

THE FRANCES LAKE TRAIL

by

Dick North

Prepared for the Lands, Parks, and Resources Branch:
Department of Renewable Resources,
Government of Yukon

30 January, 1986

Films North Consulting
Whitehorse, Yukon

THE FRANCES LAKE TRAIL

by

Dick North

Prepared for the Lands, Parks, and Resources Branch:
Department of Renewable Resources,
Government of Yukon



300042285

30 January, 1986

Films North Consulting
Whitehorse, Yukon

FRANCES LAKE TRIAL

Contents

1. Robert Campbell - Journals, 1840-1852.....	1
2. G. M. Dawson - Exploration Report, 1887-1888.....	9
3. Warburton Pike - Exploration, 1892-1893.....	14
4. Inspector J. D. Moodie - Patrol, 1897-1898.....	18
5. Charles Camsell - Journey of: 1898.....	25
6. Anton Money - Travels of: 1923-1929.....	29
7. Frank Bailey - Reestablishes trading post.....	31
8. Observations.....	32
9. Suggested trails for field study.....	33
10. Winter trails.....	34
11. Historical signs.....	35
12. The Lower Post - Upper Post Trail.....	35
13. Bibliography, etc.....	36

FRANCES LAKE TRAIL

by

Dick North

Robert Campbell

The return to Perthshire, Scotland of Chief Factor James McMillan on leave from Hudson's Bay Company in 1830 was to have an inspirational effect on Robert Campbell, 22, a young man destined to be the first white man to reach the central part of the Yukon Territory.

Campbell, a relative of McMillan, was fascinated by the tales his kinsman spun and decided that he, too, would like to enter the fur trade. June 2, 1830, the Perthshireman set out from England to assume a job as the sub-manager of an experimental farm to be initiated at the Red River settlement by Hudson's Bay Company.*

The H.B.C. ship Prince Rupert, carrying Campbell, arrived at York Factory on Hudson Bay August 15 after a journey of 73 days! It took another month of travelling by river and lakes to reach the Red River settlement.

Campbell quickly displayed his efficiency while in his new job. Ordered to make a survey of lots for a nearby settlement, he completed the complicated task

*Region of Red River is now Manitoba.

in only two weeks. From that time through the rest of the first winter, Campbell's duties were "...more the nature of amusement than work" as he spent most of the first winter hunting meat for the Company.*

The young Scot quickly illustrated a predisposition for roughing it when he set up a tent and lived in it for the entire summer of 1831 while supervising the construction of the experimental farm. Campbell recalled that he slept only four hours out of every 24, his duties being so demanding.

Young Campbell's affinity for hard work soon had its rewards. An expedition was sent south of the U.S. border to obtain sheep for the farm. Campbell was ordered to accompany the excursion, which lasted ten months and took the Hudson's Bay men right through the heart of the warlike Sioux Nation. Fortunately, the redmen were not on the warpath at the time, and the sheep purchasers completed the trip safely.

Campbell was a committed individual, doing anything asked of him with dependability and dispatch. He was not happy with his duties at the farm, and,

* Clifford Wilson, Campbell of the Yukon, The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., Toronto, 1970, p. 5.



1 Chief Factor Robert Campbell

Hudson's Bay Company

therefore, sought a transfer to the fur trading division of the Company. Aware of his talents, and appreciative of Campbell's capacity for work, George Simpson, one of the governors of Hudson's Bay, approved the switch, and he was assigned to the Mackenzie district, his first station being Fort Simpson on the Mackenzie River.

The significance of Fort Simpson was its location at the mouth of the Liard River, which drained the northwestern interior of the continent. Hudson's Bay Company's traditional method of developing a region was to send "scouts" into an area to ascertain its value fur-wise, and then to build a trading post to attract natives with whom the Company would barter for furs. In such a way the Bay men crept up the Liard River, gradually approaching its source in what is now the Yukon Territory. Thus, by the time Campbell arrived on the scene, farther up the Liard, Fort Halkett had already been built at the confluence of the Smith and Liard Rivers.

A predecessor of Campbell, John McLeod, had travelled from Halkett via the Liard to the mouth of the Dease River (then called the Nahany). His instructions were to explore south (up the Dease) searching for a trail to the Pacific. After exploring

the Dease Lake area, he returned to Halkett and reported his discovery of the lake and explorations to the south of it.

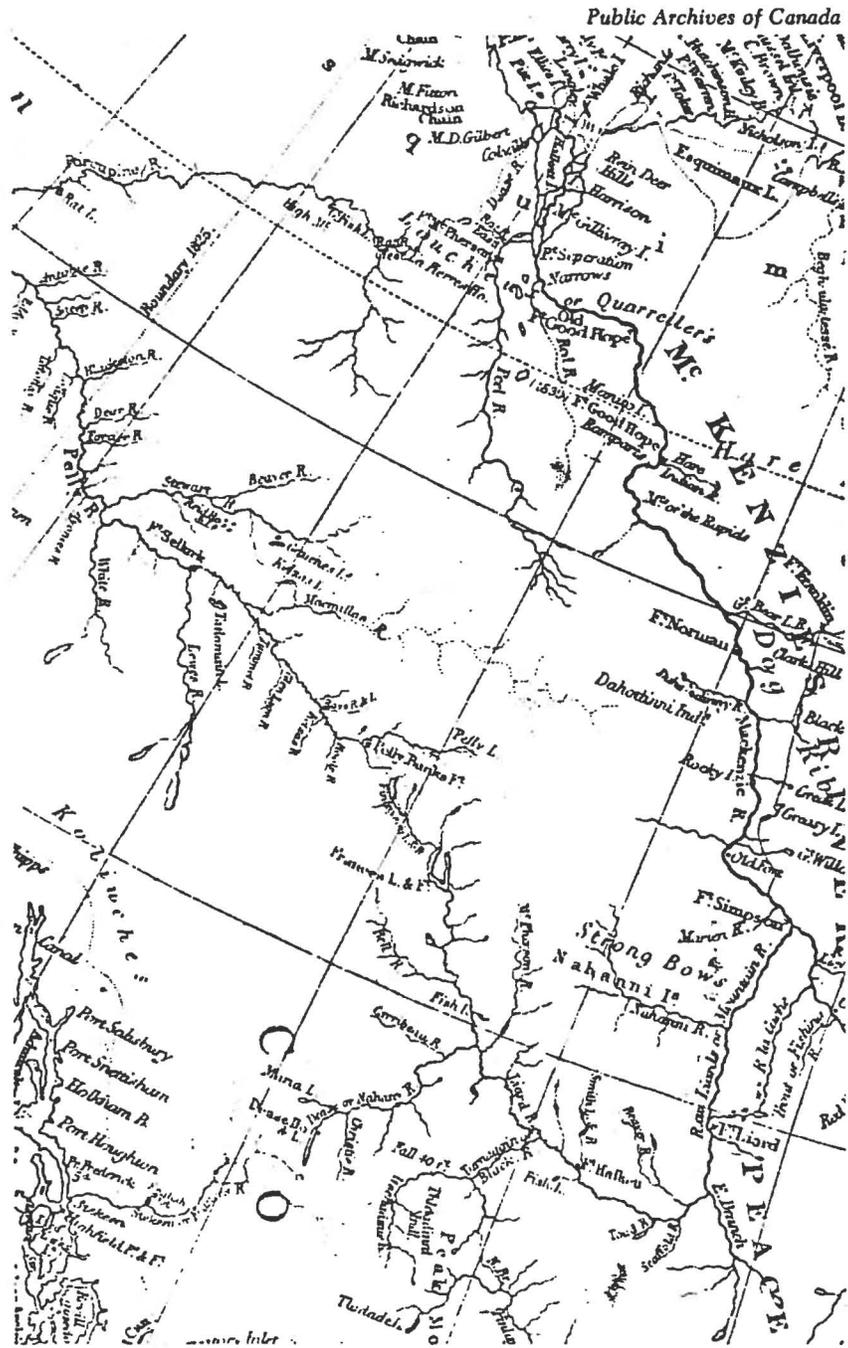
The next step in Hudson's Bay Company's venture into the upper Liard country was to consolidate its gains in the wake of McLeod's explorations. This was done by establishing a trading post at Dease Lake. Campbell was selected to accomplish this goal, and in March, 1838 set out for the lake, reaching it early in July. He chose a site for the post five miles from the outlet or source of the Dease River. Leaving McLeod to build the fort, Campbell, with others engaged for the task, journeyed up the lake and explored southwestward. He made contact with Shakes, acknowledged chief of the Tlingits of the lower Stikine River, and substantiated a rumor that the Russians were located at the mouth of the river. Campbell returned to the Dease Lake compound, now almost built, and then journeyed to Fort Liard to report his findings to the factor, McPherson. He then returned to Dease Lake, arriving there October 11, 1838.

