On the Trail of Nova Scotia’s Art

The colourful studios of nearly 100 artists and artisans are the stopping places on a scenic Maritime rally

BY RUSSELL FELTON

I can never visit Halifax without experiencing a pang of nostalgia. It puts me in mind of my birthplace, a port city of comparable size on the other side of the world, in Australia. Indeed, in the great age of sail, vessels out of Halifax would make their way around Cape Horn and across the Pacific to our harbour, where the sailing ships were moored three or four deep, forming forests of masts and spars that my great-grandmother would remember all her life. On this occasion, a Thursday evening in the fall, my pleasurable anticipation on arriving in Halifax is heightened by the fact that I will, for the first time, travel beyond the confines of the city to other parts of Nova Scotia I have long wanted to visit: the historic south shore and the green and pleasant Annapolis Valley.

I am to spend the approaching weekend participating in the Nova Scotia Studio Rally. For two days, almost 100 artists and artisans throughout the province (from the farthest reaches of Cape Breton to Yarmouth at the southwestern tip of the peninsula) will open their studios — and generally their homes as well — to those taking part in the rally. A gorgeously illustrated map, available at Esso stations in the province, provides not only detailed directions to the studios (“grey house with boats in yard,” “turn right at green garbage box”) but also a brief description of each artist’s work.

An ingenious means of exhibiting the works of Nova Scotia’s artists and craftspeople, the Studio Rally is the brainchild of two remarkably energetic and dedicated women, Adriane Abbott and Beverly McClure.

Accomplished artisans in their own right, Abbott and McClure met five years ago, when they both found themselves serving on the Nova Scotia Designer Crafts Council. The two were committed to the goal of finding new ways to help the province’s artists and craftspeople sell their work, and together they developed the idea for the rally: “We’d heard of art tours being organized in various places, and we’d both seen a map locating craft galleries in New Hampshire,” Abbott tells me in her slightly cramped but surprisingly uncluttered studio in downtown Halifax. “Since we didn’t have enough commercial galleries to merit a map, we decided to locate the studios of individual artists instead and to organize an annual event that would take people to them.”

“We wanted to help our artists and their work become better known to the public,” says McClure at her studio in Grand Pré. “We also wanted to ‘demystify’ art, artists and the artistic process. I know it sounds hokey, but that was kind of a dream Adriane and I shared — bringing together artists and the people for whom they create their work.”

For the inaugural rally in 1992, participating artists covered the cost of printing the 50,000 maps, which were distributed by tourist bureaus and the artists themselves. In 1993, with some financial aid from the province, 80,000 maps were printed, and media coverage and public awareness rose accordingly. For participation in the rally to increase substantially, however, Abbott and McClure concluded that they would need corporate sponsorship.

In her Halifax studio, Adriane Abbott, co-founder of the Nova Scotia Studio Rally, creates a new piece for a winter show.
munity is vitally important. The Group of Seven helped to build Canada’s identity — our current artists and artisans are furthering that work.

**Given the Brief That Comes Into Planning and Preparing for the rally, natural justice would require that the weather cooperate, and it does, providing two full days of brilliant, cloudless skies and thirties temperatures.**

My rally tour begins at Adrienne Abbott’s atelier, Blanket Statements, where testaments to her artistic abilities are everywhere. In 1989, equipped with a degree in fine arts from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, a diploma in fashion design from Toronto’s Ryerson Polytechnical Institute (now Ryerson Polytechnic University) and a second-hand loom, Abbott set out to create a new image for weaving by, in her words, "reinterpreting some old traditions." She regards the actual weaving of her colourful blankets and scarves as merely preparatory work, repetitive and mechanical, similar to a painter’s preparation of the canvas. The creative and expressive work is in the embellishment of them. In this, Abbott draws inspiration from craft traditions around the world, such as Japanese textiles; molas the reverse-applique art of the Canal people of Panama’s San Blas region; and, indeed, Nova Scotia’s folk art.

Abbott’s distinctive work has gone unrecognized. She has won numerous awards and scholarships, and one of her blankets was presented as a gift from the Government of Canada to the late French president Francois Mitterrand and his wife, Danielle.

Ten minutes from Abbott’s studio, still in Halifax, I visit the home and studio of Elizabeth Galusha, alias LizzyBug, who makes, well, bugs — spiders, cockroaches, June bugs, cicadas, dragonflies, crame flies, bees, wasps and various other winged or crawling creatures, each faithfully depicted in wood, wire, paper, metal and glue and painted in the iridescent or dun hues with which nature endows them in life. She becomes jewellry, others are mounted on "found" items such as broken bits of plaster, moulding or window screens.

To some it may seem a strange area of artistic specialization, but not to Galusha, who, like Abbott, earned a fine arts degree at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and started her career as a painter. "Growing up on a farm in southwestern Ontario, I saw a lot of insects and was always fascinated by them," she says. "I’ve studied them ever since, and after a while I started making them. People seem to like them."

From the fascinating if slightly unconventional world of Galusha’s bugs, a 30-minute drive along Nova Scotia’s picturesque south shore takes me to the home and studio of Susan Aikins, a wood-block artist, painter, sculptor and poet, and her husband and artistic collaborator, the wood-block printer Sam Rogers.

Their grey-shingled home and studio sit square at the tip of Prospect Peninsula and are blessed with a sublime view of this fabled stretch of coastline. A long, settled fishing wharf sits to one side, a small mountain of lobster traps to the other. Fishing and pleasure boats rest at anchor on the glass-smooth water.

Born in Montreal, Aikins is one of very few westerners, and even fewer women, to have achieved worldwide renown as an ukiyo-e artist. To create her ukiyo prints, Aikins carves designs on cherry or basswood and prints them on handmade Japanese paper. So detailed and subtly textured are the prints that it’s nearly impossible to believe that they aren’t watercolour paintings.

Aikins’ work is exhibited regularly in Japan as well as in Canada and elsewhere; in 1990 she became one of the youngest people ever to be elected an academician of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts.

Aikins and Rogers move easily between eastern and western cultures, dividing their time between their idyllic Nova Scotia base, Japan and, more recently, China. Their home on Prospect Peninsula includes a Japanese room, which opens to a small Japanese-style rock garden. I look beyond the garden towards the shore. A local fishermen gets fish on a spindly wharf that reaches out over the water. From a wharf across the harbour, a blast of country music reaches me. East meets Down East, perhaps.

**To say that Lunenburg is picturesque would be akin to describing the Acropolis as being of historical interest. The village spills down a steep hillside to a sparkling harbour, its narrow major streets running parallel to the shore like a series of steps, every house and building immaculately painted and maintained. Lunenburg was once of Nova Scotia’s most important shipbuilding centres (the most**
A whimsical scene, hand-painted on fabric (bottom right), is typical of the work of Holly Carr, pictured at home (above) with Alan Bateman. Sunflowers, like those in the couple's garden, are the subject of two of Bateman's recent works (below).

famous Canadian schooner of all, the Bluenose, was built and launched here). As I walk along the waterfront on this Saturday afternoon, I am greeted by a cooking offshore breeze that would have girded the crews of the tall ships that once sailed out of this harbour for distant ports.

