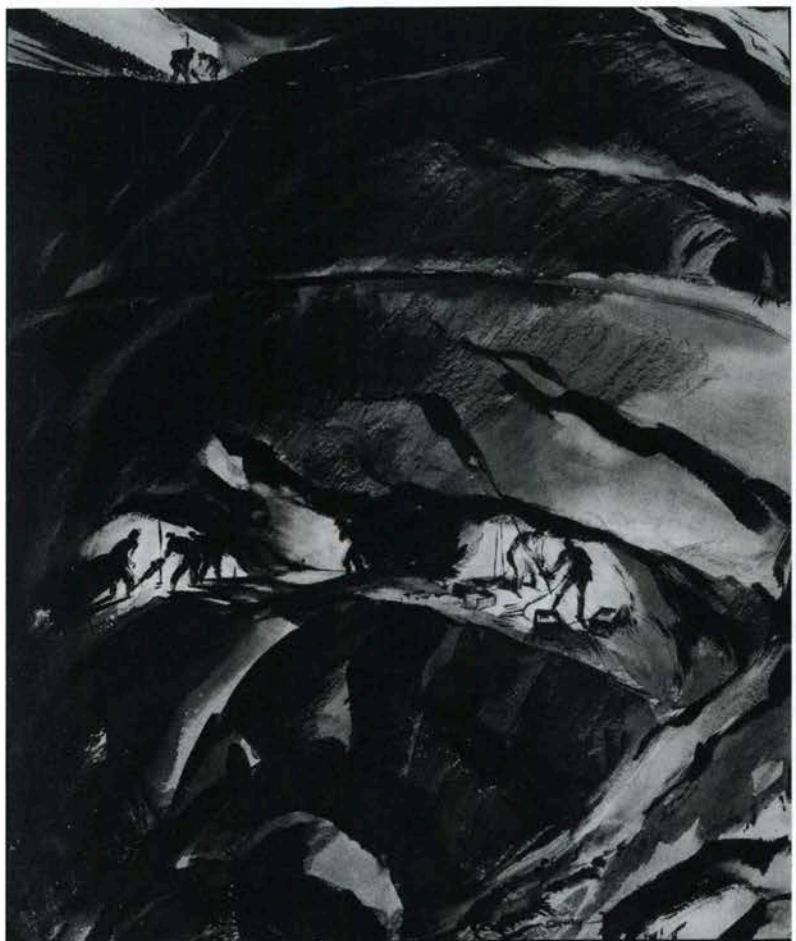
Practically all of the key men who forged Hudson Bay are still in Flin Flon. Most of them have families and live on the same street, pay $20 a month and get light, heat, and water. They golf in the summer and curl and skate in the winter. But you have the impression of men whose sensitivity has been dulled by the physical ordeal of building Flin Flon. As Green puts it heavily, "Nothing very much happens up here." His standards become comprehensible as soon as you realize that a mining man's thoughts turn on tonnages, and that so long as they are maintained nothing else matters. From about 1,100,000 tons mined in 1931, production has risen to last year's record output of 1,650,000 tons. The mine now produces 5,200 tons a day, six days a week, an output that the mill is seven days digesting.

West of the plant, an enormous wound in the earth, is the open pit from which almost 5,400,000 tons of ore have already been mined. This hole, which is 3,000 feet long, 500 feet wide at its widest point, and more than 250 feet deep, has swallowed up the reef that Creighton found. Two electrical shovels are still gnawing at the bottom; and over 800 tons of ore go daily to the crusher. However, the bulk of Hudson Bay's ore, 81 per cent of the total, now comes from the underground mine. The underground mine is worked by

two shafts. The main shaft, used as a hoisting shaft for ore and men, is sunk in the hanging wall to the 2,210 foot level. The other shaft, on the opposite or footwall side of the vein, has been driven to 2,380 feet. These shafts are connected at eight levels - 390, 650, 900, 1,170, 1,430, 1,690, 1,950, and 2,210 feet - of which five are also main haulage levels. Between the main haulage levels the ore is developed in blocks 520 feel. long. Forty-foot pilfers are left at each end; and in between ore is gouged out, leaving stopes or chambers that are cathedral-like. Electric locomotives haul the ore trains to the tipples, and the ore pockets installed below the haulage levels are equipped with air-operated chutes. These discharge directly into skips, like huge buckets, operated in balance by an 18,000 horse-power hoist, and the hoist lifts the ore to the crusher at 2,150 feet a minute.

So nothing very much happens up here

But in 1934 something did, something that stopped the smooth flow of tonnage and cost 130,000 tons of production. Labor trouble was the cause, and labor had been a trouble from the beginning, if only because of the want of it. Hudson Bay had grabbed 600 men from the railroad gangs as soon as steel reached Flin Flon. More hundreds were recruited from the Manitoba and Saskatchewan wheat fields. Others just drifted in. The majority were Canadians. But there was also a strong injection of Yugoslavs, Checks, Poles, Norwegians, even an Islander or two. This was inexperienced labor. Baldy Green remembers how he used to go below ground and "spit" (light) fuses for the new men. The men were capable of such reckless stunts as sliding down the greased hoist cable until the remains of one lad were scraped from the shaft at the



Painting for Fortune by Howlie Greenaway

THIS IS A HUDSON BAY STOPE AT THE 1,690-FOOT LEVEL. IT WILL YIELD UP TO 1,000,000 TONS OF ORE

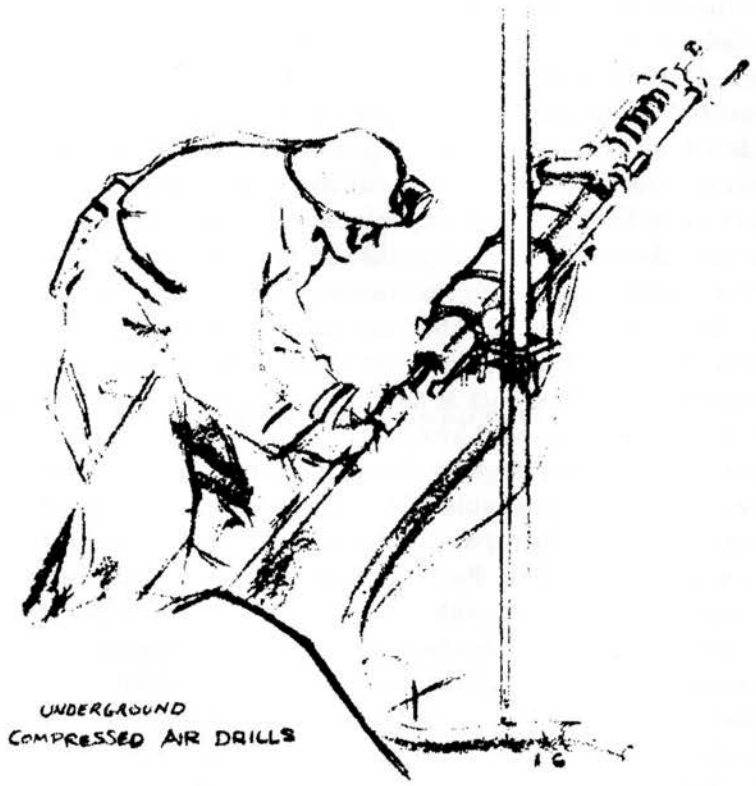
650-foot level. But around May, 1934, Green became aware that his 1,250 workers were capable of other things. Mysterious meetings were being held. Strangers were haranguing townsfolk on the working conditions in the mine. Green abruptly discharged a few men he classed as "agitators". Then one June morning a delegation barged into his office and slapped clown on his desk a letter demanding more pay and union recognition.

Baldy Green barely glanced at the letter. An almost inarticulate man, he thinks a long time before he speaks, and the words seemed to come from a long way off. "1 won't grant any such demands," he said.

"Is that final?" the leader asked.

"It is"

The strike was pulled that afternoon. Channing had already told Green, "If it's got to come let it come." But he would not truck with strikebreakers or head bashing; nor would he, on the other hand, discuss grievances with the strikers until they returned to work. From Winnipeg he telephoned: "Shut down the plant," and hastened to F1in Flon in a special train. A detachment of Mounties moved in. For a month the only sound in the mine was the gushing of pumps. "I'hen Green sent word down his grapevine that the plant would reopen at a certain time." The first morning about 750 men, shepherded by Channing and Green, breached the picket lines in columns of two. The strike wilted. Green, who hates Communists with a boundless hate, will tell you that the strike was "the work of Reds" The ringleaders were tried on charges of inciting to riot, and unlawful assembly. Some were sentenced to prison, among them the well-known Winnipeg Communist "Mickey" Marlowe. About 300 men, who had been too energetic on the picket lines for Green's taste, were liquidated by a general firing order. As a company official put it euphemistically, "unfortunately . . . many of these young men did not revive from their stupor, and it was necessary to dispense with their services." Even more than the facts of geography, this incident symbolizes the frontier aspects of Hudson Bay. In some respects Channing and Green acted as any U. S. capitalist would have acted in a similar situation fifty years ago, when the industrial frontier was still inchoate. But first of all they acted as mining men, who are feudal lords in the old sense, absolute proprietors in isolated places and obsessed by the religion of tonnage. Most used to that power are seldom sympathetic to unionism, least of all in Canada, where the organization of labor has attained nothing like the strength of the U. S. movement. Yet Hudson Bay has not been unenlightened. Looking back at the episode, Channing sees where much grief might have been avoided. In the struggle to get a new mine started, and keep it going during the depression, there had been little time to work out a satisfactory labor policy. Afterwards an Employees' Welfare Board, which Channing insists is no company union, was set up. Hudson Bay's wages are and always have been good, especially by contrast with those prevailing among the poorly paid farm labor of Manitoba and drought-ridden Saskatchewan. Two recent wage increases have brought the average about 10 per cent over the 1929 scale. The average wage for underground men on the day payroll is $6.06 a day (with a minimum of $5.28 a day, plus bonus). For common labor on the surface minimum pay is $4 .48. Over-all average for everyone employed is $5.25. The company also has introduced vacations with pay. All has been tranquil since the strike.