Campbell and 12 of his party spent the winter at Dease Lake in a condition of near starvation. The worst aspects of the famine were exasperated by the fact that warlike Indians from the coast periodically visited and threatened the men at the post.

Campbell and his men survived the winter, though he considered it lucky that they did so. Campbell sent a report to Fort Simpson advising that the trading post should be withdrawn from the Dease Lake location. As part of the report he stated that metis Francis Hoole, and Indian lads, Kitza, Lapie and Baptiste Forcier proved to be untiring and invaluable in their support of the camp through their hunting abilities and capacity for hard work. He respected their loyalty and hired them again.

A letter from Governor Simpson date June 16, 1839, turned Campbell in another direction. Simpson advised the adventurer that the Company had concluded an agreement with the Russians wherein H.B.C. obtained trading rights on the Pacific coast. Those operations could be supplied by ship rather than the tortuous overland route. He directed Campbell to ignore the Stikine operations and, instead, ordered him to seek out the source of the Colville River, which drained into the Arctic Ocean. In such a way H.B.C. would extend trade from the Peel River to the Colville. (The Yukon River had not yet been explored from source to mouth, though the Russians had discovered the outfall of the waterway as early as 1825.)

More explicitly, Campbell was to explore the northwest branch of the Liard, and from its headwaters



The great changes in the map are the result of Campbell's explorations

cross the height of land to see if a major river (suspected) drained the lands on the other side.

The young Scot's epic journey of discovery began at the end of May, 1840 when he left Fort Halkett in company with four "engaged men", his faithful interpreter, Francis Hoole, and the dependable youths, Kitza and Lapie. The weather was pleasant and there was a profusion of fish and game, providing a luxurious larder and pleasant travelling for the party.

They reached the mouth of the Dease River in the first week of July and from that point ascended the east branch of the Liard, which Campbell later named Frances River after the wife of Governor Sir George Simpson.

The route of Campbell and his men followed the Frances River, at times portaging around rapids or lining their canoes through them until they reached the large lake to which Campbell gave the same name as the river. The Hudson's Bay man did not malingere here, though he at once realized the potential of establishing a trading post at this point. At first glance, there appeared to be sufficient resources, particularly fish, to furnish sustenance for such an operation.

Pushing westward, Campbell and his little band followed a river that drained into Frances Lake

from its source in another, smaller, lake. This river and lake he named after Chief Factor Duncan Finlayson, his sponsor and friend, who later became a Director of the Company. Stepping over gold later to be found at the mouth of the river, Campbell cut across country to reach a river he named the Pelly after yet another employee of the Hudson's Bay Company. This man was Sir John Pelly, one of the governors of the Company. After descending the Pelly for 15 miles, Campbell correctly ascertained from the presence of anadromous fish (salmon) that the river flowed into a distant ocean, but erred when he judged that it was probably the Colville rather than being another river altogether.

Robert Campbell then returned to Frances Lake where a cabin was built, and returned to Fort Simpson. In June, 1842 he received written instructions from Chief Factor John Lee Lewes wherein three steps were outlined to ascertain and develop the potential fur trade of the "northwest". Firstly, he was to build a trading post at Frances Lake. Secondly, he was to cut a portage through to the Pelly River from Finlayson Lake, and thirdly, once he reached the Pelly, he was to paddle the length of it until he reached the sea.

(Lewes, of course, had no idea of the length of the river.)

Pertinent to this study was the fact that the post was built at the foot of the east arm and as such was the trail's destination. Primary work done on this was by a carpenter named Lapierre, who almost single-handedly built the post while Campbell was engaged in explorations of the Pelly. Later, when Campbell returned, he was pleasantly surprised by the amount of work that had been done by the capable Frenchman. (Lapierre House, on the Bell River in northern Yukon, has been named for this hard-working individual.)

During the same winter Campbell sent Hoole and several other men to Pelly Banks where a cabin was built at that location. This was later converted into a trading post but the lack of business caused Campbell to close it in a short time. That winter Hoole crafted a canoe for the proposed trip down the Pelly, scheduled for the next spring.

Thus, in 1842-43, Frances Lake trading post was built. The historical importance of the post was the fact that it led Indians to trade there, as well as pioneered a route to the central and northern part of the continent.

The Indians from the Dease Lake region and Lower Liard followed two routes to reach the post, one by way of the Frances River and the other directly across country from the confluence of the Dease and Liard rivers.

Later, a store was built at the mouth of the Dease by H.B.C. and called Lower Post, the name that is used today.

The Frances Lake post became known as Upper Post by Indians who traded there. The sojourn of the initial post was to be a short one, however, as Campbell suggested closing it for the same reason he shut down Pelly Banks. This was the combined lack of business and the high expense of keeping it open. After operating for about ten years operations at Frances Lake were suspended.

In summary, the route followed by Campbell on his initial journey into the Yukon set a historical precedent and as such was followed by many others who journeyed into the territory from the south.