The rally has brought me here to visit Christopher Hackett, a blacksmith and artist. At his place of work, the Lusignan Forge & Metalworks Co., in a converted salmon fishery on the waterfront, Hackett makes anchors and various other metal fittings for local fishermen and boaters, as well as a wide range of hooks, hitches, treys, snares, brackets, gates, wrought-iron furniture and other items. He also forges and paints whimsical metal sculptures—fish, whales and mermaids frolicking in foam-tipped waves, and west-coast fishers in their dories and skiffs.

To step into Hackett's smithy, with its blackened forge, massive bellows, glowing embers and smells of coal smoke and drying paint, is to enter a world far removed from that of computer screens and serrated rows of data. Yet for most of his life Hackett moved in the latter, hardly expecting to find himself in this one. Born in Chicago, he spent 12 years in an investment bank in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and after moving to Nova Scotia in 1989 spent another year managing an investment brokerage firm in Halifax.

"Then one day I read a newspaper article about one of the last surviving marine blacksmith opera-

ons in the province, and I knew right away that I wanted to be a marine blacksmith," he says, chuckling at the coincidence.

"I signed on as a volunteer apprentice with a working blacksmith for two years and, to get some formal craft training, also enrolled in the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. Then I set up my forge here, and here I am."

ON SUNDAY MORNING, A DRIVE AROUND the peninsula and a stop at the Bread and Roses Country Inn in Annapolis Royal, I visit the sculptor John Vanderwest and his family in the village of Granville Ferry at the mouth of the Annapolis Valley. The land here is flat and fertile. It has less of a maritime feel than the south shore, although the nearby Bay of Fundy, with its huge tides, still provides a livelihood for many people of the area.

Originally from southwestern Ontario, Vanderwest creates sculptures from wood and stone, both local and imported, for an international clientele. The works, often of fish intertwined with human figures, are vital and pulsing with energy.

As robust and vigorous as his work, Vanderwest is a strong supporter of the rally, Abbott and McClure, he tells me, have done a huge amount for the Nova Scotia arts community—"as much, if not more, than anyone else over the last 20 years."

Vanderwest loves having people visit his studio. "Most of the time local people are shy about dropping in—it's like they don't want to intrude or interrupt," he says. "When the rally's on, it's different. People feel they've been invited. And I like talking about my work and finding out what people think of it. It's what keeps you going as an artist."

Later in the day, at the other end of the valley, amid balsam and gerrit rolling hills near Canning, a community 10 kilometres north of Wolfville, I find myself in another setting of bocic near perfect-

tion. Settled amid pasture land and with a garden of now fading sunflowers are the home and studio of the painters Alan Bateman and Holly Carr.

Son of the world-famous Canadian naturalist-painter Robert Bateman, Alan paints rural landscapes and other objects and scenes in acrylics and watercolours. Carr creates unique hand-painted wall hangings and pillows, as well as silk scarves and other pieces of clothing that are exhibited and sold at galleries and stores throughout Canada as Carr Wearable Art. The pieces are whimsical—one, for example, is a cocktail dress featuring illustrations of socialites attending a cocktail party.

Bateman and Carr's studio is the busiest I will visit during the weekend—rallists arrive and depart in a steady stream. Bateman, slender and soft-spoken, and Carr, considerably pregnant with the couple's first child, receive them with patience and grace.

In the fading light of Sunday afternoon, my tour concludes in Grand Pre, about five kilometres east of Wolfville. Here, at the home of Beverly McClure and her husband, the painter George Walford, I begin by sampling the jellies, cheeses and other gourmet items that the couple makes—flavoured honeys with home-grown herbs—and sells under the brand name Tangled Gardens.

The English-born Walford was an established realist painter before taking time to build the couple's home and workplace. Now returned to his canvases, he creates stunning abstract paintings—often in grey, brown and orange earth tones—that are as widely admired and exhibited as his earlier, realistic work. McClure's airy primitive sculptural baskets are fashioned from wood, bark, dried grasses, leaves and plants, all of which she gathers locally. "I'm Beverly's fetcher and carrier," says Walford. "She'll spend all day in the woods, loading me up with twigs and bark, which she somehow puts together and transforms into something meaningful and exotic."

In TWO DAYS I HAVE VISITED seven studios and 10 artists. Sipping coffee with McClure and Walford in their kitchen overlooking their splendid and, truth to tell, not-totally-tangled gardens, I find myself wishing I could have done more. I would love to have seen the individually crafted guitars, violins and harps of Otis A. Tomas in the Cape Breton community of St. Anne's; the watercolours and prints of Jay Lukas in Jass River, 40 kilometres west of Truro; the baskets and wreaths that Jane Whitten and Michael Henry create from seaweed and shells near LaHave on the south shore.

Fortunately, there is time. The Studios Rally is now firmly established on the calendar of significant cultural events in Nova Scotia. There will be a rally next year and the next, and the one after that. I'll be back."

As their home in Grand Pre (top), Beverly McClure, one of the rally's co-founders, and her husband, George Walford, draw inspiration from the "not-totally-tangled" garden. McClure's wicker baskets complement the abstract paintings of Walford (left).
But Lowe values Crossroads for more than the expertise participants provide—she appreciates the work it does in breaking down cultural barriers. “Sometimes people go to another land wearing blinkers. They think their own culture is superi-or, and they view everything about other cultures from that perspective. But when people live and work in another country, the blinkers come off, and they gain a global vision. They go home realizing every culture has something of value to offer.”

Many Crossroads participants ask to be placed in locations where they can make use of their expertise. Often such positions are found, although the work may be very different from any they have previously done. A health policy researcher from Burlington, Ont., for example, recently helped out at a clinic for disabled children in Nepal, and a Nigerian lawyer worked with inmates at Ontario’s Kingston Penitentiary and with the John Howard Society. Other participants want to experience something totally different—last year a banker from Togo stayed with a Prince Edward Island farmer who showed him the ropes of commercial beekeeping.

Whether working in their own field or not, many participants seek jobs that will help them to expand their skills. One such person was Katrina Wens. He was among the participants Crossroads flew to Canada last fall. A full-time accountant for the Kenya Scouts Association, Wens worked for three months in Toronto at the Ontario headquarters of Scouts Canada. Back in Nairobi, he held the books manually, but when UNICEF donated two computers to the 150,000-member association, he realized he needed to acquire electronic skills. Wens could have learnt these closer to home, of course, but he wanted to get a feel for how other scouting associations operate and to experience living in a foreign country. Sitting in a Toronto restaurant one month after his arrival, Wens says he not only is mastering the computer but is picking up fund-raising tips. “We have energy and commitment in the Kenyan association,” he says, “but we are badly in need of income-generating ideas.”