UNDERGROUND
COMPRESSED AIR DRILLS

Hudson Bay's markets

Of the total $16,800,000 in metal sales last year, Hudson Bay's copper fetched approximately $7,200,000 (at an average price of about twelve and a half cents a pound); its gold, $4,580,000 (at about $34.25 an ounce); its zinc, $3,800,000 (at about five and a half cents a pound); and its silver, $740,000 (at forty-five cents an ounce). Which leaves about $480,000 to be divided among cadmium tellurium, and selenium sales.

In considering earning potentialities, you can forget about these last three metals. Cadmium is primarily important as a bearing alloy. It sells for about eighty-five cents a pound, and Hudson Bay last year produced about 309,000 pounds. Selenium and tellurium both are quoted around $1.50 a pound; of the first the company produced about 7,000 pounds last year, and of the second, about 7,700 pounds. Selenium, for example, is used as a red pigment in coloring railroad switch lamps and taillights. Tellurium is being pushed - not very successfully - as a hardener for lead. The market for these, as for all rare metals, is spotty. "Whatever we get for then Mr. Channing says "is so much gravy". Silver, for that matter, is more gravy. Where Hudson Bay makes its stand is on copper, zinc and gold. So long as gold continues to sell at $35.00 an ounce, Hudson Bay could peddle copper as little as four and a half cents a pound and zinc at two cents and still make money.

Hudson Bay has to rove for customers. Gold, silver, and cadmium are its only metals apt to cross the U. S. border. A four cent duty has blocked Hudson Bay copper since 1932; and an averaged of one

and three-quarter cents effectively keeps out that metal. So far as copper is concerned, Hudson Bay does no business to speak of in Canada. Noranda, through its interest in the Canadian Wire & Cable Co., has an inside track on that market. Mr. Channing can't remember when he has sold more than a few tons of copper on his home grounds, but he did place 4,000 tons of zinc there last year. Approximately 48 per cent of the copper and 68 per cent of the zinc go to the United kingdom. The balance to Germany, the USSR, France, and the Orient.

Canadian Copper Refineries Ltd., sells most of Hudson Bay's copper, either directly or through its London agency, British Metal Corp. Ltd. The blister copper, containing the gold and sliver value as well as selenium and tellurium is shipped from Flin Flon to the C. C. R. Refinery in Montreal East. Under Canadian law the gold goes to the Royal Canadian Mint, the silver to the Bank of Canada, the gold being bought at the world price (less the mint charges), and the sliver at the current Handy & Hartman quotations in New York. In actual practice Hudson Bay is not so indifferent to the fate of its copperas C. C. R. arrangement might imply. The refinery never sells without first consulting with Mr. Channing or Vice President McNab, who looks after sales. Zinc is sold by Hudson Bay itself through agents in London and elsewhere.

"Were a mining company, not speculators", Mr. McNab explains. By this he means Hudson Bay does not hold metal back in hope of getting a better price. Hudson Bays's strategy is to sell metal at least two months ahead of production. The idea is to seek average rather than peak prices. Speculation is not entirely eliminated. Depending upon his judgement, Mr. McNab may take a technically short position by selling production as much as six months or more ahead, as lie did last year, to his subsequent satisfaction, before the drop in copper prices in the spring.

Necessity dictates this practice in the U. S., where a few big producers dominate the market and a high tariff holds all foreign competition, the tendency is to hold up the price. Days will pass when little copper or zinc appears on the market. But in the world market, where Hudson Bay does business, price fixing is infinitely harder, and the commercial seller seldom has enough metal on hand to affect the market as a whole. Hudson Bay does not belong to the copper cartel in which the big South African and Latin-American are organized. Neither do the other producers. The reason is that nearly all of them produce not one metal but several. Hudson Bay, for example, has no control over the amount of copper, gold or zinc in any given batch of the ore- it could not hold back copper without holding back everything else. When Mr. McNab peers into the world market he cannot decide whether the situation looks good or bad, or something in between. It looks bad in terms of the U. S. situation, where copper stocks despite a sharply curtailed production, are high, and sales of refined metal are scraping around the lowest tonnages registered during the past five years. The zinc market, all but dead since the fall, has only just begun to stir. As for silver, Mr. McNab realizes that he cannot count on the U. S. treasury maintaining a market for this metal at fancy prices. Only when he turns to gold does Mr. McNab find encouragement. In vew of recent inflationary moves there isn't apt to be another scare like that of last spring when London shook with the rumors that the U. S. would reduce the gold price to $30.00 - even $25.00 an ounce.

Outside the U. S. the metal outlook has some agreeable sides. Apart from the violent fall in the London prices of copper from a high of seventeen and a half cents (a little less than the current level), the most exciting development in the last year's copper market was an unprecedented rise of 300,000 tons in world consumption outside the U. S. The demand appears to be holding surprisingly well, owing to the stocking up of arming nations. Zinc producers are improving, the price having twitched up a fraction, but it is still far from last year's high of over eight cents. The capacity of Hudson Bay's zinc plant has been boosted nearly twenty tons to106 tons a day partly to increase the output of premium grades required in die-casting, a growing industry in Europe, partly to deal with 40,000 to 50,000 tons of zinc concentrates lying in stock piles.

Tom Creighton remounts

The future of any mining company still lies on its reserves, the blood stream feeding its corporate heart. Hudson Bay is pretty well fixed. whereas the original drilling indicated reserves of only 18,000,000 tons and over 10,500,000 tons have already been mined out, the proved reserves stand at 24,500,000 tons and the indicated reserves in excess of 27,000,000 tons. In other words, the company has been blocking out pay dirt considerably faster than it has been able to use up the old ore. Not only that, the grade has been running above the original assays. On this score, Channing's intuitions have been vindicated. How well, then, has the investment paid out? Since the start of operations Hudson Bay has returned net profits of about $16,100,000. This is alter depreciation but irrespective of depletion

charges on the ore body. Unlike some mines, Hudson Bay does not carry a reserve for depletion, arguing that no trustworthy estimate can be made of the reserves in its kind of ore body. When the stockholder receives a dividend, he gets a bit of his capital back, plus profit, and there is no telling how much wealthier one is. Obviously the return thus far has run far below original expectations. There Mr. Channing did not reckon on the depression, and who did? The rain in reserves, however, has made for counterbalancing. At the present mining rate Hudson Bay has about sixteen year's ore blocked out. Taking April London prices and current recovery rates, the company might figure that it still has left in the ground about $220,000,000 worth of ore. On this, even at last year's higher costs, it might expect to net about $63,000,000 more after depreciation. Hudson Bay is too conservative to make any such hazardous claim. So lar as this year's prospects can be measured, the chances are that earnings will fall considerably below last year's, unless zinc and copper prices rise faster than most mining experts guess they will.

For all of the Flin Flon ore still to be dealt with, Mr. Channing is restive, if only because no mining man is ever satisfied. He has organized an exploration company and Tom Creighton has just led four prospecting partners north and west of Flin Flon . Both men swear they have no hot leads. It is just that Mr. Channing has an abiding faith -in the discoverer of Flin Flon. Gossips credit Creighton with receiving $100,000 for his price when he and Hammell sold out their share of the ore body to Mining Corp. In 1921. "If that's what people say" Creighton replies evenly, "Why should I give them the lie" He's had his ups and downs since then. Teaming up with Hammell again he combed the vacancies of the Barren lands, up to the Arctic Circle and beyond. But his luck had run out. Arthritis drove him back to civilization and doctors who could relieve the agony in his bones. Now the wheel has come full turn. Creighton is back as Hudson Bay's chief prospector, a job paying maybe $300 per month. He is quite bald, and the cold and the sun and the wind have scoured his skin until is seems almost lacquered. Dignity surrounds him like a fine coat, which silence has buttoned tightly around his spare frame.

The young men at the staff house knew little about Tom Creighton. Directly after supper he goes to his room, shuts the door firmly and leaves the world of Flin Flon to the pool sharks and young bucks making dates on the single telephone in the hall. Supposedly he reads. Others guess he just sits and thinks. Thinks of what? The mighty plant that breaths twenty-four hours a day across the shallow trough of land.

On crystal-clear nights when the aurora is weaving pale curtains or shooting searchlights across the sky, sounds carry far. From the Staff House one can hear the thump of the compressors pumping air underground and the rumble of the mills. But anyone who thinks Tom Creighton broods over what might have been his does not know the man. All he has to show is a few shares of HBM and a street named after him. But to him these things are important anyway. He remembers what Flin Flon used to look like, and he remarks, 'a man doesn't forget something like that."

Cornelius Vanderbilt Whitney

Cornelius Vanderbilt Whitney was the first chairman of the board of directors of Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Company. It was largely his father's cash outlay that provided the capital that made it possible for **Flin Flon** to sprout up between and on the rocks, like the mythical Brigadoon emerging out of the mist. Mr. Whitney, now deceased, remained active on the board for many years but also went on to accomplish much over his 90 year life. He was a founder of Pan American Airways, an officer in the Truman Administration and for nearly three-quarters of a century a very prominent figure in horse racing and the arts.

Mr. Whitney, known as Sonny, was the heir to oil and rail fortunes, a leading thoroughbred owner and breeder, an aviation industry pioneer, the first assistant secretary of the Air Force, one of the founders of the Saratoga Performing Arts Center and a backer of such notable movies as "Gone With the Wind." But he did it all with such reserve that in 1941, at the peak of his many careers, The New Yorker magazine opened a profile of him with these words: "Cornelius Vanderbilt Whitney is living proof that a man can inherit $20 million, bear two of the most socially and financially prominent names in the country, become chairman of the board and the biggest stockholder of two of America's giant business enterprises, run for Congress, own a racing stable, build and operate a large commercial aquarium and at the same time preserve a personality so self-effacing that the public does not know who is."