George M. Dawson

Geologists R.G. McConnell, J. McEvoy, and G.M. Dawson, under the employ of the Geological Survey of Canada, along with four white men, three Stikine and two Tlingit Indians, and the wife of one of the native boatmen, reached Lower Post on June 23, 1887, after the trip from Wrangell, Alaska, via the Stikine, Dease Lake,

and the Dease River. Here, they enjoyed the hospitality of Mr. Engells, operator of the store there, before continuing their geological investigations of the southern Yukon. At this point, McConnell departed from the others to travel down the Liard River.

After hiring two Indians at Lower Post, and replenishing his supplies, Dawson and his party paddled their canoes up the Liard and Frances rivers occasionally lining or portaging their craft through or around rapids until they reached Frances Lake.

Dawson's description of the route was one of the most detailed ever made. The total distance between Lower Post and Frances Lake by water was 135 miles according to Dawson's computations. A more direct overland route was estimated by the geologist to be 94 miles.

There was little that Dawson's discerning eye missed as his party made its way up the Liard. Seven miles from the mouth of the Frances River, Dawson espied an old Indian camping ground that was said to be frequented at certain seasons of the year by the Tahltan Indians who ventured to Lower Post to trade. The campsite was reached by an overland route which crossed the Cassiar Mountains to the north of the Dease River.

It took Dawson and his party only 36 hours of actual travel to paddle and line their boats from Lower Post to the mouth of the Frances River, a distance of 45 miles by river. (But only 33 miles if followed across country in a straight line.) This included navigating the Lower Canyon on the Liard, which commenced six miles above Lower Post and was about three miles in length. Dawson made four small portages over rocky points in the canyon noting that in high water the entire stretch would have to be portaged. He constructed a cairn of stones on a prominent rocky point marking the 60th parallel and the northern boundary of British Columbia which coincided almost exactly with the lower end of the canyon. On a post placed in the cairn, the exact latitude ($60^{\circ} 01' 06''$) was carved.

Once the Frances was reached the Dawson party navigated the winding course of the river with few problems until they came to the middle canyon situated 13 miles up from the mouth. Dawson reported the canyon to be three miles in length. He wrote that they took their boats along the southeast bank in making six short portages. The geologist noted that one portage of greater length on the opposite bank would overcome all

of the really bad water, though the banks on that side were rougher than the southeast bank. The river was reported by Dawson to be hemmed in by cliffs 200 to 300 feet high for most of the length of the middle canyon.

Dawson recalled the river above the canyon to be relatively level for 12 miles with the current being gentle. Near the end of this stretch two large creeks flowed into the Frances these being unknown to Dawson, though he was aware from the Indians with him that one drained from Simpson Lake. (The two natives from Lower Post had deserted immediately before reaching the middle canyon. However, previously, using charcoal, they had drawn a map on a canvass boat cover showing the Frances River with many of its tributaries, and their source lakes.)

The river veered northeast after the gentle stretch to a placē where the river had low rocky banks. This segment of the water course was unnamed by Campbell. Dawson called it False Canyon as the river gave an appearance of flowing through a series of cliffs that actually failed to materialize. The current, though fast, did not result in rapids. Two streams entered the river here from a valley which ran east of a mountain range Dawson said was called by the Indians Tses-i-uh.

Dawson reported the river as varying its course

again to a northwesterly direction after False Canyon continuing for 13 miles before it suddenly changed course again to pass through the upper canyon. Near this point Dawson wrote of a tributary coming from the east, the valley of which was a travelled route of the Indians through a chain of lakes some of which drained into the McPherson River. (Now called the Hyland River.)

Dawson estimated the upper canyon was four and one half miles long with a mile and a quarter of the distance being a series of rapids which he described as "rocky and rather strong" and having a total fall of 30 feet. Dawson and his party made several portages, but he stated that the necessity for this could be avoided by making one 1,000-foot portage on the south bank rather than the north, thus avoiding the turbulence of the canyon. He advised that a boat could be pulled through the rapids after being unloaded.

After successfully navigating the upper canyon, Dawson's group discovered that the Frances River drifted in a relatively straight line for 21 miles from its outlet at Frances Lake.

Geologist Dawson wrote that the difference between the level of Frances Lake and Lower Post was

477 feet. The average rate of descent he estimated to be three feet to the mile after assigning 90 feet to the fall in the three canyons.

Dawson visited the site of the abandoned post which was located just above the narrow entrance to the east arm of the lake facing westward from the shore. And, though Campbell himself had given Dawson an accurate description of the position of the post, it was completely overgrown with bushes in 1887. The outline of the stockade was visible, but the structure itself had disappeared completely. Dawson gave notice that the post had been abandoned in 1851.

Dawson followed Campbell's trail across to the Pelly and down that river to the Yukon where he met fellow geologist W. Ogilvie. They ascended the Yukon (the upper branch was called the Lewes) to traverse the coast range to Lynn Canal, and from there journeyed to Vancouver.

Warburton Pike

Explorer, prospector, mine operator, and promoter, Pike organized an expedition to follow the route of Dawson from Wrangell, Alaska, up the Stikine to Dease Lake and the interior. His ultimate destination

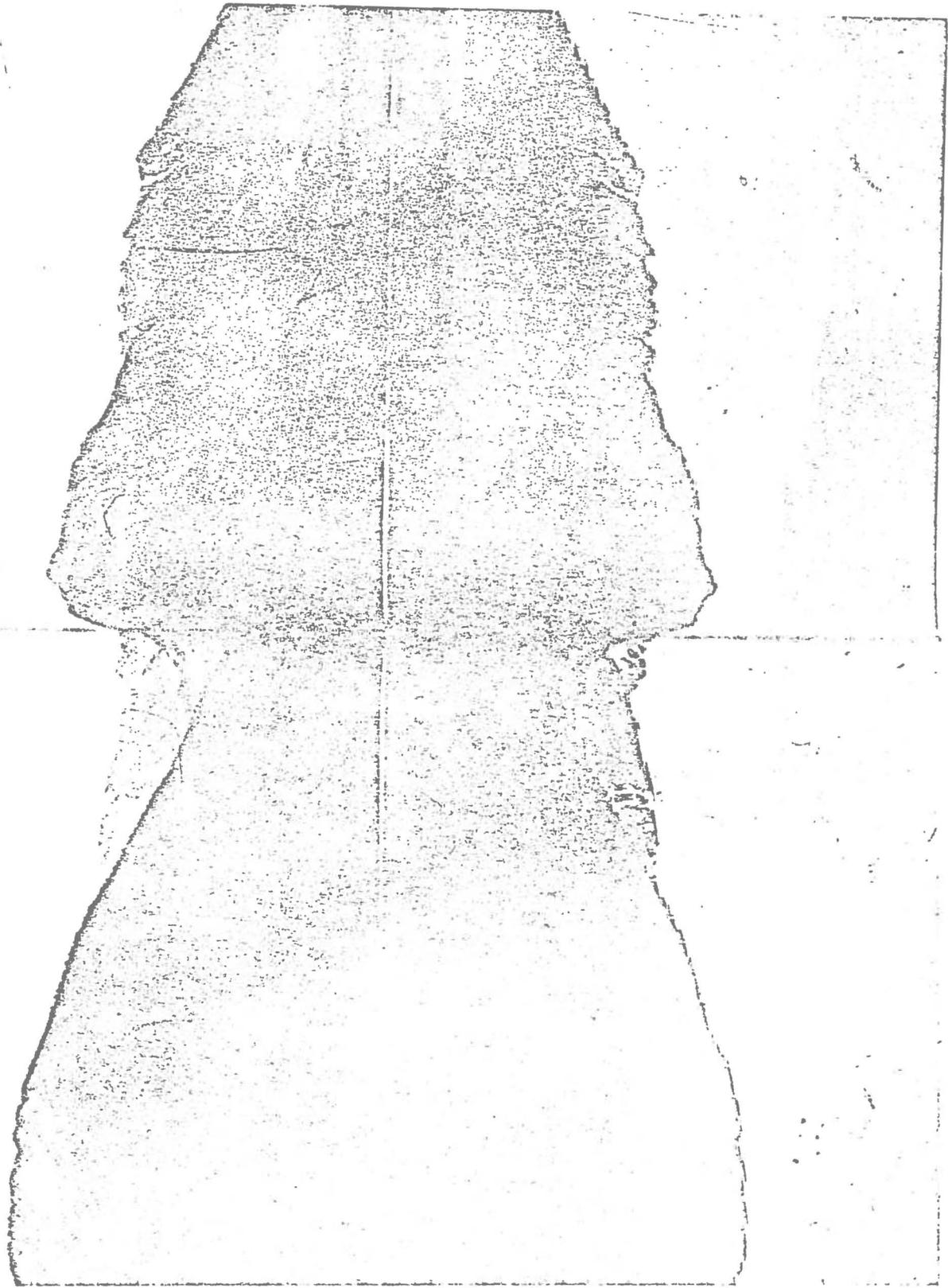
was western Alaska by way of the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers.