The Toronto trip marks the first time the 10-year-old bachelor has been outside Africa. The only thing he doesn’t like about Canada is the weather. “Everybody says you’re having a warm autumn, but I’m always cold,” he says. “I walk around with my hands in my pockets.” As for the legendary reserve and politeness of Canadians, he thinks it is at times a blessing. “People don’t bother you in the streets. Canadians have a nice sense of calm and solitude. In Nairobi everybody’s friendly and talking to you, which is nice, of course, but you can’t always do with your thoughts.”

“Often when people here learn that I’m from Kenya, they imagine my life must be exotic,” remarks Wens. “I laugh when I hear that. Nairobi is a big, noisy, modern city. There are no lions or elephants there.” He stops for a moment and smiles. “Just the other day a fellow asked me if Kenya had electricity. He seemed surprised when I said, ‘Yes—and cars and refrigerators and satellite television.’” Wens, the son of a hotel cook, says that his life in Nairobi is not dramatically different from the life many men his age lead in Canada. “I share a house with a cousin and take a bus to work each morning. On weekends I play tennis, swim or go to a movie with my girlfriend, who’s a clerical worker.”

Learning that people from different cultures have many things in common is, of course, as valuable as learning about their differences. “I know that I will for ever see foreigners in a new light,” says Wens. “I will remember that there are many common bonds that people from all parts of the world share.”

Crossroads operates on an annual budget of about $2.2 million. More than 80 percent of that is contributed by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The remainder is com-
“Often when people here learn that I’m from Kenya, they imagine my life must be exotic,” says Weru. “I laugh when I hear that. Nairobi is a big, noisy, modern city. There are no lions or elephants there.”

Now a geologist in Mali with a Canadian mining company, Françoise Goutier spent three months as a Crossroads participant at a Mali youth camp in 1979 and has been a Crossroads volunteer ever since.

"If I am a sharp, biting cold in Whitehorse, two days before Kenneth Mitchell is scheduled to return to Canada, he too feels he has gained a great deal from his Crossroads experience. He was, he says, impressed by the federal and territorial laws protecting Yukon’s natural environment. His small country (964,000 citizens live in a 145-square-kilo-

metre area) isn’t doing enough, he says, to stop people from unknowingly destroying wildlife habitats and dumping garbage in the hills. "I am going to join Friends of the Earth, and do whatever else I can to help preserve the island’s environment.""
Searching for the perfect lubricant

Today's engine oils have to do far more than their predecessors. Imperial's scientists are hard at work developing oils that are both environmentally friendly and suited to today's highly sophisticated vehicles.

By Wynne Thomas

A sunny day in early spring the chalkboard in Meda Hafey's office at Imperial Oil's research centre in Sarnia, Ont., is covered with a long and complex algebraic formula, which looks rather like the scientific hieroglyphics you sometimes glimpse in the background of TV documentaries on, say, nuclear physics. The comparison is not all that off the mark. Hafez is a research scientist, although his field is not nuclear physics but chemical engineering, and the chalkboard doodling, he explains, is the result of some thinking his group has been doing on improving heavy-duty engine oils.

The engine oil in question is a product sold by Imperial under the name Essexolub XD-3 Extra and designed to meet the demanding requirements of the latest models of diesel engines. XD-3 Extra is the best-selling heavy-duty engine oil in Canada, but Hafez, always the scientist, is playing around with ideas about how it might be made even better.

There was a time, albeit long ago, when the oil in one's car was an uncomplicated product: basic, in composition and relatively easy to manufacture. Indeed, the earliest automobiles were relatively happily lubricated by simple mineral oils distilled from crude oil produced in southern Ontario and the eastern United States.

Vehicles today, however, would not get you very far on such oils. The modern high-performance internal combustion engine—built with new materials to fine tolerances and festooned with emission controls—demands oils of a complexity unmistakable of a few decades ago. The list of ingredients that go to make engine oil has grown as long as the formula on Hafez's chalkboard and includes not only crude oil derivatives but such chemical compounds as detergents, dispersants, viscosity improvers and antioxidants, plus a score of minor components.

Fortunately, Hafez, who heads the engine and drive train lubricant research section at the Sarnia facility, has a knack for explaining complicated processes in simple terms. "The job of an engine oil today," he says, "remains what it always has been—to minimize engine performance by reducing friction and to protect the components of the engine from wear by minimizing metal-to-metal contact. And even today, a large part of any engine lubricant is still derived from crude oil."

But, adds Hafez as he sketches the outline of the inards of a modern engine alongside his chalkboard formula, today's engines require the addition of many different ingredients to this crude oil base.

First, antioxidants are added to protect the base oil from oxidation. Then a group of agents specifically designed to reduce engine wear is added. Essentially, the agents do their job by depositing a protective chemical coating on the moving parts of the engine—such as the pistons and valves—that requires lubrication.

Then comes a group of detergent additives, designed to wash away the sludge that forms on the internal surfaces of an engine. They work, says Hafez, in much the same way that detergents in the home do when washing dishes or clothes, although the chemical compositions of the detergents differ, because one group must be soluble in oil and the other in water.

And, finally, dispersants are added to modern-day engine oils to prevent dirt—basically dirt—formed on the engine surfaces. In some new engines, Hafez explains with the aid of another chalkboard drawing, there is very little clearance between the top of the piston and the first ring zone, it is very important to keep the area clean.

Exchanged in such kindergarten terms, it all sounds simple enough, but in fact, formulating and manufacturing a modern engine oil involves some pretty sophisticated chemistry. "The challenge," says Hafez, "lies in striking the right balance between the various ingredients so that an engine can achieve maximum performance. There are many surprises lying in wait for even the most experienced researcher. Both the ingredients themselves and the processes involved have changed a lot since the old days."

The old days, for Imperial, reach back to the turn of the century, when the company found a ready market for its crude grease among the homesteaders who spread across the West in Red River carts following the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885. (Few settlers were tempted by the $1.25 refund the company offered for the oil barrels in which its product was shipped. In an early example of recycling, settlers pressed them into service as washtraps, as rain barrels and, suitably modified, as armchairs.)

When the homeless carriage first chugged its way onto the Canadian scene in the early years of the century, it not only opened up a vitally important market for a brand new product called gasoline (Imperial opened Canada's— and possibly North America's— first gas station in Vancouver in 1908) but signalled the need for better lubricating oils. The waxy products then on the market tended to gum up engine parts. Indeed, substantial progress was made in those early years. From some new oilfields in Texas and South America came crude oils containing little or no wax, which yielded lubricating base oils with good cold-weather properties. And in the early 1920s, Imperial's Sarnia refinery pioneered a vacuum distillation process, which led to a major improvement in engine oil performance by creating a range of lubricant viscosities to meet the require-
"Around the middle of 1991," says Medi Hafez, "it became clear that the design of heavy duty diesel engines would undergo major changes by 1994 to meet new and tougher emission requirements in the United States."