The article went on to say that the public confused C. V. Whitney with his first cousin, John Hay Whitney, publisher of The New York Herald Tribune and ambassador to the Court of St. James's. If so, the confusion was understandable. Sonny Whitney was the son of Harry Payne Whitney; his cousin, who was five years younger and known as Jock, was Payne Whitney's son. The cousins both attended Groton and Yale, invested in motion pictures, became ranking polo players, owned racing stables and lived for years on Long Island. And both inherited fortunes of approximately the same size. Jock Whitney died in 1982.

Sonny Whitney was born on Feb. 20, 1899, in Roslyn, L.I., and he was spectacularly well-connected. His father's father, William C. Whitney, made several fortunes in oil, tobacco and New York City streetcars and served as Secretary of the Navy under President Grover Cleveland. His mother, Gertrude Vanderbilt, was the daughter of Cornelius Vanderbilt 2nd, one of the legendary figures in railroads and finance in the late 19th century. His great-uncle Oliver C. Payne was treasurer of the Standard Oil Company.

His family's wealth, and the frequent absence of his parents on long trips abroad, seemed to trigger a craving for success in the young Whitney. He entered Groton at 12, graduated at 18 and promptly enlisted for pilot training in the aviation section of the Army. It was 1917, and the United States was entering the war that had been raging in Europe for three years.

He was commissioned at 19 and was assigned to Carruthers Field in Texas as a flying instructor. When the war ended, he enrolled at Yale, where he rowed on the crew and was captain of the squash team. But he became better known in the Sunday supplements as a playboy, a tall and dashing figure who made headlines by his social

involvements and evening engagements.

After graduating from Yale in 1922, Mr. Whitney embarked on a series of careers in business and entertainment. In 1927, in his most important venture, he founded Pan American Airways with a Yale friend, Juan Trippe. He was its chairman of the board from 1931 until 1941, and during that time the airline vastly expanded its overseas operations, becoming a symbol of American technological prowess.

In another major venture, he took control of the **Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Company** in Canada in 1931. He remained its chairman of the board until 1964. He also took a turn at politics when he ran for Congress in 1932 as a Democrat from Long Island, but he lost to the incumbent, Robert L. Bacon, one of his Westbury neighbors. And during the next few years, he widened his interests in several directions: He purchased his father's horse farm and racing stable in Kentucky, he opened the Marine Studios in St. Augustine, Fla., which became the underwater attraction *Marineland*, and he went in to movie making with the producer David O. Selznick, helping to finance and produce such Hollywood films as "Gone With the Wind," "A Star Is Born" and "Rebecca."

When the country entered World War II in 1941, Mr. Whitney promptly went back onto active duty in the Air Corps and served as a staff officer in the Pacific, India and the Middle East. He rose to the rank of colonel and received the Legion of Merit, the Distinguished Service Medal and other decorations.

In 1947, Mr. Whitney joined the Truman Administration when he was named the first assistant secretary of the United States Air Force. Two years later, he was named under secretary of commerce. He was also a presidential envoy to Britain, Italy, Spain and Luxembourg in 1950.

The colors of the C.V. Whitney Racing Stable, Eton blue and brown, frequently made the winner's circle at tracks round the world, as they had done in the time of Mr. Whitney's grandfather. Over the years, 450 stakes winners were bred or raised on the 1,000 acres of the Whitney farm in Lexington, Kentucky. The star of the stable was the great Equipoise, who won 29 of his 51 races and ran in the money 43 times in the early 1930's.

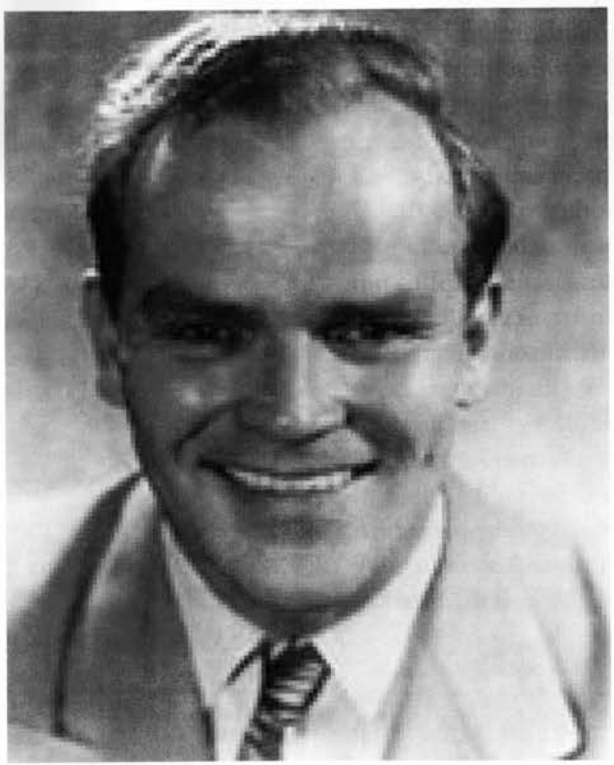
None of Mr. Whitney's horses won a Kentucky Derby, but one, Phalanx, came within a head of winning in 1947 and won the 1947 Belmont Stakes. Some of his other horses were Counterpoint, the 1951 Belmont winner, Career Boy and Silver Spoon. Mr. Whitney received most of the sport's high honors, including an Eclipse Award in 1985 for half a century of devotion to thoroughbreds. Mr. Whitney was married four times and had five children. He was married to Marie Norton from 1923-29; to Gladys Hopkins from 1931-41; to Eleanor Searle from 1941-58, and since then to Marie Louise Schroeder Hosford, an actress who had four children from her previous marriage. For three and a half decades, Marylou and Sonny Whitney reigned in high society from the half- dozen homes that they maintained in splendor on two continents: in the Adirondacks, on Fifth Avenue, on the farm in Kentucky, in Palm

Beach, Fla., and in Spain, as well as in Saratoga Springs. Their philanthropies were diverse, including significant donations, for instance, to the Whitney Museum of American Art, which was founded by Mr. Whitney's mother, and to the 1980 Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, N. Y., which were beset by financial problems.

In addition to his wife, Mr. Whitney is survived by three children, Nancy Lutz, Cornelia Vanderbilt Whitney, and Cornelius Searle Whitney; four stepchildren, Marian Louise Llewellyn, Frank Hobbs Hosford, Henry Deere Hosford and Heather Schlachter, eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild

Hardie Gramatky

Celebrated water colourist including scenes of Flin Flon
Magazine illustrator and animator for Walt Disney and
Best selling author of children's illustrated stories.



By the time Hardie Gramatky traveled to **Flin Flon** in 1938 to paint the pictures of the mine site and the town that appear in this book, he was already a celebrated artist. Mr. Gramatky, N.A. (1907-1979) was born in Dallas, Texas and studied at Stanford University, Chouinard Art Institute (Los Angeles); He was a member of the National Academy of Design, the New York Water Color Club, the American Watercolor Society and the California Water Color Society.

Hardie Gramatky was raised in Southern California. He studied art with F. Tolles Chamberlin, Clarence Hinkle, Pruett Carter and Barse Miller. A dedicated student of watercolor painting, he produced an average of five small watercolors per day. By 1929, he had become a proficient watercolorist and was recognized as one of the true innovators in the development of California Style watercolor painting. These skills helped him to get a job as a head animator at the Walt Disney Studios.

In the early 1930s, he became active on the board of the California Water Color Society and it was largely through his strong initiatives that the California School of watercolorists was able to take control of the Society and expand it into a nationally recognized organization. In 1937 the Ferargil gallery became his art agent in New York City and began selling his watercolors. He also exhibited works in other cities in America and established a reputation as one of California's premier watercolorists.

By the late 30s, he was producing commercial art to be used for magazine illustrations which included the paintings he made of **Flin Flon** for the Fortune article of 1938 which introduces this book.

During this trip Mr. Gramatky was amused that his editor had left his special sun glasses behind and then had them flown up the next day. It seems he had read a few too many Jack London stories and thought he might go snow blind during a visit to Flin Flon in the dead of winter. A local man apparently quipped that they could easily have purchased good sun glasses at the local drug store.

Mr. Gramatky recalls some of his illustrating assignments in an article for ***American Artists*** (March 1947)

I had been exhibiting my work for years when it suddenly dawned on me that this was really pictorial reporting. Why couldn't you do this same thing with a given assignment. Thinking along these lines, I got my first job from ***Fortune*** *magazine. It was in January of 1937; and I was to "cover" the Mississippi flood. I remember how cold it was even for the South. Outside of Paducah, I stood in water up to my waist painting with my board on a floating barrel. It was fun. I even had to break the ice to dip my brush into the water. From there I was sent up to* ***[Flin Flon]****... to do a series of paintings, at 30° below zero. After that, the editors were kind to me and sent me to such places as the sunny Bahamas, etc. It was wonderful experience and I have drawn upon it many times since for magazine illustrations or advertisements when I was not able to go out of my studio.*

During this period Mr. Gramatky also began writing and illustrating a series of children's books. Hercules, Loopy, Creeper's Jeep and Sparky were all books he created, but Little Toot was the one that would become an all-time best seller. By a strange coincidence, this thread of his illustrious career was aided by the trip to **Flin Flon**.

The classic children's book *Little Toot* might not have been published when it was if it weren't for a **Flin Flon** connection! From a retrospective catalogue on Hardie Gramatky the following is printed:

In August, 1938, Hardie Gramatky was having lunch with Charlie Murphy, a Fortune editor with whom he'd gone on assignment to the Flin Flon mine in Canada earlier in the year. Murphy loved the Little Toot manuscript and said, "Hardie, you should have this published!" Hardie told him that that was the idea, so Murphy turned around to speak to a G. P. Putnam's editor, Ken Rawson, sitting at the next table and said, "here Ken, take a look at this."