Pike was a man of much curiosity and many interests which were reflected in his book about the journey entitled Through the Sub-Arctic Forests.

The explorer left Victoria, B.C. in July, 1892 arriving at Lower Post that same summer. Some of the guides who assisted him at the time included: Indian Charlie, Two Fingered Johnny, Beavertail Johnny, and Secatz (interpreter).

Pike first set out over the Frances Lake trail in January, 1893. However, this was aborted at the mouth of the Frances River when the temperature dropped to 68 below zero. He changed creeks, taking a more successful trip up the Hyland River, prospecting. He found a silver "ledge" in the upper canyon of the Hyland later returning to it with George Simpson, operator of the Hudson's Bay post at Sylvester's Landing on the Dease River and kin to the former Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Pike spent the remainder of the winter transporting supplies, prospecting, and hunting, then embarked up the Frances River trail by dog team with Indian Charlie, and Alec Flett, a Manitoba metis. Besides the regular supplies, Pike added a canoe to the top of the load.



The East Arm of Frances Lake.

His interpreter, Secatz, had proceeded up the trail ahead of Pike also packing supplies and slashing a trail for him. Unfortunately, Secatz had not known that Pike was going to follow with a canoe on top of the sled and did not cut a trail wide enough for it. Thus, Pike and his companions suffered some delay in cutting a path for the dog sled and the canoe.

Pike met an encampment of Indians about 40 miles north of the mouth of Frances River. This was in the vicinity of False canyon. Pike, who was always prepared to note down interesting particulars, recorded the fact that the Indians told him the best moose country lay to the east of False Canyon. The natives advised Pike to drop his canoe off above the upper canyon as the head of the river opened in spring before the ice broke on the lower Frances and the Liard. Pike mushed to within a few miles of the lake and cached supplies. He then returned to Lower Post to await the arrival of a partner before heading out again.

Pike's partner finally arrived, and the expedition set out by dog team and snowshoes reaching Frances Lake (after picking up the canoe) on April 18. From there Pike and his men explored the headwaters of the Pelly River, where later Mount Pike was named after him.

Pike's ever present habit of recording the lore of a region through which he passed, resulted in a reference to a pervasive belief among the Indians that a tribe of cannibals or "bushmen" inhabited the vast wilderness north of Frances Lake. Coincidentally (or perhaps not so coincidentally), the infamous land of legendary monsters, the South Nahanni river valley, comprises the northeastern border of the region. Of this subject Pike wrote somewhat sarcastically:

"One of their (Indians) favorite resorts is the unknown land of horrors lying between the sources of the Pelly and the Hyland Rivers." The Liard Chief earlier had advised Pike that the area was a dangerous place to go. Of course, Pike promptly went there but saw no such legendary forms of either man or beast.

Yet another anecdote of Pike's concerned the fable of the "flying caribou". An Indian told Pike through his interpreter that this airborne animal habitated the gravelly points created by streams flowing into Frances Lake. If a man journeyed to one of these points and camped alone on any summer's night, he might meet the caribou perched on a particular dead spruce hanging over the lake. The legend went that if you treated the animal kindly it would occupy its time

telling you stories of the old days. However, if you stooped so low as to take a pot shot at the caribou, it would make things very unpleasant for you. Pike added that his interpreter, Secatz, ultimately refused to translate any additional remarks of the Indian, stating that it was a bunch of nonsense.

The Moodie Patrol

The gold rush of 1897-98 was in full bloom when Inspector J. D. Moodie of the Northwest Mounted Police was ordered to blaze a trail to the Klondike from Edmonton. So many people had become lost along the way on the long overland trek, the Canadian government felt obligated to send a long distance patrol not only to slash a trail, but to look after misguided "greenhorns" who found themselves in trouble. Consequently, on September 4, 1897, Moodie's patrol set out from Edmonton.

Moodie's route took them from Edmonton to the Peace River to Fort St. John. Here they crossed the Rocky Mountains to the Finlay River, thence up that to Sifton pass. After crossing the pass, they rode northwest to Dease Lake and then descended the Dease River. Almost one year to the day after they left

Edmonton the patrol reached Lower Post, which Moodie called "Liard Post". He employed a Pelly River Indian as a guide for the party here, and also a Lower Post lad as an interpreter for the leg of his journey up the Frances River and across to the Pelly.

Moodie, Constable F. J. Fitzgerald,* Richard Hardy, Frank Lafferty, H.S. Tobin, and Baptiste Pepin made up the party when it left Lower Post on August 31, 1898, and headed for Frances Lake. Moodie and his men were travelling by horseback, thus their perspective was different than most of the argonauts who travelled to the Klondike by boat.