The new development was of particular interest to the company, which had been working on the development of diesel engines for several years. In 1992, the company hired its first research scientist, Dr. K. R. Smith, who was known for his expertise in the field of diesel engines. The team worked tirelessly to develop a new engine that would meet the stringent emission standards set by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

By the time the automobile was becoming a familiar sight in Canada, and Imperial was gearing up to produce the new engine, the company had already invested a significant amount of money in research and development. The team worked day and night to meet the deadline, and the result was a new engine that was more powerful and fuel-efficient than any other in the market.

The new engine was released to the market in 1994, and it quickly became a best-seller. It was praised for its reliability and fuel efficiency, and it set a new standard for the industry. The company's sales increased significantly, and they were able to expand their operations to other countries, including the United States.

Today, the company continues to innovate and improve its products, always striving to meet the needs of its customers and the demands of the market. The team is constantly working on new projects, and they are always looking for ways to improve their products and stay ahead of the curve.
Top of the Class

Three Canadian public schools are among the best in the world according to a study conducted by two U.S. educational experts

BY SHONA MCKAY

search on the subject of effective schools for the past four years. "From the outside, Keswick Ridge is not that impressive," says Haynes, who heads the student-teaching programme at Western Carolina University. "The school is weather worn and small. But once inside, it doesn't take long to discover that this school is special. There's an atmosphere of dynamism and innovation. Senior students and staff are working together in a new programme in interactive education. In every classroom I visited, kids appeared to be happy, involved and excited. It's a fabulous place.

Haynes first became acquainted with Keswick Ridge in the spring of 1995, when he and Chalker, director of Western Carolina University's Alliance of Business Leaders and Educators, travelled to Canada in search of schools to use as a forthcoming book on the key characteristics of exceptional schools. The journey took Haynes to the East Coast, where he singled out Keswick Ridge as well as Brookfield School in Dartmouth, N.S. Meanwhile, Chalker visited Ontario, where he identified a number of noteworthy schools, the most prominent, to his mind, being Lord Lansdowne Public School in Toronto's inner core.

The two academics have been preoccupied with global education since the early 1990s. Recalls Haynes: "At the beginning of the decade, there was much discussion about the crisis in the American educational system. Our students were faring poorly in international tests, and our schools were plagued with violence. Everyone from parents to politicians was calling for reform." The appeal prompted Chalker and Haynes to look at schools around the world with the goal of finding innovative and effective approaches to education that might be applied at home. "No one country has all the ingre-idents of a perfect educational system," notes Chalker. "What we found was that certain places excelled in certain ways. For example, in France, almost all three-year-olds attend a state primary school. Given what we know about the benefits of early childhood education, that's very impressive. And New Zealand has developed an excellent math and language curriculum, which has been copied throughout the world." Chalker and Haynes were also impressed with the success Britain has had with its recently introduced system of site-based management, which gives parents and teachers a stronger role in administering the schools with which they're associated. Noteworthy too, Chalker and Haynes add, is South Korea's national curriculum and testing programme.

While the two scholars did not single out one specific aspect of the Canadian school system as remarkable, they nonetheless found much that was praiseworthy in Canada. "As in all countries, we relied on local administrators to point us towards schools that were recognized as outstanding," says Chalker. "So, in a sense, our research is based on the best a country or region feels it has to offer. If we did not feel the schools were exemplary, however, we would not have included them as such. And it's our view that quite a few Canadian schools are already using many of the ingredients of the exemplary schools that we plan to highlight in our upcoming book. Your schools are doing so many things right."Such words will probably come as a surprise to Canadians, who are much more used to hearing the country's educators and educational institutions maligned. And, indeed, there appears to be room for criticism. Recent research conducted by the Economic Council of Canada, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational
Achievement and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada indicates that Canadian high school students fare poorly in science and math tests. Also, at a time when a high school education is required for all but the most menial of jobs, a full one-third of Canada's young people drop out of school before completing grade 12. And what of literacy? Although statistics indicate that the rate of functional illiteracy is falling, there is still cause for concern. For instance, in Ontario an astounding 40 percent of community college entrants fail required literacy tests.

Yet we have come a long way when confronted with such attacks, viewing trouble in the classroom as a societal rather than educational issue. Certainly that's Chalker's opinion. "It's my belief that a society gets the schools it deserves," he says.

Those involved in education cite one other factor that critics often fail to take into consideration when maligning today's schools. It is that the expectations placed on schools are very different these days from those of a generation ago. "There are a great many misconceptions out there," says Haynes. "Too often the public judges the school system using values and criteria that applied 10 years ago."

Jean Llewellyn, principal of Brookhouse School in a middle-class suburb of Dartmouth, agrees. An educator for the past 27 years, Llewellyn notes that teachers today "are expected to do much more" than ensure that young critics are proficient in the three Rs. "When I started teaching, things were much simpler," she recalls. "School was a more controlled and controlling environment. Teachers stood at the front of the classroom and covered the material that was outlined in the course guidelines."

But we have come a long way for the better, Llewellyn insists. "Today, we operate in a more open environment and teach in many more creative and effective ways," she says. "Before, if a child was having trouble grasping arithmetic in the abstract, we'd probably fail him. Today, that child is more likely to receive individual help -- different methods could be used to help him learn, enabling him to move ahead. This individual approach to learning means teachers have a more difficult job. But it's much more rewarding for everyone."

David Nielsen, Kensington Ridge's longtime principal, cautions parents and pupils to be careful what they wish for when calling for a return to schools of yesteryear. "People look back and remember the way it was," he says. "In their minds they see well-behaved kids sitting in orderly rows. They imagine that because they were sitting quietly in those rows that the students were attentive and learning well. They forget what it was really like. I don't remember, for instance, the first time I was strapped. I was in grade 1, and I don't think you could have found a better behaved kid. My sis. I wrote my sums on the left side of the page instead of the right."

Canadian educators are also quick to point out another challenge facing schools today. It is that the student body of the 1990s bears little resemblance to the school population of a generation ago. Countrywide legislation mandating that children of all abilities learn together, for example, has brought a definite change to the classroom. Today, teachers find themselves teaching not only garden variety boys and girls but also those who are physically challenged and those who have significant learning disabilities.

A visit to Toronto's Lord Lansdowne Public School illustrates still another change in the student body -- today's students are much more ethnically diverse than in the past. Says the school's principal, Peter Freiberg, as he walks down brightly decorated halls: "A full two-thirds of our kids speak a language other than English at home."

Addressing language and cultural issues presents teachers with yet another challenge, but, as Freiberg would no doubt agree, Canadian children gain a tremendous amount from attending a school whose students come from a broad range of ethnic backgrounds, especially in this world of globalization. But to meet the needs of a more diverse student population, many Canadian schools have had to develop more varied and complex curricula.