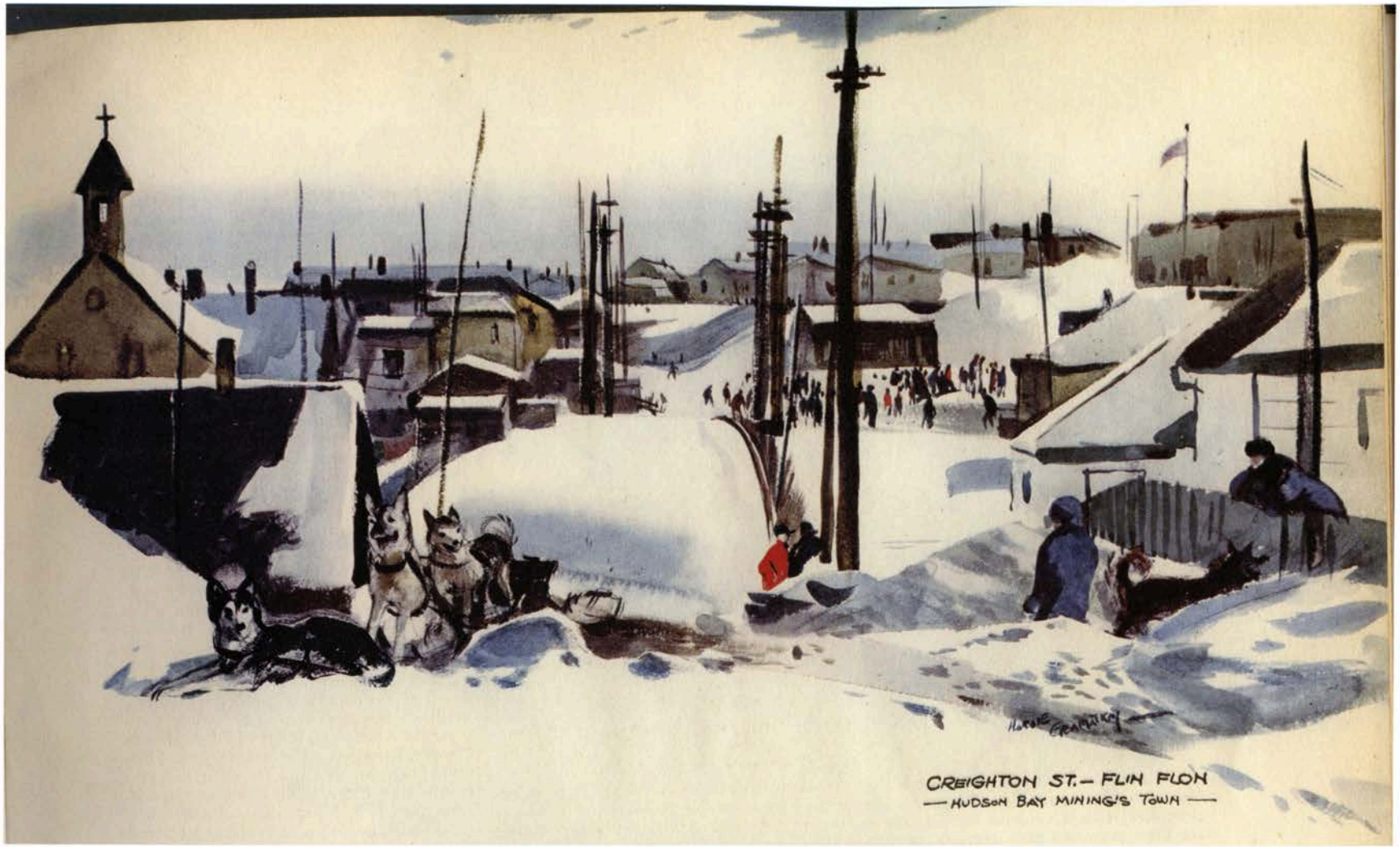
Putnam's loved the manuscript and drawings and published Hardie Gramatky's first children's book in October 1939.

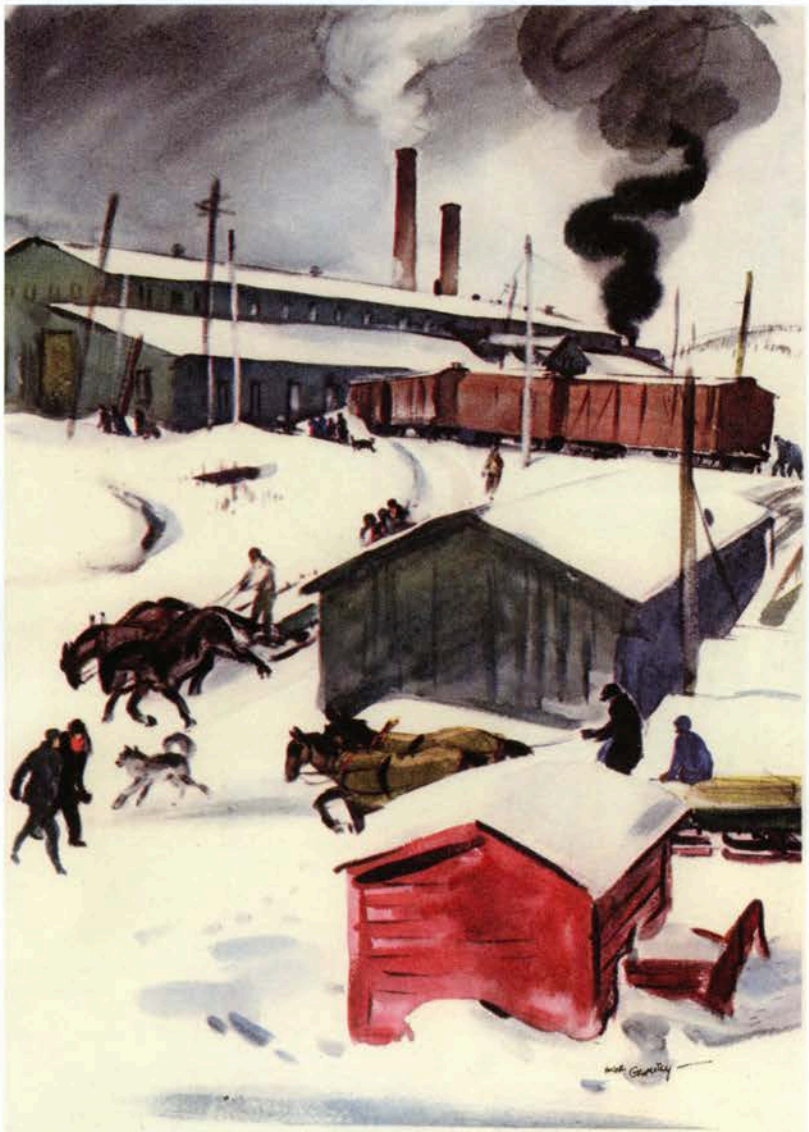
During World War II, he worked in Hollywood producing training films for the United States Air Force and after the war moved back to the East Coast.

Settling in Connecticut he pursued a career as a commercial illustrator producing art for Fortune, Collier's, Woman's Day, True, American and Readers Digest. From the 50's on, he concentrated exclusively on fine art painting and writing and illustrating children's books. His last book was published posthumously in 1989.

More information about Mr. Gramatky , his art and children's stories can be discovered at:

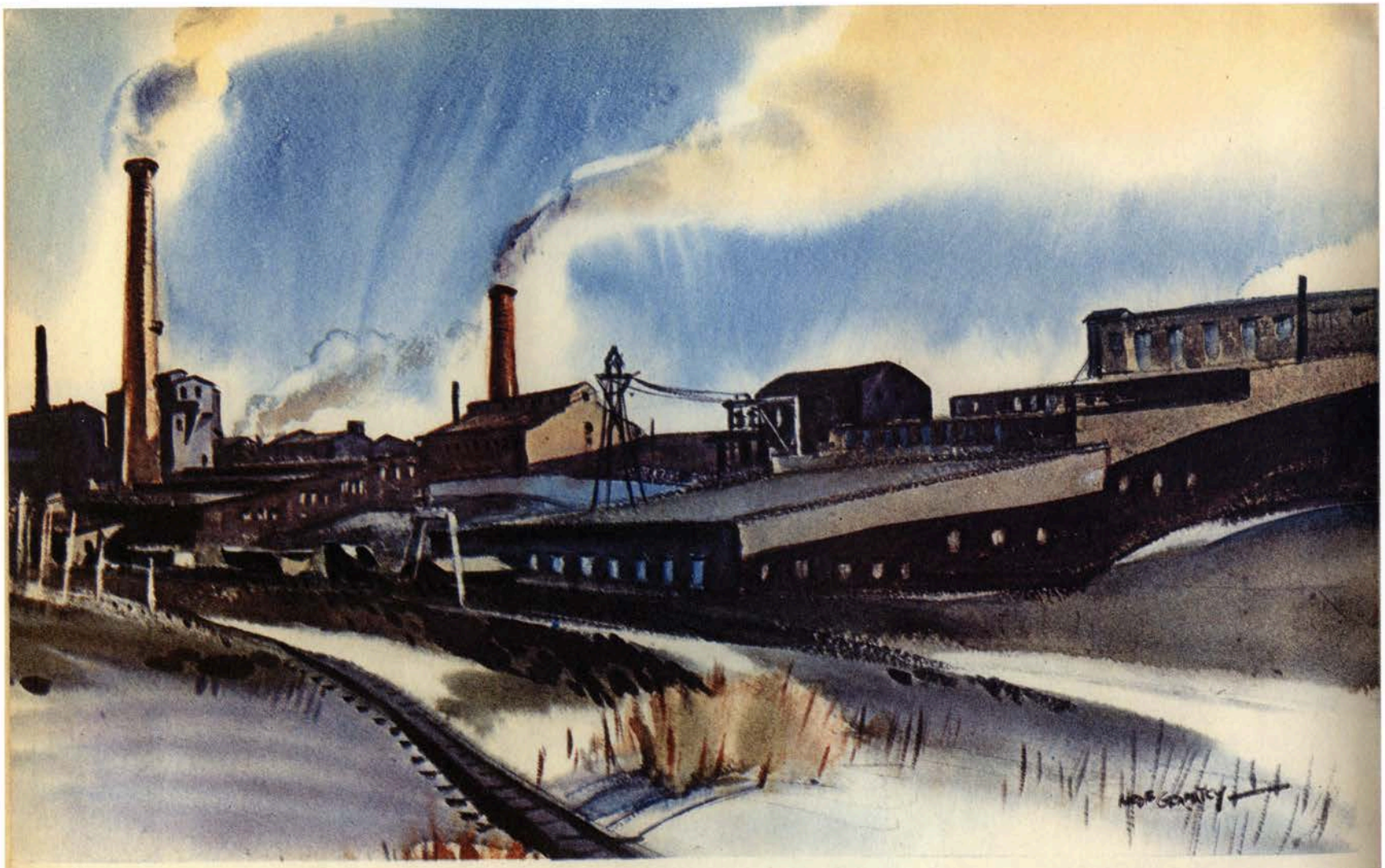
www.gramatky.com and www.littletoot.org


CREIGHTON ST.— FLIN FLON
— HUDSON BAY MINING'S TOWN —



HUDSON BAY FREIGHTS BLISTER COPPER AND ZINC FROM THIS SIDING

NORTH STREET, FLIN FLON: RED-LIGHT DISTRICT BEGINS HERE

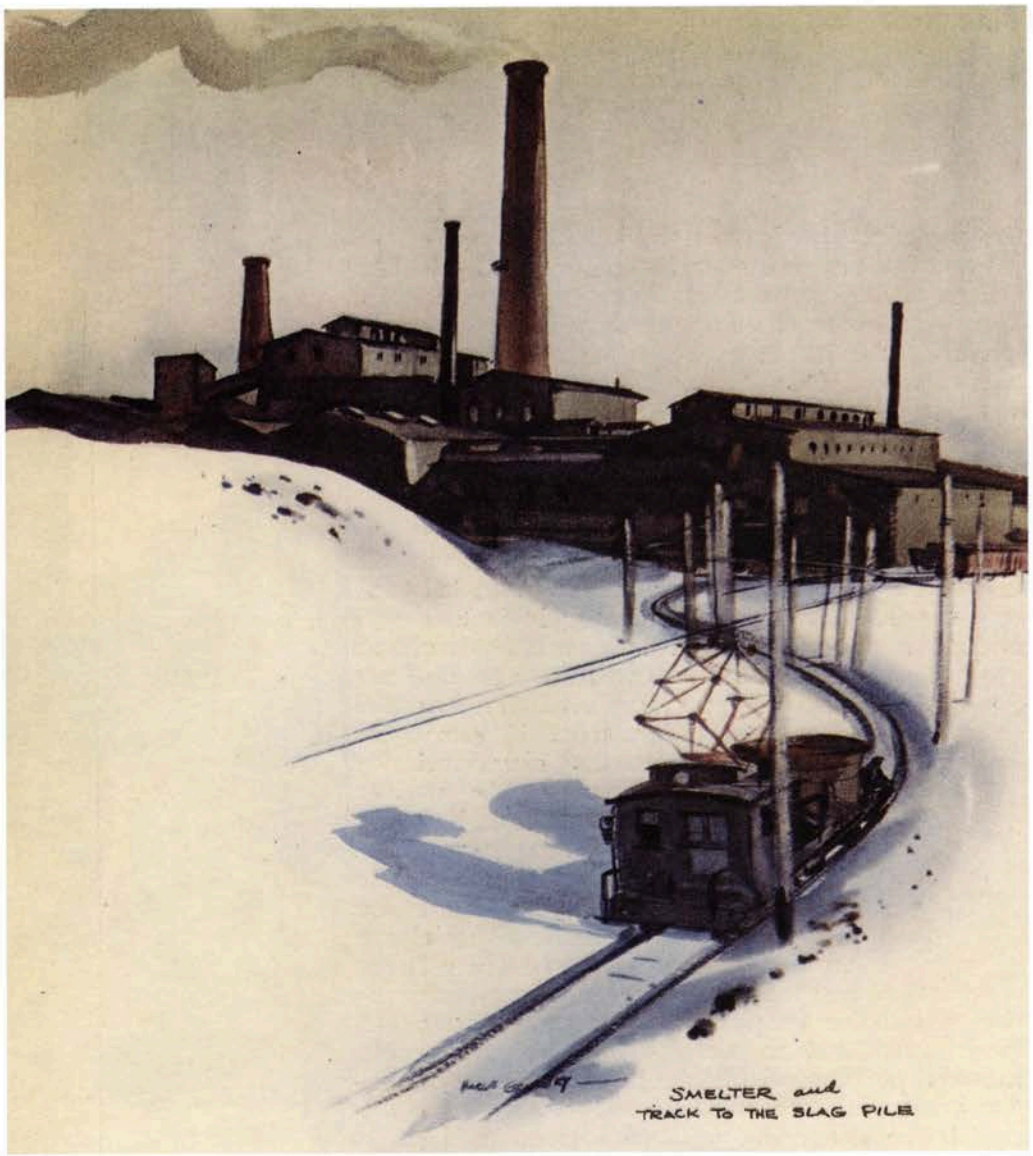


SYMBOLS OF A $27,500,000 OUTLAY IN THE BUSH. HUDSON BAY'S SMELTER AND ZINC PLANT

ISLAND FALLS DELIVERS 63,500 HORSEPOWER FOR FLIN FLON


SARG. J.J. MOLLOY
R.C.M.P.
PATROLLING THE FLIN FLON AREA

Winter Work at the Island falls electric plant on the Churchill River


SMELTER and
TRACK TO THE SLAG PILE

Tom Creighton

Tom Creighton with his partners discovered the ore body which was to eventually be developed by Hudson Bay Mining and lead to the founding and flourishing of the community of Flin Flon. By the time Tom Creighton arrived at The Pas in northern Manitoba he had gained a unique range of experience, from service as a sailor on the Great Lakes of central Canada, to the dedicated search for minerals in the vastness that was inviting him from Newfoundland to the Yukon. Creighton drew his first breath in an obscure settlement in Ontario, near Barrie. His early years, in Dunedin, were spent amidst the large family to which he had been born on March 7, 1874. It was later known that this hardy individual once contemplated entering the ministry, though the call of other adventures became too strong to ignore. He was a shy and unassuming man, but was not averse to the competition of sports such as hockey which he undertook to sponsor during his several years of residence in The Pas - those years after he had been paid for his share of the Flin Flon discovery.

Why Tom Creighton actually decided to travel to The Pas can only be a matter of conjecture, but once there in 1912, he lost little time in teaming up with prospectors Leon Dion and John Mosher. The group tramped the rocky region from Lac La Ronge to Amisk Lake, and even further east in the months that followed Creighton's arrival in the north. They could be found at Amisk Lake along the west side of Missi Island in 1913-14 and later were staking claims for mining promoter, John E. Hammell. By now Creighton was in company with Isadore Dion and Dan Mosher who was financed by Hammell to seek promising properties in the Saskatchewan bush. The story of their discovery of the great sulphide property called Flin Flon was one of patience and hope, and when Creighton and the others were paid for their share in the discovery, Creighton decided to stay, at least to establish his headquarters at The.Pas. From there he travelled extensively with Northern Aerial Minerals Exploration, a company formed by the now famous Hammell, to search for riches in the vast Arctic regions of the northern mineral belt stretching across Canada.

Tom Creighton's activity in the late twenties included several prospecting and scouting contracts for R.H. Channing Jr., agent for the Whitney interests who were involved in the Manitoba mineral area. R.E. Phelan. Gordon G. Duncan, and Creighton exchanged endless amounts of information on properties lying in the region surrounding Flin Flon Lake. The detailed exploration extended near the Cold Lake property of Carl Sherritt, and also entailed attempts to buy, at a reasonable price, several claims held by "Cranberry Jack" Callinan. In the winter and spring of 1925-26, Tom Creighton was located at Flin Flon where he was supervising a crew of workmen engaged in sacking ore to send to Denver under the direction of Gordon Duncan who was now working for the Channing-Phelan organization.Duncan, as a young field engineer for Northern Aerial Minerals Exploration, was exceptionally familiar with the mineral country in Manitoba-Saskatchewan, north of The Pas, and he found an able prospector in the person of Tom Creighton. Creighton could also absorb the asides that lent value to his assessment of properties and situations, an example of which was his chance information from E.R. Cullity, the engineer who was at

Amisk Lake ten years earlier when the search for gold had been concentrated there. Cullity had fallen on lean times and was sending feelers out to Creighton to ascertain the possibility of selling the claims he held in the vicinity of Flin Flon. On December 28, 1925, Creighton wrote to Gordon G. Duncan in Denver, Colorado,

When I returned (from Flin Flon Mine) I found a letter from E.R. Culllty awaiting me here. He said that he had read an article in a Vancower paper which said Flin Flon had been sold to U S. interests who were to undertake its immediate development to bring it to production He said he had been trying to guess who the purchaser might be and would like if I would let him know. The following is a paragraph from his letter, 'I left Biwabik in July, coming to Arizona to engage in manganese mining on my own near here- Have been going along nicely, shipping a little high grade dioxide ore for which the battery trade pays a fat price, and carrying on a modest development program Hard luck stepped in last week with the failure of a local bank which took the roll, string and all. This is twice in the last two years for me and that is plenty. If this one liquidates as fast as the other in which I was caught. . . I forsee a lean season for one manganese mining magnate...

Creighton wrote,

Might be a good time for you to feel him out on the Burke and Portola claims.

From 1929 to 1932 Tom Creighton's activity was as a member of the Northern Aerial Minerals Exploration parties flying into the northern frontiers from the company's headquarters at The Pas. Both The Pas and Cranberry Portage had been the scene of heavy air traffic for the flourishing new aviation companies making unheard of advances in northern freighting, travel, and adventure. One of these journeys into the Arctic was made by Creighton in an aircraft piloted by H.A. "Doc" Oaks. Oaks was a World War I flier who, while finishing his mine engineering course at the University of of Toronto, flew supplies into various properties including those beyond Island Falls where he and Creighton once landed near the hydro-electric plant under construction. Oaks was associated with J. E. Hammell in the Red Lake Mine activity, and in March of 1926 was flying a Curtis "Lark" for Patricia Airways and Exploration Limited.