Inspector Moodie was amazingly definitive in respect to his survey of the route, making one wonder how he managed it under such difficult conditions. For example, on Wednesday, August 31, he wrote:

Camp 70. Left Liard Post at 10:15 a.m. course northwest. Good going through poplar. (The Liard was named for the poplar tree.) At one quarter mile we crossed a dry slough or back water from the river and went through some jackpine and some down timber for another quarter of a mile, then up a steep pitch of about 30 feet, and one quarter of a mile farther on another similar rise, and through scrub and burned down timber on

*Who later perished on the ill-fated "Lost Patrol".

bench. This continued for about four miles with two or three slight rises and falls. At five miles trail went to high bench, about 45 feet or so, by very steep ascent and through thick small poplar, with no feed. At seven miles came to very thick heavy scrub and much down timber, although not piled up very much or of any great size, and soon rose to top of high bank above river by two grades. Considerable work required here.

(Moodie passing judgement on the feasibility of trail construction as per his superior's orders.) At about nine miles we crossed coulee about 30 feet deep by steep grade and went on through small pine and poplar and one half mile beyond came to another very deep coulee, with steep banks running back from river with nice creek at bottom. These grades could be made easier by going a little way higher up, as coulee runs up into the hills very suddenly. Crossed this and rose to top of hill 50 to 60 feet. A bridge of about 15 feet would be required across the creek. Travel was then through jackpine and poplar with no feed. At twelve miles we passed lake with a little feed in valley about one mile to our right, and travelled along edge of bench above river flat. This travelling continued until 6 p.m. where we came to another large lake on our right, and travelled along side through thick small pine for one and a half miles, where we camped at north end. Fair feed but not much of it, in fact where there was water today, there was no feed, and vice versa. Distance about 18 miles, hard on horses, as it had to be done in one drive, and it was a pouring rain for the last three hours. Compass course is northwest by north."

An explorer or adventurer today, using Moodie's

painstaking description of the route could probably follow his steps all the way through the wilderness from Edmonton to the Pelly River keeping faithfully to his path the entire way.

Moodie and his party, astride horses, took three weeks to ride from Lower Post to Frances Lake. According to his day by day computations of distance, the Moodie group travelled a total of 199 miles between Lower Post and Frances Lake. In view of the fact that the boatmen under Dawson did not travel more than 135 miles, why the difference? This may be ascribed to the fact that Moodie's orders had been to locate and slash the "best route". Therefore, his distances would have been much longer than those individuals who were under no such restrictions.

The fact that Moodie travelled overland offers a historical alternative to the all-water route between Lower Post and Frances Lake.

Moodie and his party took one week to reach the mouth of the Frances River from Lower Post. According to the Inspector's diary, his party rode 61 miles before they reached the Frances, probably striking it five or six miles up river from its mouth. Moodie mentioned passing two large lakes en route, one presumably being

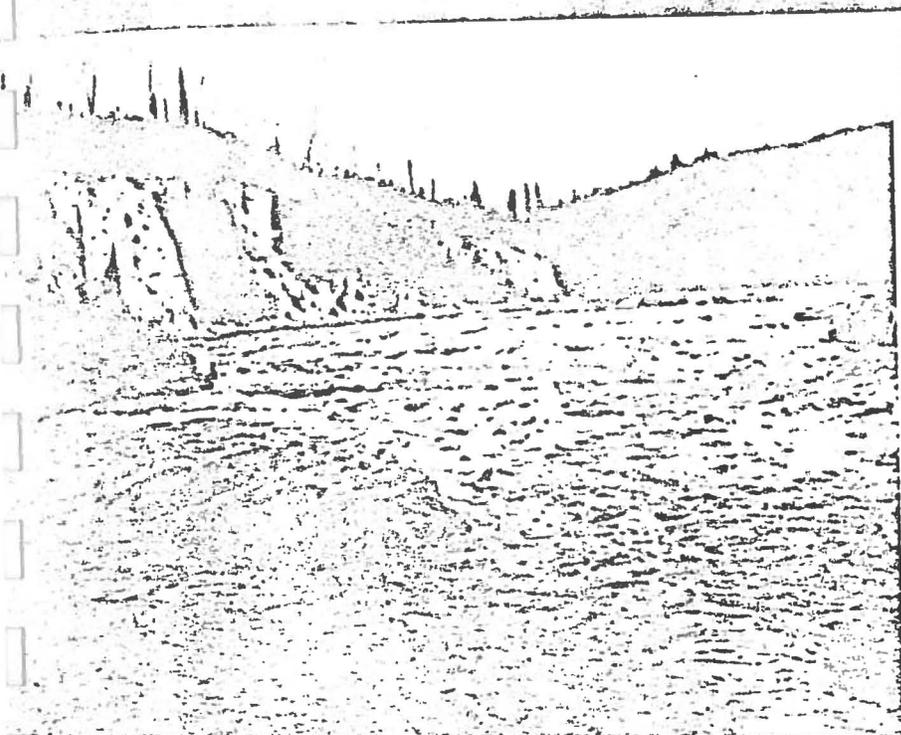
what is now called Watson Lake. He purposefully angled directly across country to intersect the river figuring there would be better travelling along the river's benches.

Inspector Moodie's first locatable campsite after leaving Lower Post is that made on September 10 and 11. (The two day respite includes a Sunday rest day.) He mentioned seeing a canyon and many rapids on the river during the day's journey. (Near Mile 35 [km 56.3] on the present Campbell Highway.)

After the Sunday rest of September 11, Moodie and his men continued on their northwest bearing. Ultimately they ran into a bend of the river and had to backtrack to a bench in order to proceed.

September 15 Moodie spent part of the time with the Chief of the Liard Indians and wrote that he told them snow would come in 28 days and that the Pelly would be frozen by the time they got there. Also that it would be impossible to bring the horses back.

Inspector Moodie's group reached the upper canyon of the Frances River on September 17 and camped approximately where the Cantung road now crosses the Frances River. In mentioning that his guide had never



Middle canyon, Frances River.

Photo by Anton Money.

been there before he pointed up the fact that Indians sometimes walked, when he wrote:

"Our guide had never been here before, having either travelled by foot through muskegs or by the river."*

September 19 they reached a portage above the upper canyon which Moodie described as being slack water 12 feet deep in places. He paid five dollars to a stamper to carry them across the river.

Aware of the need for celerity because of the Liard Chief's warning, Inspector Moodie quickened the pace to reach the Pelly River before it froze. Floating the river would be much easier than galloping half-starved horses along its banks. Moodie managed to increase his average day's distance while riding up the west side of the Frances River. September 20, they made 15 miles and the next day, 14 miles. Moodie made camp directly opposite the entrance to the east arm of Frances Lake.

Making good time up the west side of Frances Lake, he reached the confluence of the Finlayson River and the lake in two days. Here he purchased a portable canvass canoe from C.S. Watson for \$175.

*Moodie's diary. P. 75.

It had light steel ribs, and was 20 feet long with a four foot beam. Considering the fact that the boat cost \$90 at the factory, Moodie considered the price to be a fair one.

The trail across the height of land from Frances Lake to the Pelly River commenced at the lake following an old Indian winter path about 300 yards south of the mouth of the Finlayson. From there it went "over the hill nearly west."