As Chalker and Haynes discovered, successful schools -- wherever they are in the world -- have much in common. "We observed that the best schools have strong, visionary leaders," says Haynes. "They also set high expectations, demand academic excellence and an orderly learning environment. Perhaps most important, good schools recognize that it takes a whole village to raise a child. They welcome and encourage parental and community involvement."

There's no doubt that the three schools Chalker and Haynes identified as excellent in Canada are headed by capable, resourceful individuals. Kensington Ridge's David Nielsen is a case in point. A remarkable man who has headed the school for the past 22 years and whose considerable talents as an educational innovator, musician and pilot have led members of the school community to dub him a Renaissance man, Nielsen has made his presence felt everywhere. For example, it is thanks to his belief in the power of technology that Kensington Ridge is computer rich.

A visit to the school's technology room finds it occupied by two seven-year-olds. Having used their personal passwords to log onto one of several CD-ROM-equipped Macintosh computers, they are engrossed in an interactive reading programme. Earlier that morning, before regular classes had begun, two grade 9 students used the equipment to access the Internet, seeking information for their project on veterinary medicine. "We want to ensure that our graduates have the knowledge to use technology as a tool," says Nielsen. "Whatever they end up doing in life, that knowledge will serve them well."

In Kensington Ridge's basement, one comes across a classroom that extends almost the length of the school. Here, working at tables that seat six comfortably, are about 70 grade 7, 8 and 9 students and three teachers. This is the site of the school's three-year-old, continually evolving project in interactive education. "Putting youngsters from disparate grades together works for everybody," says Nielsen. "The younger students can get help from the more experienced persons seated next to them. Meanwhile, the older kids are able to apply and consolidate what they have learned."

Kensington Ridge's commitment to excellence and its penchant for innovation have paid off. Last year, as decreed by Education 2000, New Brunswick's ambitious education reform strategy, Kensington Ridge students took part in province-wide language testing and, according to Hugh Dugas, assistant superintendent of school district 18,
strong indicates that he will be able to accommodate the youngsters.
Down the stairs and along the hall, a visitor comes to another room that plays a significant role in the life of many students at Lord Lansdowne. It is the resource room. "We were finding that our vice-principal was spending a disproportionate amount of time handling disciplinary issues," recalls Friberg. "I wanted this valuable person to spend her time on other things. I also wanted a programme that would deal with discipline issues in a more effective way. The result is the resource room, an open classroom that is staffed at all times with a guidance teacher, a special education instructor and usually a teaching assistant."

The room's function has evolved from its initial concept. "Yes, the room is used by children who are having difficulty paying attention in class," notes Friberg. "A teacher can send a misbehaving student to the resource room for the purpose of completing work in a quiet setting or simply for time out. However, the facility has come to be used in many other ways. Often it's used by kids needing help solving a problem in the playground or by a student who needs some extra assistance with a specific subject."

Thirteen-year-old Emily England found herself in the latter category last spring. A grade 8 student, England participated in a three-times-a-week remedial math programme at the resource room in her final grade 7 term. "I'm a good student but I always do poorly in math," says Emily. "When you're not good at something, you just don't want to participate. But, thanks to the help I got in the resource room, the subject became more interesting. When I got an A in math as my final mark last year, I couldn't believe it. I was so happy!"

Also central to Lord Lansdowne's success are its efforts to foster an atmosphere of respect and tolerance. A school-wide code of behaviour as well as the existence of a peacekeepers programme, through which children learn to act as mediators in minor disputes among peers, have helped the school's goal to be a place of play rather than strife. "The wonderful fact is that we have no ethnic tension or racism here," says Friberg. In fact, there's very little bullying of any kind.

Barbara Pimentel, whose 10-year-old daughter, Tanya, attends Lord Lansdowne, confirms the claim. "My daughter has experienced playground bullying elsewhere," she says. "But at Lord Lansdowne, bullying doesn't seem to be a problem. In fact, Tanya, who was a peacekeeper last year, complained that there was never anything for her to do!"

Pimentel — and all parents who take an active interest in their children's schooling — figure highly in Chalker and Hoyne's recipe for creating a "world-class" school. "Parents' attitude to education has much to do with how well a child does in school," says Chalker. "If parents demonstrate respect for the education system and take an active interest in their children's learning, the results can be tremendous."

Llewellyn can testify to that. Says the principal of Brookhouse: "Parental support figure largely in our success. When kids see parents volunteering to work in the classroom or simply making sure that homework comes before television, the message they get is that education is something of value. When a child understands that, we can do our job much more effectively."

That's an observation Mary Harrison, the mother of two Brookhouse students, about whom she says, "I'm very much appreciative having the school doors open to me," says the New Brunswick native, who moved into the Brookhouse school district after hearing good reports about the school. "When my brothers and I went to school 20 years ago, my parents would have needed to make an appointment to visit our school. It's much, much better now."

Natalie Roy thinks so too. Her eyes still smiling, her enthusiasm ever alive, she is considering her time at Keswick Ridge, looking for the best way to put her school experience into words: "A lot of things I have learnt here will be with me for the rest of my life," she says. "But more than anything else, my school has given me self-confidence. I really believe that I can be whatever I set out to become in life."
Is there something pretentious about making a ritual of cutting open the pages of an old-fashioned book? The question arose some time ago in the venerable Champlain Society, which, for nearly nine decades issued its magnificent volumes of Canadian history with the pages uncut, in the old European tradition. This allowed members to experience, like country gentlemen in Jane Austen novels, the exquisite but altogether innocent pleasure of slicing carefully cutting the pages open with a paperknife, making a distinctive crt, crisp sound. And if a member of the Champlain Society wasn’t eager to read, say, the three volumes of Marc Lescarbot’s 17th-centry History of New France, then he or she could leave the pages permanently uncut, thus retaining the work in mint condition, making the set a more valuable heirloom.

Today, a complete run of Champlain Society books brings about $10,000 in the rare-book market. An amate, if such existed, would likely be worth far more. In truth, there are still few members of the Champlain Society who buy two copies of each book, one to read and one to place on the shelf in pristine, uncut state.

The uncut page issue became vexatious a few years ago, when the word “pretentious” somehow crept into the minds of certain members, disturbing their sense of self-regard. In the old days, no one would have thought to raise the issue. In 1905, when the Champlain Society was founded by Sir Edmund Walker, the banker and philanthropist, high-quality books commonly came from their British printer with the pages uncut, which suited the taste of the society members. Sir Edmund and his friends wanted to publish the crucial documents of Canadian history, like Samuel de Champlain’s writings, but there was never any thought of selling them to the general public or even to ordinary school libraries.

These handsome, well-made volumes, embossed with the society’s crest, appeared in strictly limited editions for a strictly limited coterie of collectors, scholars and amateur students of our national past, with each copy numbered in ink. (Number 1 always went to Sir Edmund.) At the start there were just 250 members (annual fees were $120). A newcomer could join only when a member died or withdrew. The waiting list prevailed for three generations, and in the 1960s, one of Sir Edmund’s great-grandchildren had to wait in line for several years, just like a commuter. Membership is no longer exclusive — since 1975 it has been possible for anyone to join.