In the thirties, Creighton had settled back into life at The Pas, actively participating in favourite sports. He resided at The Pas until hired to fill a position with Hudson Bay Exploration and Development Company Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Co., Limited, on July 1, 1937. For twelve years he acted as supervisor of exploration work in the central and western provinces of Canada. His work took him to the Northwest Territories, the Yukon, and to British Columbia where he further increased a large circle of friends and acquaintances. At the time of his death, Creighton was president of Hudson Bay Air Transport, another subsidiary of the company which had employed him.

Tom Creighton was the subject of many tall stories, generally told by former companions, of his extravagant parties and his intemperance. There was truth in the tales, although Tom Creighton remained somewhat of an enigma until his final year, 1949, when he died on

April 6 at Flin Flon, at the age of seventy-five. A diary, kept during his varied exploration trips, contained items related to weather, problems, personnel, equipment, and progress. He was often referred to as a man's man, and spent a lifetime in the pursuits he enjoyed. It was noted by the press in 1940 that Creighton was taking flying lessons at Redondo Beach. California, while on an extended vacation. He was almost seventy years of age at the time, still vigorous and adventuresome.

In Flin Flon, a street near the open pit carries his name. In addition a town in Saskatchewan, to the west of the mine and metallurgical plant, was named after him as well. The need for a surveyed townsite had been met by the Province of Saskatchewan, and the village was named after prospector, Tom Creighton. On June 18, 1955, during Saskatchewan's Golden Jubilee year, the citizens of Creighton erected a cairn in memory of the prospector. Passers-by read these words:

His wants were few
His habits simple
The bush his wide domain

The inscription on his gravestone at Ross Park Cemetery reads:

"Here lies a man."

The Night Bus to Flin Flon

by

Lesley Kinsley

I always dreamed of going south for Christmas break. Every year, however, Santa came and went and with him my thoughts of sandy beaches and umbrella drinks. The instinct of the Canada goose propels it South yet our flock flew North for our yearly pilgrimage. We flew to Winnipeg and then journeyed to Flin Flon, a small mining town north of the 54th parallel. Although it was not my first choice I accepted it as tradition. After all it was my father's hometown and my grandmother's place of residence.

Flin Flon is roughly 800km northwest of Winnipeg and straddles the Saskatchewan border. It is located in the Precambrian Amisk Volcanic Belt otherwise known as The Canadian Shield. Its claim to fame, other than its propensity for growing marijuana in its Trout Lake mine, is the Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Company, the 4th largest copper and zinc producer in Canada. It would be accurate to describe this "City Built on Rocks" as having been developed accidentally but on purpose. Its rocky terrain is much more suited to a population of blueberries than anything else. The houses were built to fit the lay of the land, somewhat forced like a misplaced puzzle piece. Still, the mine necessitated its inception.

Like most small towns, Flin Flon is nothing if not unique, its charm predicated not only on geographic circumstance but also on its name. The city itself is named after a fictional explorer called Josiah Flintabatey Flonatin whose travels led him to The Hall of Jewels and The Valley of Gold. With its mish mash of exploitable metals and strange rock formations, Flin Flon could easily be mistaken for one of these places. More often than not, we made the twelve hour trip on the night bus. I always dreaded the long night's journey into day but when you're young every ride seems far except for the route to your best friend's house. There are far more pleasant ways to get to Flin Flon but frugal philosophies and my father's poor eyesight (preventing him from driving) made the night bus our only choice.

My sister and I found ways to amuse ourselves mostly out of necessity. We baptized our journey "The Midnight Special" evoking images of Japanese bullet trains and nail biting carnival rides. Unfortunately for us, we weren't heading for Tokyo but to where the highway ended. My only comfort was the loose change which I hoarded long enough to buy stale doughnuts at stops such as Swan River and The Pas.

The line up for the bus was always long and I hated to wait for things that turn out to be unpleasant. It seemed contrary to what seemed right. I was always fascinated to see the hodgepodge of people negotiating their way onto the busy platform. Many of them were scruffy looking men hoping to land jobs in the southern wheat fields or northern mines. They wore leather jackets easily exposing the blue and white stripe of the Players cigarette brand they smoked. None of them wore hats which seemed completely illogical. In this part of the country, it was unusual for temperatures not to dip far below freezing. Eventually we got onto the bus and began our journey on a highway as flat as a flapjack. The flatness of the Manitoba prairie disappears the farther north you travel giving way to a series of rocky outcrops that becomes the setting for the small frontier town. The number of passengers diminished with each stop, as the voyagers dispersed like pine cones after a fire, thinned out like

a carrot patch in early summer. I always wondered where they went, disappearing into nowhere. I suppose though, that every nowhere is somewhere and I should not be quick to judge.

Each stop was the same as the last except farther North. Nevertheless, I got off at every unmarked gas station and perused the packaged baked goods as if they were the last crumb of food available on earth. The cold air was unsympathetic as I demolished my chosen treats. The fabric of my woolen mittens deposited an unsavroury after taste but it was too cold to eat with unprotected hands.

It was customary for the driver to pick up and drop off packages before going back out onto his route. On my first trip I decided he was a spy funneling documents through Manitoba's regional transportation system. This ruse was more exciting than a forgotten Christmas sweater someone had packed up and sent home. The longer I sat in one position, the harder it was to get comfortable. More often than not, one of my body parts would go numb. I knew that at any moment the feeling could spread through my body like an electrical shock, zapping my heart in a place where nothing could be done about it. I always looked to my father for comfort, immersed in the pages of economic theory, he was oblivious to my imminent demise.

The deeper we got into the night, the more I would think about walking along the perimeter that encircles the unique mining community. At sunset, the sky is a hue of red and gold. Mixing with the smelter gases, it explodes in a curious array of light, unique to that place and time.

The only bus games you can play without hassle are mind games. Without a viable alternative, my sister and I spent many of our bus trips guessing the fifty states. The first few rolled off our tongues like melted butter but the game became more difficult as the trips wore on. You could have called us unpatriotic but the goal of a bus trip is to pass the time as painlessly as possible and this activity takes a lot more time off the clock than its Canadian equivalent, especially when you forget Delaware and have to start back at the beginning. The sun would come up somewhere close to Cranberry Portage. I never saw any berries but figured they were hugging the ground, keeping warm until the springtime. I was always relieved when I finally saw the statue of Josiah Flintabatey Flonatin greeting visitors as they entered the town. Soon I would be at my grandmother's home inspecting ice cream pails of German buns and chocolate cookies she had stored for occasions such as these.

The Cranberry Tree

by

Enid Delgatty-Rutland

Prologue

I knew the rhymes of English rose,
of heather in Celtic glens,
of Grettir, Ukrainka, Lermontov,
but none that spoke of the flat grey rock,
or the spindling cranberry tree.

Fiery hooch and smoke of birch,
grey-green feldspar, crystal quartz,
glint of fool's gold, swirl of slag,
brown of muskeg, blue of snow.

Zinc, copper, nickel, titanium,
cadmium, selenium, sulphured ores -
not gold or silver, finely wrought,
but bulk base metals were rare to me.

North of the fifty-fourth parallel,
south of the Northern pole,
to East, an ocean, to West an ocean,
and under, the burrowed rock ....

Enticed by palaces, paintings
the glittering bauble of a foreign education
dangled before our eyes
we began our long exile
never thinking of turning back

Nothing in our past we thought
we could not leave
nothing binding us to that common ground
from which we fled

Now homing to the heart of the continent
surprised migrants
compelled by wilderness
or what we remember
that wilderness to be

A counting of gains
a cutting of losses
before we set off for home.

Homecoming

Fog and mist past Gasp,
sun flaring on the St. Lawrence continental heat
sunglasses for the glaring hills
the white water glint on Qu,bec City streets.

The Pushkin docks behind us
I hang on the boat-rail riding the wide river swell
see the white islanded church guarding the harbour mouth,
thinking
of Lydia in her beat-up Oxford boarding house,
her stories of Russia told beneath transported landscapes;
of Tolstoi writing of resurrection, Leonid painting illustrations
so the Doukhobors could come;
of Boris' life, stencilled in snowflakes,
the novels and poems carved in frost;
a poet honoured enough to be dangerous,
his only weapon, the snowflake, the literalization of hoar-frost.

Trunks, bales, crates
sealed up in Europe
compacted for the voyage
grasped by winches
careen overhead to shore.
I cannot remember what was in our trunk,
wonder if anything in it will be of use here.

2

In Montreal, in our absence, the highways have expanded
into wide swooping roller-coasters.
The rusted underbellies of the metallic animals
harry me.
Penumbras of gin rosy rainbows of summer's unlimited ice
spread over suburban lawns to evening.
The fragrance of charcoal steaks
grass-smell, gas-smell and the rasping rattles
of dying lawn-mowers.

As night lifts the little girls cry in their sleep
the male child turns in the womb.
Morning chills drive the lovers
swimming into one another's arms.
Sirens sliding past the A & P ring the changing hours.
Everyone lists in the dawn knows the price
says
it must be right
feels
against the bone
the rising heat.

The Way Back

In Thunder Bay, four ladies eat toasted Danish tea-buns,
their faces heavily made-up, hats like wrecked canoes.
One quiet lady doesn't want a bun.
"You don't know what you're missing, Myrtle!
The raisins, the melting butter.
putting up with Ben all those years ...
Myrtle, Myrtle, come on, why not
relax a little?"

An artificial pond in the corner, its busy mill grinding
over a little sign
All money falling into this pond will be used
by the Canadian Cancer Society.
Some kids try to fish the money out
Hera bears down on them from the cash desk
(red blazer, black pencil-slim skirt)
"Go away! This money is for cancer!"

Cancer, fishing money from the pond
Creeping into our bones fear
our buzzing background.

2

Approaching Sudbury
rejecting Dante
for lack of imagination.

What faith could stake out
treeless, gassed, terra-cotta hillside
and, nine feet high, write:
SPACE FOR RENT?