Moodie and his men reached Finlayson Lake on September 28 (5 p.m.) where they camped. The next day they set out again, and during their travel along the lake spotted saw pits and several abandoned camps. They finally reached the Pelly on October 1.

Inspector Moodie sent several men he had hired for the purpose back to Lower Post with the horses, and then set out down river in the canvass canoe. October 4 the river was heavy in ice and also very shallow. The canoe incurred several tears and had to be repaired. Since it was overloaded they built a raft to even the weight, and placed two men aboard. However, shortly after it was launched, the raft tipped over, luckily in shallow water, and the two men again joined the others in the canvass boat.

Farther along the river the cloth craft became the worse for wear, and after lengthy negotiations, Moodie purchased a Peterborough canoe for \$450 from a stamper. This enabled the men to proceed through heavy floe ice, but finally, on October 22, they were forced to put ashore and hike the rest of the way to the Yukon River (not yet frozen). They were spotted and transported across to Fort Selkirk.

One place of interest mentioned by Moodie was "Humbug City", this curious name being applied to an encampment of argonauts who wintered on the north side of the Pelly at its confluence with the Macmillan.

Charles Camsell

Charles Camsell arrived on the Frances River trail the same year as Inspector Moodie, in fact, he met the Northwest Mounted Police officer at Sylvester's Landing on the Dease River. Warburton Pike had returned from his distant journeys and put Camsell to work for him after the future geologist had spent a summer of near starvation at Frances Lake.

In his book Son of the North, Camsell, who eventually became Federal Deputy Minister of Mines for the Canadian government from 1920 to 1935, and, Deputy Minister of

Mines and Resources as well as Commissioner of the Northwest Territories from 1935 to 1946, recalled being a stamper in the gold rush to the Klondike in 1898.

Born the son of a Hudson's Bay Factor at Fort Liard, Camsell was brought up in the wilderness, and thus was well-prepared for the eventual hejira to Dawson City. He and his brother, Fred, were invited to join a group of four men heading for the Klondike by way of the Liard River. They left Fort Simpson in September, 1897, and after travelling all winter, reached Lower Post on April 12, 1898. Being experienced in the ways of the north, Camsell and his partners realized that all of the good gold-bearing ground would have been long since staked around Dawson City. Therefore, they elected to prospect the Frances Lake district instead. They had read Dawson's optimistic observations concerning the area's mineral potential.

Three of the six partners by this time had left the group, two to trap and one who pushed on to Dawson City ahead of the others. This left Charles and his brother, Fred, and D.W. Wright, a big game hunter from southern British Columbia, to reconnoiter the lake region.

Camsell and his party mushed dogs up the Liard and Frances rivers to arrive at the lake on April 27, 1898. They scouted out a likely stand of trees by a stream that emptied into the lake one third of the way up the east arm. They made camp here in front of Nipple Mountain. Using a whipsaw they had brought with them for the purpose, they cut planks and built a boat, and quickly rowed farther up the lake to find a place less populated with mosquitoes. Here, they prospected the area of the Thomas River, but with no success.

Camsell and his two companions ran out of provisions early in June, and relied on their hunting abilities to fill the larder, but with limited success. They sampled almost every living thing in and around Frances Lake including rabbits, ducks, geese, ptarmigan, grouse, squirrels, gulls, fish hawks, and fish hawk eggs (cutting trees down to get them), and wolf. They caught fish on fishing tackle. (They had been unable to secure a fish net prior to departing on the trip.) All told, Camsell's party found out what Campbell, too, had discovered. Frances Lake was not as prolific in fish and game as it looked at first appearance. (The Indians, who camped there at various times of the year, did better. They knew where

to find big game such as mountain sheep, moose, and caribou, and they also knew where in the lake to obtain fish and were able to make the nets needed to catch them.)

The food situation deteriorated so badly for Camsell and his partners, he wrote humorously "...once, in traditional style, we had to eat stewed moccasins."*

Their two dogs, which had been a big help treeing porcupines, and finding other forms of edible wild life such as ground squirrels, wandered off and were presumed to have been killed by wolves that howled in the vicinity of their disappearance. This event, combined with their accelerating poor condition, invoked a decision to retreat to Lower Post.

Embarking in their boat on June 25, they rowed to the south end of the lake stopping briefly to look for the ruins of the old Hudson's Bay post. There was nothing left other than a pile of stones that had been a fire place.

After the brief search for the old post, the men embarked on their boat and made their way to the outlet of the lake where they camped at the confluence of the Tyres and Frances rivers.** The fishing was superb here as they caught all of the grayling they could eat. Their

* Camsell, p. 80.

** The "Tyers" river is apparently misspelled on current maps. It should either be "Tyer's" or "Tyre". Also maps now show the "Tyers" flowing into the lake.

diet remained interesting, ranging from fish to "devililled" wolf. Though undernourished, Camsell and the others had little trouble descending Frances River. The portages were relatively short and they completed the journey in less than a week.

Anton Money

Anton "Tony" Money had been contracted in England to work as a bookkeeper for the Hudson's Bay Company at Telegraph Creek in 1923. After a short sojourn he became disenchanted with his job when the Factor would not let him near the accounts he was supposed to audit. He resigned and with an older prospector named Amos Godfrey, decided to trace down a silver prospect found by the Indians Caesar and Little Jimmy. The silver showing was on a creek that drained into the east arm of Frances Lake roughly 350 miles from Telegraph Creek.

Money and Godfrey left the head of Dease Lake on July 1, 1925 and spent 23 days travelling by boat down the Dease and up the Frances River to the lake following the same route of Pike and Dawson. Money wrote:

"If I live to be a hundred, I'll never forget the canyons on the Liard and the Frances."*

* Anton Money, This was the North, General Publishing Co. Ltd., Toronto, 1975, p. 82.