From a 1996 perspective, the organization’s past sheds some light on the nature of Canadian history as a subject and on the change in Canada’s leadership class during this century. Created as a way to encourage the study of Canadian history, the society has itself become a revealing part of that history.

It was started, like everything else, by Sir Edmund Walker.” The historian Ramsay Cook, a member since 1974, made that point when I asked him about the society. Sir Edmund has faded from public memory, but in his time he was a towering figure, a self-educated farm boy who became general manager of the Canadian Bank of Commerce at the age of 38 and served as president from 1907 until his death in 1924. He was the dominant figure in the founding of the National Gallery of Canada, the Royal Ontario Museum and the Art Gallery of Ontario – as well as the Champlain Society.

In assembling the first members in 1905, Sir Edmund carefully chose citizens who represented all regions of Canada. (A year later, at its first annual meeting, the society was thanked by a Quebec member for having "chosen the name of the founder of the Province of Quebec ... and the first settler of this country" for its title.) But anyone studying this list today will be less impressed by its geographical range than by the bizarre (in our terms) mingling of intellectuals, artists, politicians and businessmen. The charter subscribers included the prime minister of the day, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, and two of the people who were to succeed him, Robert Borden and Mackenzie King. They also included Sir Sandford Fleming, the inventor of standard time; Sir Gilbert Parker, the historical novelist; two Osler (a high-court judge and an MP); the doctor and popular rhymester W.H. Drummond, the painter Homer Watson; and Sir William Van Horne, builder of the Canadian Pacific Railway. It should be noted, however, that this charter member was an eager recruit: the original will included a generous sprinkling of Bank of Commerce branch managers (the rumour that they joined in order to carry favour with Sir Edmund was given a certain credence when, at a decent interval after his death, they quietly surrendered their memberships).

The population of Canada was then much smaller, the people less cosmopolitan. Yet in some sense, the nation’s leaders were broader then their equivalents of 1996: they hadn’t yet begun to live in the separate compartments they now inhabit. In those days, people in business were as involved in the academics in running the Champlain Society, but over the years that has changed. Today, business people still play a part, but they are overshadowed by scholars who make history their career. The Champlain Society’s story encapsulates what has happened to the study of history: professionals have pushed amateurs to the margins, and the subject has grown relatively narrow. Champlain Society books emerge at a stately pace. At the first annual meeting, Sir Edmund had news of a kind that would later become familiar to generations of members. There had been a delay, he said, in the edging of the first two volumes. No books had been issued as yet, but they were well under way. In fact, Sir Edmund’s ambitious plan never fulfilled. He proposed to issue two books a year, which would have resulted, by 1996, in some 180 volumes, but there have been only 92, which works out to about one a year. Some years, two volumes were indeed published, but other years brought none. In 1912 the society proposed to publish a translation of Joseph François Lafontaine’s Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Time. Work didn’t begin, however, until 1910, and the first volume didn’t appear until 1914. The second and final volume came out in 1917, setting a possible world record for elapsed time between conception and completion of a book project.

Things have not greatly sped up since. The
average gestation period remains about 10 years, books now in the preliminary stages will appear, all being well, when the new millennium is well under way. Most editors are professors with serious interest in the营业执照. The standard opining fee is $3,500 plus, up to $4,500 to cover expenses such as transcription costs. At an hourly rate, the pay falls well below any province's minimum wage, which don't encourage the editor to put it ahead of other work. If someone is appoint- ed to chair a history department, for instance, it must get two books out a year. Today, the second and final volume of The Journal of Alexander Henry the Younger (Henry the Younger was a partner in the North-West Company early in the 19th century) appeared in 1992; the project was first discussed in 1963.

The george of all Champlain Soci- ety productions was, appropriately, The Works of Marie de Champlain, in six volumes. The schedule was typical. The idea was set in motion around 1980, the 350th anniversary of the founding of Quebec by Champlain, and the last of the six volumes finally fell off the press in 1916. In one way, this differed from other projects: it cre- ated a book that the society considered play- ing on a more public stage, committed itself to doing so and then drew back into the obscurity in which it has operated ever since.

The National Humanities Commission, an agency of the Dominion government, awarded the society a $35,000 grant to support a popular edition of the Champlain material on cheaper paper. The government was the money, which was promptly invested; it came in handy some years later, when the bank balance fell to an uncomfortably low level. Decades passed, and eventually members decided that a popular edi- tion might not be a great idea after all, certainly it could make their own copies less valuable. But what about the grant? Did it have to be returned? The National Humanities Commission, when asked this question in 1939, replied ambiguously that the society could forget about it. The printers were then directed to destroy the plates for the Champlain books so that they couldn't be used later by someone else. The members' investment was wasted.

That set a pattern, if you believe Conrad Hei- denreich. The great-grandson of Sir Edmund Walker and a professor at Toronto's York Univer- sity, Heidenreich is the exploration of Canada and early Imperial European contact, Heidenreich has belonged to the Champlain Society for more than three decades. Currently a vice-president, he is critical of some aspects of the society. He is not sure it has a future as grand as its past, and he is convinced that commission has been discovering it down the wrong path for years. Instead, he'd like to see an emphasis on scholarship and the broad dissemination of knowledge. The society's future prospects are clouded by a specter that threatens many venerable institutions. M. Stewart Wallace, the distinguished librarian and editor who directed the Champlain Society programme for thirty years, foresaw this threat and gave precedence to libraries when memberships were opening up. "The Society's not dead," he explains. Today, a quarter of the members are libraries, but the rest are individuals, few of them young. In 1985, many members were in their forties; today the average age is much higher—"60- plus" is the best guess available. When Heidenreich attends meetings, he feels that he represents the younger generat- ion. He was born in 1948.

Currently, membership fees are $30 per year ($70 for institutions), but there are only about 1,000 members, 270 fewer than are needed for economic health. And the business of documentary publishing has been shaky for a long time. Old books are often repub- lished, and quality in cheapo editions, and major- ity in the Canadian past, helping to focus atten- tion on it through scholarly activities, and dis- seminating its most valuable publications much more widely. An example he cites is David Thomp- son's Narrative.

The state of Thompson's reputation illustrates both what's right and what's wrong with the soci- ety—and also says something about public attitudes to Canadian history. Writing for the North West Company in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Thompson mapped much of Western Canada, and in 1814, he explored the entire course of the Columbia River for the first time and discovered what became the main route to the Pacific for seven decades, the Athabasca Pass. (At age 67, as an afterthought, he surveyed what was to become Ontario's Algpenum Park and the province's cottage country region of Muskoka.) In "The Man Who Measured Canada," an article that appeared in the May 1996 issue of National Geographic, Pirt J. Vestlund writes that Thompson "should be one of Canada's most heroic figures," that he may have been "the world's greatest land geographer" and that as an explorer he "made Lewis and Clark look like tourists." Yet Thompson is not widely known. In 1916, the Champlain Society helped establish the explorer's place in history by publishing his account of his travels (edited by J. B. Tyrrell, and a revised edition in 1982. But the society left it at that. Today a copy of David Thompson's Narrative brings up to $1,500 in the rare-book market but is otherwise unavailable. Heidenreich thinks that a popular, low-priced edition would be an ideal project for society. Fraser certainly agrees; "It's an exciting read. That story should be told in a sense of ourselves—Thompson should be our Davy Crockett or whatever."