Smokestacks three, I know you,
you do not have to tell me about yourselves.
I've seen you against sunlight and starlight and hovering
above snow cover
against Pre-Cambrian rains and written in my father's face.
Smelled you for eighteen years and know
how even sulphur dioxide and hydrogen sulfide get in the blood
and feed a kind of love.

Water-tower bug with your tripod stride
red and white striped carapace
striding over my childhood
colossus to that world

3

The count, Montreal to Superior:
two skunks one racoon one ground hog one rabbit.

Should we keep going?

We can't turn back.

4

Espanola's pulp mill standing high on the river-bank
one link in a great chain of prosperous mills
a pretty town, unselfconscious, not talking very much.
The brochure for tourists is confusing:
"One thing in common with the people of the area
is the Spanish River."

If you plan some fevered night
to start sorting it all out,
the place is the statement.
Start there.
If you want to clarify what might be said
out of everything that's been done,
then start here in Espanola
with the sun glittering into the river
at six o'clock the trees beginning to whisper
the young doctor out for a walk with his
baby his puppy his wife.
Start with the river,
those four and the falling sun.

5

Proceeding at precisely the speed limit
sixty miles per hour
along the Trans-Canada
(East to West, West to East, looking the same either way)
we pass by Elliot Lake.
The sign there reads "Nuclear Museum"
and another time perhaps we'll stop to visit it.

On the way to Rabbit Blanket Lake
you can choose the Northways Motel,
the Northern Lights Motel, the Northland Motel.

Should any confusion arise, then
1. Watch for fallen rock
2. Use ash-trays, please, to prevent fire

How long it is to Marathon!
Edging through blasted quartz and scrubby pine
trailers crawl the side of the topaz lake
tired automobiles lay up panting inside the hills
Silent picnics among Superior tamarack,
always looking over one's shoulder to the silent pole.

Longer than the easy line the map projects -
the road to Marathon
scissoring through all these acquired layers
of bandage
that cannot be ripped off in one swift pull

must be discreetly peeled
exposing that faint pink scar.

When we stop at the lake-side motel

we fling ourselves on the old iron bed
seem still moving still traveling
rivers forests flowing past.

Walking to the lake's edge
still hundreds of miles from home
the constellations becoming familiar
the focus sharpening.

Pebbles discreetly gleam through the clear water,
a fish jumps at flies,
fireweed blazes in the darkening light,
blueberries glow along the path.

Seeing aurora borealis condensing milky ether
to jagged veils of green and rose.
Remembering that town sparked with electricity,
the dancing, the music.

Music at the core:
Ernie Bucher, accompanied by Miss Laycup,
singing at the Friday Glee Club
the day they brought Mr. Mahoney
up in pieces from the pit.

Singing
that wells up from the soles of safety boots
saying, not that it is worth it,
only, that there will be no end

6

Rain all the next day.
Chilled and stiff at four o'clock we stop
for tea and peanut butter cookies
at Livingston's Eatery.

The mother in a clean Hubbard cotton dress,
full-breasted, heavy hipped,
turning chicken in the pan,
orbital centre for the squat husband in khakis
carrying in the water-pail, filling the wood-box.
The daughter, pregnant with virginity, going to the mirror,
grieving over the sight speckling of acne,
dreaming of town and Saturday night.

"We don't talk about what matters to us,
but live in dream, shadows to each other;
our conflicts are primitive and terrible,
we bow our heads, enduring
as we endure rain, sun.

"These strangers who drive through
have little to do with us,
we have nothing to say to them.
The world goes on.
We make a living."

7

It costs a dollar to cross on the ferry,
say who you are
and get over the border.
Through Minnesota,
past Olsens and Jacobsons,
a Mr. Audette...

Nervous about America
we don't want to talk about it.
I'd rather not
have people make monster faces at me,
prefer to decline invitations
though think, sometimes, I'd like to visit,
if only it wasn't for those faces.

Four dollars in U.S. funds
to get back in
to relatives.

8

Uncle Albert's fields are awash.
Not since my grandfather's time has there been
such endless rain.
Lines in Philip's face
the cows in the barnyard standing miserably in mud.
Emma's old hen concealed her eggs in the granary
and marches out now with fourteen mid-summer chicks
Doesn't give a damn
that the snow will come before the chicks are grown,
that they will need a heated house till spring.

An accident. One hundred miles an hour (they say),
four boys dead, the carriages on view at the local garage
charred flattened pieces.
The new highway, a great economic benefit to the community
a skating rink for death.

A year ago now, Uncle Albert's accident,
not able to say what happened exactly,
but the horses suddenly spooked, bolting, dragging him
bellied over the ground. Ribs splintered, digging into his lungs.

Then lying propped in the front seat, a broken oat-stalk
we shoving the Dodge down the straight road to Roseau.
through Customs
a parcel marked "Urgent".

Shattered by the risks of this existence
a shelled snail
I lived for long in the city, forgetting what it was like out there
close to the rough fields, the intimacies of the neighbours
the feelings of the animals.

Six in the morning and the wind
trying to shake the shutter from its sash.

A hostile sky black as river mud
clouds with white underbellies.
Across the field, and past my grandfather's empty cabin
the yard light swings frightened arcs jumps and swivels.

They told me the night before of the tornado last week
over Crystal City way. Like the frightened child I was
I go to my uncle's room and call
"Mike! Uncle! Uncle Mike!'

We never become what we never were,
never lose what we are. . .

Well, not a tornado only a natural sky in ill-humour.
Icelanders, we sucked our coffee through sugar lumps
as the faint day sieved through dawn.

9

In the quiet of the storm-washed morning
we inspect the piney hills,
my grandfather's road that runs
from valley crest to crest.

We stand at the end of his road,
not far from his tomb.
Nothing has happened to change his view
except the road running through.

10

Lots of churches in Steinbach,
going on fourteen, they say.
The people here very wicked
or holy.

Muddy roads, and late at night
we hit a rain of tiny frogs,
myriad silver flashes jumping about the feet of the car.

For a hundred miles black black soil
river valleys creeks chestnuts elms and maples
standing in the sun like cows
summer haze blurring the edges of farmhouses.

We bypass Winnipeg on a grand asphalt track,
like running around the edge of a Christmas game.
It is so much fun, we do it twice
but never think of going in.

11

Gilbert Plains
the second family farm
bought after the homestead failed
credit extended to those still working
but sold now and belonging to somebody else

none of the four sons interested in staying
after the Revival and Reverend Spear.

He, coming in Glory robes
slicing the town in half
with his Message

dividing its mind
honed knife through an August tomato.

Grandmother got the Power at the First Immersion
but gentle George chilled by three days'
standing in the river
confessed to nothing.

Grandfather always worshipped Grace
never complained
even when she fired his twenty-six of Gooderham & Warts
to the bottom of the basement stairs
"That's the last bottle of whisky there'll be in this house!"

After her stroke crying in the night
words like snowballs:
"George, why has God deserted me?
Why does he let me suffer?"

He quiet answering:
"Now Grace,
now now then."

Wheeled her to church on Sunday morning
in her black and orange dressing gown
parked her just below the pulpit
where, mouth agape,
she fixed uncomprehending eyes
on God's ambassador.

After she had gone
George played his harmonica

Blessed Redeemer, Jesus is mine ...

That was his song and his story,
Who Killed Cock Robin, recited
to each grandchild.

At his death he kissed each of us.
"See you in the morning," he said.

It's all changed now, the town.
They cut down all the trees to widen the main street
and you have to be careful about heat-stroke.
The new houses are bright pink and green
television colours
and we couldn't find
their little town house of those last days.

Easier in Scotland to find Grandfather's nose

where only twenty years ago
he walked around
and sniffed the melting snow.

While for my father, once a passenger of merry buggies
pulled by Ginger over a packed dirt road,
waited
the concrete floor of the shop
the drills, the lathe
and the screw.

12

No more freeways from here to home
no cities anymore not until you go
over the Pole.
Some signs of life, though.
At one Dance Palace every Wednesday night is Buck Night,
a dollar a carload.
The Sin Pits showing
CLARENCE THE CROSS-EYED LION in a double feature
with ULYSSES, SAMSON and HERCULES.

Flat fields around Portage-la-Prairie announce in
thunderous tones
PREPARE FOR ETERNITY YOU'LL SOON BE THERE
FOREVER.
Rural fields of marsh and morning glories
Along the road white garbage spheres
wide open mouths
instructions to
PUT YOUR TRASH INTO ORBIT.

13

Tense now, as we head due north,
traverse the Great Bog where
tractors still lie buried in muskeg
lost when they laid the road.

Muskeg, where a fire can smoulder for decades
feeding on mouthfuls of damp twigs,
blowing up puffs of smoke every six months or so,
waiting for one dry summer one season of incandescent heat
to invade brush and burn for hundreds of miles around.

We pass burnt stumps blackened trunks of spruce and birch.
The '41 fire happened when I was six and returning from
Grandmother's
on a train hissing hell for leather
through spitting needles of exploding pine.

We smoke cigarettes crack peanuts
keep a foot steady on the accelerator.

Only this one road.
Impossible once on it
to lose our way.

Two hundred and sixty miles steady at seventy
past scrubby pine interminable rock
order this re-entry, decompress ...
Sixty to eighty of us there were, shipped out each year
along with cadmium, copper, zinc
dressed like pullets
ready to serve.

How many left?
I wonder ...
Val on a LIP grant
Dr. MacDonald, Keith in the big office,
Mrs. Kepper saying
"Six. I had six, none of them are here.
I fly often to Vancouver, Calgary, Alberta, Ottawa
now that my John is dead."

You have to keep skimming,
that's where the profit is.
Keep moving up to the front
where they say the action is.

Think back, generalize, hang loose ...

14

My generation drinking water straight from the lake
then cleaved neatly from our past
Jackfish fillets sliced from the bone
flung to the huskies.

What of our parents?

The Depression forced them North
nothing else.
Swept from prairie farms plucked from desks
uprooted at eighteen and twenty and thirty
put on the cat, the shovel, the pick.