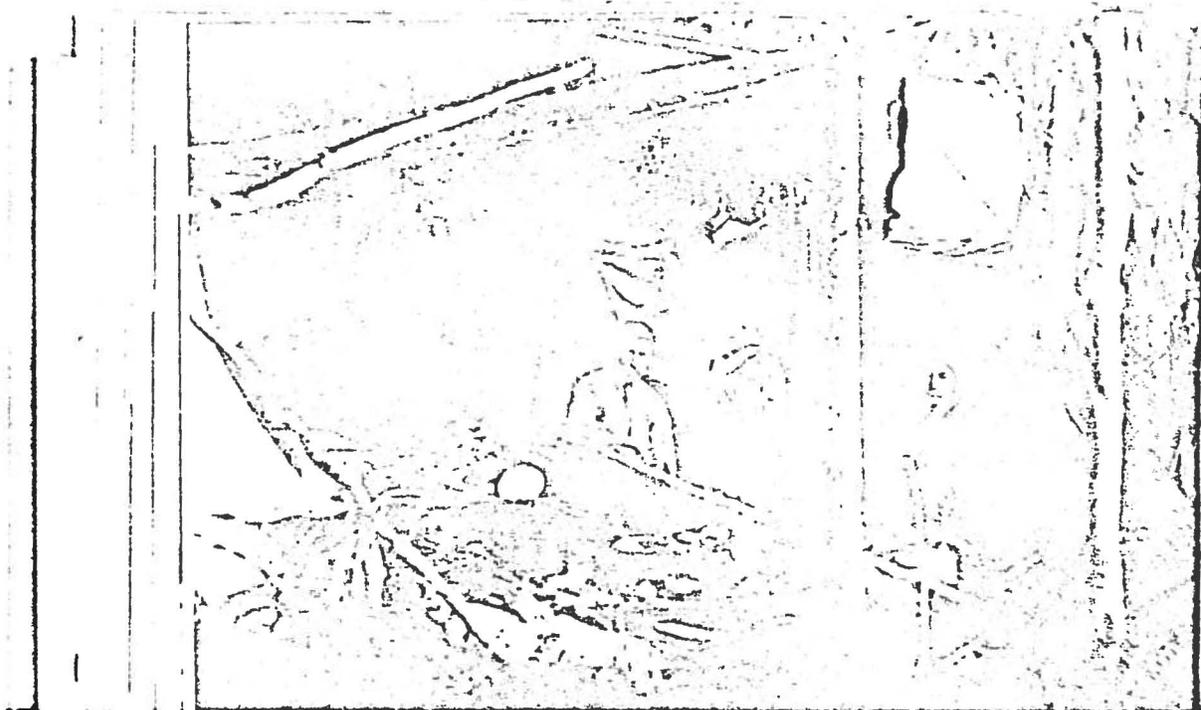
Poling, lining, and rowing their homemade craft called the Come What May through the lower, middle, and upper canyons, they slowly, excruciatingly made their way up the river. At one point they used a block and tackle they had wisely brought with them to winch their heavy craft over a ridge of rock that extended across the middle canyon. Ten miles above that obstacle they met an old time trapper named Watson after whom the community of Watson Lake was later named.

Money and Godfrey continued through the upper canyon, which Money reported was not as difficult as the first two, and arrived at Frances Lake at the end of July, 1925.

Money was to check out Caesar's and Little Jimmy's* silver showing and later promote it, but without great success. He found gold on a tributary of the Finlayson River and decided to remain in the area to work it. Godfrey, on the other hand, went back to pursue other activities in the Dease Lake region.

Anton Money built a home out of which he operated a small trading business with his wife. He remained at Frances from 1925 to 1929. Money travelled between Frances Lake and Lower Post several times by foot and

* Little Jimmy still lives at Lower Post as of the date of this study (January, 1986).



Caesar and his family at Frances
Lake, circa 1929. Photo by Anton
Money.

lowed
and the
small s
month.

Pl

I ever
touche
creek.
making
hide. T
the del
long, it
with th
sewed t
drumhe
shrank
proof a
his hea
could c
no mor
surface
man to
for hu
slapped
wooden
the skin
out alar

Sin
seen blo
mer sun
for the
not qui
spread
the trea
laughin
wind. I
of our c
it. Ever

dog team. On several occasions he referred to an overland trail used by the natives that "...followed close to the foothills east of Frances River."*

Money explained the reason for its location was to avoid the many steep cuts made by tributary streams that drained into the Frances River. The trail, according to Money, ran in almost a straight line from Lower Post to Frances Lake.

After Money left Frances Lake, he returned a few times on visits, but never again took up permanent residence there.

Frank Bailey

A long time Hudson's Bay trader and later involved in forestry, and game protection work, Bailey first went north to Hazelton, B.C. where he ran the trading post there for the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1934, he opened a trading post at Frances Lake as an independent trader. Three years later he went to work directly for Hudson's Bay Company which took over the post he established, this being the first H.B.C. post at Frances since 1851. Bailey operated the store until 1940 when it was closed, and to date it has never been reopened. As far as the trail was concerned, he used the water route at first, and then had all supplies flown in by plane.

* Money, P. 119.

OBSERVATIONS

Observing the Lower Post - Frances Lake route from a historical standpoint, it can be seen that the water route or "trail" is a very difficult and hazardous trip for all but the most expert canoe men.

This stretch of water would seldom be approached in an upstream direction because of the three canyons unless a party of historically-inclined canoe or kayak enthusiasts were bent on duplicating the pioneers. The same applies to travelling downstream.

Indian trails as mentioned by the pioneers and the natives themselves are in evidence, but at best in this region they are sporadic, appearing and reappearing at intervals in the maze of swamps, windfall, grass hummocks, and beaver dams that have backed up streams to cover the paths. These "obstructions" combined with the ever-present mosquito nuisance of mid-summer make long distance hiking trails impractical in this immediate area.

However, based on historical research, the Frances Lake trail does lend itself to some possibilities. Trails worth a more definitive look would be of the one or two day variety that leave the Campbell or Cantung highways and either make a circuit and come back to the road, or

are one way to a certain destination and back. Virtually all of these trails have to be cut anew, though in some places segments of old paths may be found.

SUGGESTED TRAILS FOR FIELD STUDY

1. Mile 35/56.3km - (a) Frances River bridge. Leave on the east side of the bridge following benches of the river north to the Cantung Highway. Distance about 45 miles.

(b) Same route as above only follow the base of the foothills east of the river.

2. Mile 49/78.9km - Leave the Campbell Highway and proceed along the west bank of the Frances River to the tote road appearing on the Watson Lake sheet (1:250,000) and following that to emerge on the Cantung Highway. About 30 miles.

3. Mile 12.1/19.4km (Cantung Highway) - Proceed north along (Queen Creek?) thence skirting the western base of Mount Billings until a point is reached directly east of the old H.B.C. trading post. From there cut across to the post. Return trip would follow the benches of the Frances River back to the

highway. (The Tyres River would have to be crossed on this route.)