Seven years ago, Heidenreich outlined his heretical and moderately popular views to the annual meeting. He expected to be lynched, but several members agreed with him. More recently, he expanded the tone, and now he's concerned that it become urgent. Printing costs have risen so high that they threaten to create a considerable deficit. The membership must expand, Heidenreich says. "Otherwise, the writing is on the wall for a society like this." New members, ideally, should be younger than the current average, but Heidenreich doesn't hope for a major influx in that cat- egory. A fresh supply of healthy 45-year- olds would please everyone. Meanwhile, opposing forces in the war of the uncit pages have reached a truce, based on compromise. Those who raised the sub- ject a few years ago claimed they could no longer see the point of uncit pages, and some of them came with the pages neatly cut at the printer's or binder's—some of these dissidents actually used the term "affectation" to describe private page- cutting. They were finally convinced that no affectation was involved. Rather, it was a matter of consist- ency: pages remained uncit so that the series would be uniform. After all, great care was taken to make the books identical, finely typeset, indi- vidually numbered volumes with matching back- rams covers and gilt lettered and crest patterns, while membership brought in more money. But that trouble, it would be silly to precede the pages.

Still, the issue wouldn't go away. One member expressed every year at the annual meeting and said, "I want my pages cut." It might be an easy way to say that tempests flared, but feelings ran deep. And not all those who sincerely defended tradition turned out to be entirely reconciled to affectation. "I consider it a privilege of my membership to cut my pages," one member declared. In 1990, the society finally surveyed the members. Of those who replied to the questionnaire, half said they wanted their pages cut, half said they didn't. Appropriate arrangements were made, and now those who came out in favour of cut pages should not always receive them. All members, receive the books precut. All the rest get the uncut edition, and to this moment the crew, crit sound of the paperknife emanates from the pri- vate libraries of the nation, audible evidence there are some traditions too beautiful to die.
Whisperings of a Prairie River

From its Alberta source to its end in Manitoba, the Saskatchewan River has borne witness to the history of the heartland

BY WAYNE SCHMALZ

On summer mornings, when the sun hasn’t long been up and mist hangs over the earth, you can hear geese calling in the distance. They are down on the river, squawking in cacophonous joy over their morning feast. A while later they lift off, skimming the poplars and sparsely that line the high riverbank as they fly into their familiar V and head off into the now blue sky.

Towards evening, another gagle appears. Tranquilizing their arrival with loud honks, the geese circle a few times, making sure that all is well, and then settle on the river, home for the night.

I grew up within earshot of the North Saskatchewan River on a farm in the hilly, tree-studded, rolling parkland of central Saskatchewan. Our land ran down to the river, whose strong, steady current provided a uniform backdrop to the changing cycle of life around it. While the landscape seemed to change, the crops changing, becoming green shoots and then golden heaps of waving heads, the river’s only change was to freeze in winter. For most of the year it moved unperturbed and unaffected by what went on around it, a constant companion in a world of flux.

This watery line that stretched out seemingly forever in two directions separated us from the farmer opposite. Looking across from our sloping fields, we’d measure his daily progress, trying to get an idea of how his crop was doing and speculating on when he might be harvesting. I never actually met the farmer, but in a strange way I felt close to him – the river drew us together, linking us in an inexplicable way.

As children we were told to be careful of the river, that its appearance could be deceiving, that beneath its usually unperturbed surface were dangerous undertow currents. And then one sunny Sunday afternoon it happened. My cousin had gone with a group of friends to a favourite spot along the river to swim. It was a scorching hot day, and the cool water was a perfect antidote to the stifling heat. "Over here," my cousin shouted to one of his companions. "But watch for the hole. It’s just to your right." As my cousin turned to swim away, he stepped into the hole himself and disappeared. Suddenly, abruptly, he was gone, cruelly betrayed by a river he thought he knew so well.

We never entered the river after that. Instead, we’d slide down its steep banks, push our way through the dense underwater growth that lined its shores, and find a grassy ledge from which to dangle our feet in the water and trail a fishing line. Looming back in the soothing sun, we’d empty our minds of everything that mattered.

Sometimes, on a Sunday morning, my father would say to my mother, "Do you want to go across the river today?" which was his way of asking if she wanted to visit her relatives who lived in places on the other side. The ferry ride itself took only four minutes, yet crossing that water was like entering another world, a world where people seemed to speak and think differently from us. These trips often took us close to Fort Carlton and Duck Lake, places I knew nothing about. It was only later that I learnt it was around here, in 1883, that Louis Riel and the Métis, unable to get guaranteed rights to the land they had occupied for several decades and alarmed by the influx of settlers and the disappearance of the buffalo, had risen up in protest against the Canadian government. The rebellion had been quickly put down. Riel was tried for treason, found guilty and hanged in Regina later that year.

For as long as I can remember I have associated the Saskatchewan River with aboriginal people. Gazing at the long stretches that were visible from my home – sections that had remained unchanged for centuries – I tried to imagine what life was like here before the Europeans arrived. I wondered, too, about other places along the river – upstream, where the banks and depressions that floated past me came from, and downstream, wherever everything eventually went.

A few years ago I decided to satisfy my curiosity by making a film of the Saskatchewan River and its two branches, the North and South Saskatchewan. Together these waterways carve through more than 3,200 kilometres of the country – more even than the St. Lawrence River.

The North Saskatchewan begins as a slow and steady drip from the lip of the Saskatchewan Glacier in the Columbia Icefield, high in the Rocky Mountains of western Alberta. The South Saskatchewan is formed by the confluence of the Bow and Oldman rivers in southern Alberta. The two rivers flow east, coming together in central Saskatchewan, just a few kilometres east of

26 Summer 1996
As I drive through Cumberland House, it becomes obvious that life here is not easy. Robert Buld, who has lived in the community for his entire 63 years, says it is particularly hard for young people. "There aren't too many jobs, and life is getting worse.

Before a huge dam was built 90 kilometers upstream in the 1960s, it was possible to earn a decent living hunting and fishing. But now, with fluctuating water levels, fish, and other wildlife, hunter and trapper have all but disappeared. With few other jobs available, many in the community are dubious about their future. One way or another, it seems the river shapes life here.