Now those fathers and mothers still alive
are grandfathers and grandmothers,
and in their eyes old farms appear.

They head south and west to find
brothers sisters
to get away from the rock and the water.

They go
come back
like yo-yos.

And the children go instead.

What about us?

no songs in our blood but the old ones
those the young parents sang
My Wild Irish Rose

songs of immigrants shuttled too quickly
to form their own songs

Later
absent from Auschwitz
absent from Saint-Germain-des-Pr,s
when the "existentialist hordes burst to the boulevards"

following bombing tracks
hearing orders for liquidations
becoming secret lovers of alien violence,
voyeurs of catastrophe
whispering fearfully of leukemia
cultivating neuroses as our fathers had
roses and cabbages

and fields of white crosses
blinded with insights, sensations
(always borrowed never our own)

rejected feeling rejected by everything
we knew first-hand.

To look with a scaled eye and sharpened sense
at Trout Lake, Snow Lake and Ross Lake
might have some point
might be a way of reclaiming old landscapes
of catching Dief's voice again
hearing it tell of Batoche
seeing what's become of it all.

Can we speak now of the absent, the dead?
Salvage something of the truth
in this great silence?

What instrument for evoking angel arcs
to join future and past?

I do not know
but remember Annie Aquash

Death due to exposure
the curved bullet in her brain.

The Sunless City

No celestial city, this,
or holy.

Miss Wyman, missionary:
"The men of the town are victims of excessive drink,
the women bear too many children,
are often left to care for them alone.
Lechery is rife, piety a sin,
the language ungodly."

Our skinned knees cold on Miss Wyman's orange linoleum floor,
stiff with the thought of the crackling fires
lost in the wickedness of stolen potatoes
forgotten texts
we prayed our blind prayers.

No celestial city
then or now
but mainly sunless
smoke screening the sun some of the time
high latitude forbidding it
most of the time.

The land began with magma, hissing, bubbling,
flowing in restless, particulate energies
before mammoth elephant, tepid breeding swamp
before the glaciers' slow advances and retreats.

For us the beginning was 1924
and Tom Creighton, a man so reticent
even his relatives hardly knew his name.
Tom, Dan Milligan and the Dionne brothers
roaming the Shield, walking over it
as if it were downtown Toronto,
knowing by smell, almost,
where the ore lay hidden.

Tom's diaries saying only:
"Temperature -54 F. Saw two Eskimo today.
Food running low."
Then later: "Lost. Blizzard six days now under shelter of fir boughs.
Wind NNE."

Tom always gave
the direction of the wind ...

Dying, finally, in the Company Hospital,
not rich, but with Peggy Barker
to hold him steady against the worm
that gnawed his gut and blurred his brain.

Peggy knew how it was with Tom.
She'd been up the Churchill line
cleared out a typhoid settlement
delivered babies in Pacific Milk cartons,
bound up stumps of limbs torn off in the pit.

Nine months of terminal living,
morphine helping Tom over the boulders,
keeping the bears at bay:

the time he ordered the ballroom floor
of the Selkirk Hotel in Winnipeg covered in cornflakes
so he could snowshoe, amuse the stockholders
that sky-high year in the Pas
he blew a quarter of a million

the find he was always on the verge of making
but never made
some mountain of blazing copper high in the taiga
decorated in feldspar crystals festooned with mica pop-corn strings
known to nobody but him.

The vision was Tom's.
For the rest of us the town, like all towns
not celestial, was ourselves.
Families fastened on rock landscape
but not yet of it not like it
not knowing it as itself.

2

Not a rock hill-side, a birch tree, or a whiskey-jack
to meet us on the road to the cottage
before we got into town,
but Mac, weaving angles against the July sun,
saying "A day at a time."

Mac, his lungs freshly rotting,
bringing us two freshly plucked lettuces
nurtured in northern ground,
their hearts translucent under thin green coverings
and pale veins,
the outside leaves burnt mahogany with smelter smoke.

I have to tell about that smoke.
Mustard yellow, billowing from the stacks high overhead,
shifting with the wind, teasing as we wait to see
if it will suddenly descend to bite our gardens and nip our lungs.

Dying, a public event, a community affair.
Death, going from house to house with Mac, uninvited,
watching us all as we drank with him
the coffee, the rye and ginger.

Silent son-of-a-bitch,
sneaking Mac off,
robbing us as we stood
wondering who had let him in.

And next, Jasper.
Why a second death to face before settling down
to visit with the Old Man?

Why these songs coming from the dead
to weld us first to grief
before anything else?
Time getting on,
we had forgotten that coming back would mean
turning the Old Projectionist loose again.
Jasper played the fiddle by ear, the tunes
we heard on Messer's Islanders.
He fiddled, she played the mandolin,
I chorded on the upright.

Smile the while I kiss you sad adieu ...
When Annie McTavish's husband got drowned at Mystik Creek rapids
Annie got drunk all over town for three days,
Cree wails filling and emptying the air of night and day.
But not that way with Jasper's wife.
She left in January with the perma-frost,
the drifts, the frozen lake outside the picture window,
the rest of winter with nothing to put in it.

Make your bed, lie in it.
Stitch slipcover, drapery, no tear falling
to any flower, leaf, or stripe.
Forty below, waiting all that time to June
for the earth to soften so they can put him in the grave,
her grief too hard a ground for letting go
with cries and lamentations.

Remembering, my friends after school
in her ten by twelve living room
tumbling, elephant walking up and down the walls,

stitching quilts,
pulling taffy, eating lefsa, and Jasper
in a nightshirt, roaring homilies.

Remembering, after the highway went through,
Jasper's big American cars, driving hell-for-leather,
raising a gravel dust as high as clouds.

Dying mid-stream.
A ten-second heart attack, a cough.

He lies in his grave on Hillside
alongside the ballpark.
Dry-eyed she stitches,
running the Singer till
we smell the insulation burning.

3

From the kitchen window
one street of houses the railway track
Ross Lake grey rock ascending to the horizon,
two towering stacks to the right
South Main Shaft to the left
barn red.

Houses clamber up and down the hills beneath the stacks,
everything ramshackle,
looking as though it could be abandoned overnight -
and would be, if the mine closed.
People always talking about that happening,
maybe having to pull up stakes in a hurry,
afraid to put money in houses.

Most of them grew from bits of scrap lumber,
cardboard cartons, a bag or two of cement.
Once you start like that, it's ludicrous
to import a lot of bricks,
invest in mortar.

Rock peers out through the roadbed,
in gardens, in basements.
No escaping it, not even in winter
when the wind blows the jutting boulders clean.
Living in the foundations of an unfinished house
all year round.

Blazing magma fires the horizon at night
when slag pours from the smelter cauldrons.
Slag gold-red fire fading on cement floors
cooling there into silver spider-webs.

Furnace doors clanging in the night
generators humming all night
parents breathing in the next room.

Never silence
only time
marked by dawn's six o'clock whistle
the afternoon's five o'clock whistle
a matrix of working sound.

Nothing in the land changed.
A delicate patina of undigested twigs and leaves
still clothes bedrock like a soft counterpane
Rock still breaks through
the fingers of winter tucking loose soil
back into corners and cricks.

Nothing speaks for Jasper or Mac,
for the fish or frogs down at the edge of the lake.
Acid water, dead centre of the town,
zinc and mercury-filled,
years now since anything could live in it.
What we will leave behind when we go.

Outside the Old Man's cottage
among soft pines' whispering
and birch leaves' tinned spinning
we knew why it was death who had met us,
death and the old projectionist
warning us
telling us about our absence.

4

To go back is to return to those who stay
those not inoculated
by visiting school-teachers or tracers of genealogy,
those not eager for exile blinded by then and when.

We said to J.T.,
"Yes, it's fine to be a tourist with all that money,
but we forgot to tell you
we want to come back,
we want to stand outside your machine.
Just look at it
maybe put on a band-aid or two
when a piston-shaft breaks
or the vats of H2SO4 leak.
Nothing to upset anybody just a little help."

No dice.
And no gabby gawkers either.

5

Pour blood on gneiss and quartz
dangle nerves like ropes from the branch of the birch
break bone on the stage of the Rotary fair.
Then go free.

The Cranberry Tree

The cranberry vine in October:
berries maroon and scarlet unevenly strung
leaves crisp green and tangerine
roots like ice imploding the crevasse
fragility bound to bedrock.

The second variety the tree
frail broad leaves translucent berries
hidden beneath prime forest
silent growing.

2

Raspberry Island, Blueberry Hill,
limestone Narrows, Beaver Lake,
Athapap, Channing, Old 84,
The Trestle, the Bridge, Uptown and Down,
The Big Hill, Main Street, and Whitey's Bay.
South Main Shaft, North Main Shaft,
roasters and smelter,
quartz, molybdenum, clay,
the open pit, the fifteen-hundred-foot level,
the shafts to the bottom, the cage to the top.

Loon and mallard, tern and bunting,
wolverine, bear and caribou,
pike, sturgeon, grayling, pickerel and perch,
chipmunk, rabbit, squirrel and shrew.

McCutcheon, Max, McArthur, Lloyd,
Duncan, Forbes, and Stephen Clay,
Jasper Kittle, Sneider, Ben,
Mike Nowazek and the Delgattys,
Magnusson, Redbird, Dahlgren, Bucher,
Stein, Oulette, Ostry, Ross,
McSheffery, Mainwaring, Moose, Kowalski,
Diggernuts, Whitney, Bray ...

Name
list
collate.

Take
the shiny-papered catalogue
with its three ninety-eight hats
its oil burners
Christmas chocolates wrapped in gold and silver tinsel
stitch
through the random necessities
a five thousand pound test seam.

3

Hamilton with his careful broom
swept each grain-car clean of left-over kernels
and carried them home in old potato sacks.

Across from his house on Hapnot Lake
established a refuge for local fowl.

The Kinsmen join in put up the Sanctuary sign
"A community conservation project"
and now all the birds come
to tilt to float
to fly
against the sun.

From this 150-foot-deep slash 5,400,00 tons of ore have been mined.
You can see the ore train working up a six percent grade.