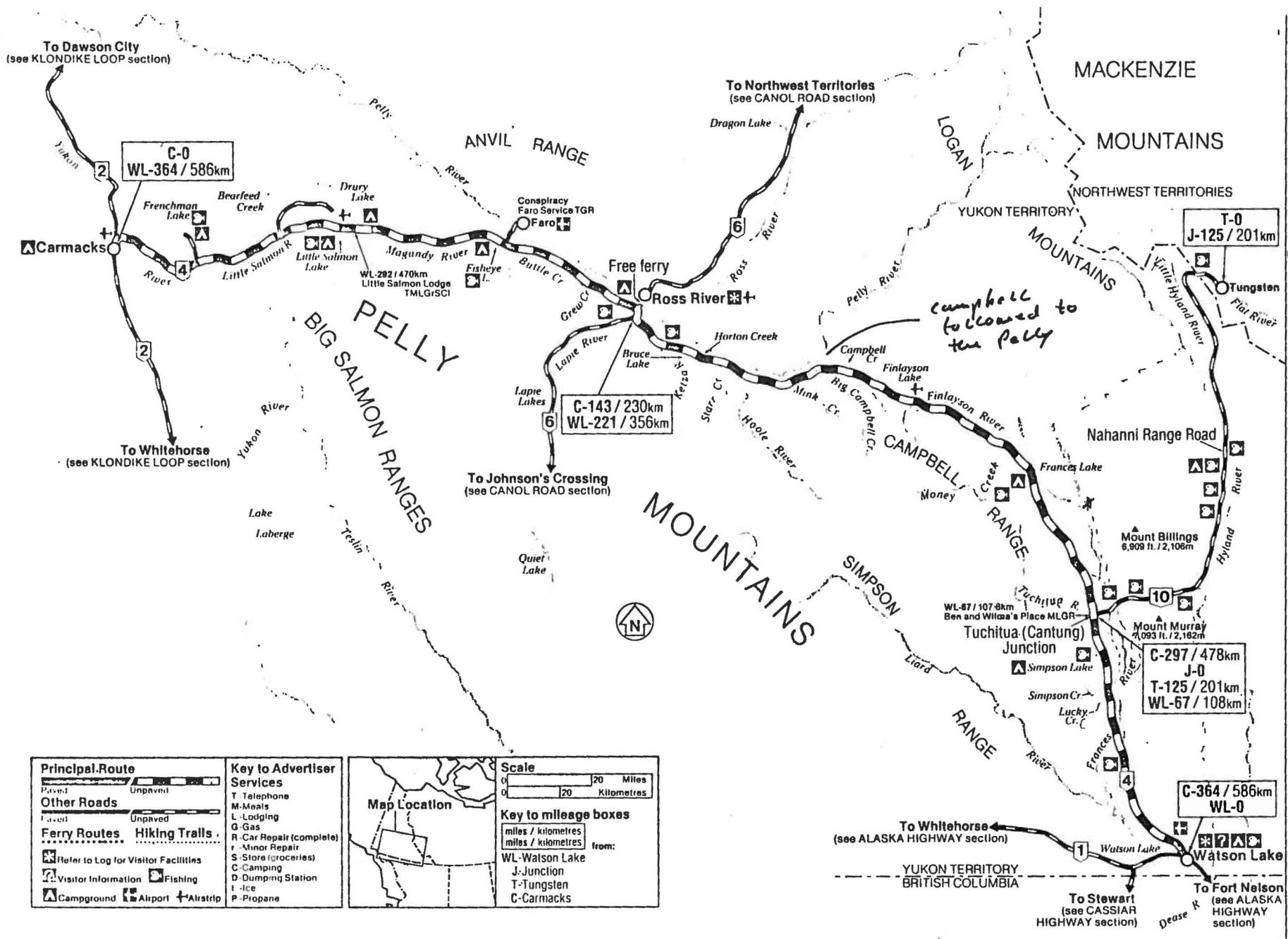
4. Mile 67/107.8km - From Tuchitua Junction follow Inspector Moodie's trail along the west side of the Frances River to Frances Lake, then along the lake to the campground just past Money Creek at Mile 107/172.2km. Distance about 60 miles.

5. Mile 5.2/8.3km (Cantung Highway) - Proceed by way of the south bank of the Frances River along the upper canyon to the Tuchitua River following that to the Campbell Highway. Distance about 5 miles.

6. Mile 74/114km - Hike from Campbell Highway to the old portage site above rapids of Frances River. Distance (one way) 2.5 miles.

WINTER TRAILS

Winter trails for snow machines and cross country skiing comprise different evaluations. They can be considerably longer in this area, though care must be taken not to jeopardize trappers' trails, bush cabins,



Principal Route Paved Other Roads Unpaved Ferry Routes Hiking Trails	Key to Advertiser Services T Telephone M Meals L Lodging G Gas R Car Repair (complete) R Minor Repair S Store (groceries) C Camping D Dumping Station I Ice P Propane
--	---



Scale 0 20 Miles 0 20 Kilometres	Key to mileage boxes miles / kilometres miles / kilometres from: WL - Watson Lake J - Junction T - Tungsten C - Carmacks
---	--

and summer operations such as fishing camps that are unwatched in winter.

HISTORICAL SIGNS

Material from this research should be sufficient to compose interpretive material with regards to the area being studied, and written as required.

THE LOWER POST - UPPER POST TRAIL

This trail appears on the Watson Lake map (1:250,000) as a dotted line going almost directly north from Lower Post passed Baker and Shrimp Lakes to Stewart Lake thence to the foot of Murray Mountain where it ends in Dolly Varden valley. Margaret Kuiack interviewed Francis Magun, 72, whose trap line covers that area. He told Margaret the old trail went north along the west side of Mt. Billings to the trading post at Francis Lake.

A general concensus of people interviewed, however, appears to point up the fact the lower trail is now grown over, goes through swamps and grass hummocks with much low country, and would not be appealing enough for the expense of restoration. However, the upper part of the trail, from the Cantung Road to Frances Lake, might deserve a closer look.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alaska-Northwest Publishing. The Milepost, 1985.
 Camsell, Charles. Son of the North, Ryerson,
 Toronto, 1954.
 Coutts, R. Yukon Places & Names, Gray's, Sidney,
 1980.
 Dawson, G.M. Yukon District, 1887, Queen's
 Printer, Ottawa, 1898.
 Money, Anton. This was the North, General, Toronto,
 1975.
 Moody, J.D. Diary Of: Patrol Reports, Sessional
 Paper No. 15, Part II, 62 Victoria, A. 1898.
 Pike, Warburton. Through the Sub-Arctic Forest,
 New York, 1967.
 Wilson, Clifford. Campbell of the Yukon, Macmillan,
 Toronto, 1970.

ADDITIONAL READING

- MacGregor, J.G. The Klondike Rush Through Edmonton.,
 McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1970.
 Patterson, R.M. Trail to the Interior, Macmillan,
 Toronto, 1966.

INTERVIEWS

- Bailey, Frank - 556-8614
 Edzerza, George - 667-7386
 Frontier Helicopters - 536-7766
 (John Saunders)
 Johnson, Vic - 633-6610
 Magon, Francis - No phone.
 McDonald, Peter & Janet - See Vic Johnson, Porter Creek.
 Szabo, Andy - 536-7521
 Taylor, Don - 536-7575
 Toole, Gordon - 536-7346
 Van Bibber, Eileen - 536-7363
 Watson Flying Service - 536-2231
 (Stan Bridcut)

SUGGESTED SOURCES (If needed)

- Jimmie, Howard and Mathew - No phone.
 Lootz, Dan - No phone.
 Miller, Don - No phone.
 McKay, John - No phone.
 Stewart, Minnie - No phone. (?)

TRAPLINES

1. (368) Edna McDonald.
2. (369) Gerald Edzerza
3. (360) John Kloss.
4. (350) Oscar Stewart)
5. (356) Roy Stewart.
6. (351) Francis Magun.
7. (259) Norman Stewart.
8. (255) Eileen Van Bibber.

OUTFITTER

1. Gordon Toole - 536 - 7346 (retired)