Looking at a map, one would think that the source of the North Saskatchewan, within an imposing mountain range, is inaccessible, but the man at a tourist information desk on the Birdie-Jasper highway tells me one can actually hike in. "Tell the better part of a day," he says, "but it's well worth it." And so, from a spot along the highway, I once my way along a tumbling stream and over a low, narrow ridge into a secluded valley. Towering mountains rise on either side, waterfalls cascading gracefully down them. At the end of the valley, on the Continental Divide, is the Saskatchewan Glacier. Climbing over rocks that blanket the valley floor, I eventually reach the glacier. A lake has formed at its toe, and from it several narrow streams push forth with vigour, eventually becoming a single entity, ready for the long journey before it.

The river makes its way east through Rocky Mountain House (another community that got its start as a trading post), through oil-field and through the largely uninhabited sections of western Alberta, collecting water from incoming streams and churning up mud from its dirty bottom. By the time it reaches Edmonton, it has a definite muddy look.

Here the river is part of the urban landscape, with the high-rise buildings of a modern city looking down on it. But many who stroll, jog or bicycle in the park that extends along both its banks feel the river retains some of its wilderness self.

"I like to get back to nature," one person says when I ask what draws him to the river.

Continuing east, the waterway makes its way towards Saskatchewan. Sandbars appear more frequently. Some are temporary; others have taken root and become permanent features. Meandering through the rolling parkland of central Saskatchewan, passing numerous villages along its way, the river eventually flows between the communities of Battleford and North Battleford. The former was once one of the most important communities in Western Canada, serving as the capital of the vast North-West Territories from 1876 to 1882.

Moving with quiet force, the river continues its eastward route through the heartland of Canada, arriving, about 250 kilometers farther on, at Prince Albert. A few kilometres east of here, at a place called La Collie Falls, it becomes unusually agitated, tumbling and lashing its way over protruding rocks. It was here in the early part of the century that the city of Prince Albert decided to build a dam with the aim of producing hydroelectric power. "Prince Albert will yet be the greatest city in Saskatchewan," wrote the editor of the local paper. "All we need for many a year lies in our front yard. Prince Albert is the future Ottawa." A local leader even suggested the city would soon become as important as St. Petersburg, the then capital of Russia.

The dream was not to be realized, however. Estimates of the amount of power that could be generated turned out to be grossly exaggerated and building costs hugely underestimated. As construction costs escalated to more than $1 million, the city had difficulty selling municipal bonds.
LAKES WATONOGI AND MUSKOSCHEN

Camping Contemplations

I must admit to a penchant for camping. I am not a rugged outdoor person, and I can’t even tell the difference between a top-quality sleeping bag and an inferior one. But I like camping just the same. I like cooking sausages and beans on a propane stove, sitting in a folding chair and a blazing fire as days settle into night, and hearing loons call as I drift towards sleep. I like drinking tea from an enamel cup as I watch the sun light up the clouds in the early morning. I like the scent of campfire. I like the serenity.

There is, I am convinced, no better way to see this vast, often wild country than by camping, particularly in our national and provincial parks, which are situated in some of the loveliest spots in this lovely land.

Recently, as I was giving our tent its annual stringent, I realized that over the years my camping adventures had taken me to every province, although, alas, to neither the Northwest Territories nor Yukon.

I have camped beneath Vancouver’s Lions Gate Bridge, by a rushing mountain stream high in the Alberta Rockies, on a grassy meadow in Saskatchewan (where, in distance, I could see Regina rising abruptly from the prairie), and on the sandy shores of Manitoba’s Lake Winnipeg. In Ontario, I have pitched my tent by Lake Superior’s “shining waters,” in an ancient Canadian forest and at the foot of Parliament Hill in Ottawa. And, in Quebec, near La Vérendrye Wildlife Preserve and along the Gaspé, where I saw whales breach the water, I have slept under canvas—or rather, tarp. In the Acadian coast of New Brunswick and in a meadow running down to the sea near Pugwash, N.S., a deep Maritime village where the Pugwash Conferences were founded in 1955 to bring thinkers together from around the world to discuss global issues, I have pitched my tent by the sea. In Nova Scotia, near Cavendish on Prince Edward Island and in the Oakville Harbour, N.S., a place so strictly charming that one can only wonder at the notion that Canada lacks the romantic appeal of Europe. And then I have camped at Baddeck and the Lunenburgs and Cape Breton...

Associated with these tours, of course, are many fond memories. When camping in Prince Edward Island National Park some years ago, my husband and I selected a site as near to the sea as possible and, in our ignorance, pitched our tent with the entrance facing the water. In order to have fresh air while we slept closed just the netting, leaving the tent flaps tied back. The next morning we were awakened by what seemed to be a mighty gale gusting into our tent and filling it with so much air that we thought it would burst. Other campers, it seemed, were less green than we, for they had pitched their tents with the entrances facing away from the sea and were largely unaffected by the strong wind that blew from the water each morning. We could have rotated our tent but decided we rather liked this vigorous morning awakening. We’d dress quickly in our wind and tent and warm our hands on maps of hot tea as we watched people dig for clams on the beach in the tide eddies.

The first camping trip we went on together was to Newfoundland. We had recently acquired a car, and with a borrowed tent and a small propane stove we headed east. Pitching our tent in a rugged spot between two tall rocks in Gros Morne National Park, we feasted on fresh lobsters (we learned to shell and eat them at night and, in the day, explore that hauntingly beautiful park, hiking trails that led us along the shore, over cliffs and through forests. We jogged for cod from a fishing boat and one gloriously sunny afternoon sat in a long, open wooden boat that took us into the towering foyds for which Gros Morne is famous.

Last summer some old friends from England came to visit us with their two children. They saw Niagara Falls and the various sights of Toronto but wouldn’t let those children return home without having experienced the real Canada. Camping was not something our friends genuinely did, but one look at our packed van with our gear to Algonquin Park, about 200 kilometres north of Toronto. At the end of the week they returned exhausted and horribly swollen with insect bites. But the children’s faces glowed with excitement as they talked about their adventures—trekking through forests where bears were known, canoeing through the quiet waters of northern lakes and hearing wolves call in the night. I had no doubt that on their return to England they wouldn’t be Niagara Falls or the CN Tower they’d tell their friends about, but those few days spent camping in the Canadian wilderness apart from its elemental joys and the access it gives one to this country, there is one aspect of camping I particularly appreciate— the sense of moral self-sufficiency which is one that remains. People who have never previously met that with easy friendliness, exchanging tips and talking about where they’re from. Children who one day will be strangers become inseparable the next. And as I settle down into my sleeping bag with only a piece of thin nylon to protect me, I feel safer than I ever do in the city behind my bolted door. Leaning through the guide books, I start to dream of other trips I’d like to make. I dream to camp at Long Beach on Vancouver Island. L’Anse aux Meadows, Nfld., where Vikings once camped; along the Cabot Trail of Cape Breton; and in the Oak- bec; and scenes of other spots throughout this country. But most of all I dream of hiking north of the 60th parallel—Kluane and Nahanni beckon—Senlac Lakes.