

North Bay Old Home Week, 1925 and 1935

by Dr. Francoise Noel, Nipissing University

"Life and Development of North Bay for 300 Years Passes in Grand Panorama," *The Nugget*, August 4, 1925, p. 1.

Life and Development of North Bay for 300 Years Passes in Grand Panorama.

Wonderful Parade Which Led Way to Charter Presentation at Memorial Park Was Spectacular Reflection of North Bay From the Earliest Days.

Attractive to the highest degree, reminiscent to the point of reality, typically picturesque with touches of pathos and humor, here and there, psychologically arranged, and in all a blaze of color and glory the historical pageant and parade formed a memorable and colorful opening for the Old Home Week festivities and proclamation North Bay as a City.

In no other manner could the history of North Bay and incidently Northern Ontario, have been more forcibly impressed than by the elaborate panorama that wended its way through the city in holiday attire. The streets along which the procession proceeded were crowded with people. And as when great Pompey passed the streets of Rome the very housetops were alive in acclamation. Many of the various floats and historical pageants were enthusiastically applauded. Scenes in the parade and at the inauguration ceremony which followed were shot from a thousand angles by amateur and professional photographers.

As one beheld the replica, for instance, of Samuel de Champlain and his dauntless followers, bearing hard on their paddles, with their faces eagerly set forth in the direction of the new lands they were to explore, and as one ? the bands of Indians, the gallant courier (sic) du bois or then again, W. Brunett's old bus with a number of commercial men, "the real pioneers," driven by a team of horses with a uniformed driver on the seat, somehow or other a spirit of elation forced itself on one's mind of the romantic struggle that had been a part of the city's historic development.

And then again, with all the hilarity, there was a sense of reverence evident, reverence for the energy and indefatigable efforts which were displayed until now in place of the C.P.R.'s Lucy Dalton, with an ungainly [smoke] stack and an apologetic squeak of a whistle, there are furio[us?] monsters rushing from coast to coast; in the place of a priest riding in a cart with a wooden cross and a few followers afoot, there are now churches and cathedrals and prosperous appearing parishioners; instead of Indian huts and grotesque totem poles, there are fine homes and cities.

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Order of Parade

The parade lined up shortly before ten o'clock, the time that it was scheduled to commence, on Main Street, with the business floats assembled in the Planing Mill yards. Leading were marshals and heralds on gaily decorated mounts. These were followed by the Boy Scouts Band on foot, led by Scoutmaster Anderson, with the Girl Guides, led by Mrs. Anderson, following. Many hundreds were gathered about the scene of the assemblage and a large number followed the pageant from the time that the signal to commence was given until it arrived at its destination at Memorial Park, where, with the exception of the float with the Queen of the Carnival, all temporarily disbanded, to make way for the memorable even of the day, the presentation of North Bay's Charter.

The route of the parade was down Main Street, along Fisher Street, to First Avenue and thence to Memorial Park, and the procession extended for the length of about six city blocks.

As has been intimated, the outstanding attraction of the parade were the fraternal floats. Each of them depicted interesting incidents of long ago, from the time of Old King Cole to the arrival of Champlain among the Indians.

The float arranged by the Lions Club gave an intimate and true conception of the home life of the Indians. There was an Indian teepee concealed in a background of small evergreens while the door of the teepee was guarded by a squaw with a circle of Indian braves, highly painted and in full regalia, squatted in a circle about her, with bows and arrows by their side, peace pipes

flourished incessantly and a small camp fire smouldering unconcernedly. In a cage at the side was a small doe, while the Lions took advantage of the opportunity to proclaim their identity by having a small lion concealed in the tent, the roars of which may or may not have been magnified by some contrivance of human design.

The Knights of Columbus portrayed the early arrival of Champlain. He was the first of the party and was shown as gazing from the top of a hill over the surrounding country while his companions were landing the rest of the flotilla.

A large pointer, arranged by the Elks Club, recalled the drive among the hazardous Canadian waters. The boat was capably guided by real old timers whose tattered costumes and hardened faces foretold hardships of long ago. The voyageurs propelled the boat with three pairs of oars and an experienced boat man in the stern directed it down the stream.

The Commercial Travellers Club brought back a more recent picture in the development of North Bay. An old fashioned bus driven by horses revealed the conveyances of the old pioneers. The driver was attired in a costume indicating the childhood days of the city.

The Masons float was a characterization of Old King Cole and his Merry Fiddlers. His servants attended and saw that his bowl was kept full. The King assumed a humorous attitude and his minstrels played the old time tunes. The celebrated pipe was very much in evidence and was quite in harmony with the bright costumes and the stately chair of the king.

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Gorgeous Railway Floats

The railways, which have been one of the main factors in the establishment of North Bay as a city, were magnificently represented. One of the most appropriate floats in the whole procession was that of the T. & N.O. depicting the advancement of Northern Ontario. At the front there was a tableau of life on the farms, then a scene of mining men, engaged at work, and thirdly a scene displaying sport life of Northern Ontario, hunting, boating, fishing.

From an artistic standpoint the most elaborate float in the procession was that (sic) of the C.N.R., a coach was elaborately bedecked with a profusion of flowers, while a design, "From coast to coast," was also engraved in luxuriant masses of lilies.

The C.P.R. was represented by the Lucy Dalton, the first railway engine in Northern Ontario, drawing a miniature caboose with the conductor and the brakie in uniform on the steps. The engine was driven by a gasoline motor but nothing was lost to the realistic appearance as the engineer and firemen were in the cab, smoke issued forth and a whistle tooted incessantly.

There were countless floats arranged by business houses and stores in North Bay all of which were handsomely decorated, while of more than usual interest was the pageant of the Queen of the Carnival, who was imposingly stationed on a throne with ladies in waiting and pages grouped about.

Other historical pageants represented James Nicolet the first white man to set foot in North Bay, Father Claude Pijart, the first priest to the Nipissing Indians, a band of Courier Du Bois (sic) and fur traders, the Rev. Father Le Caron and a band of frenchmen."

An added attraction was the music rendered by the Stratford Band, the North Bay Premier Band and the Clowns Band while the Englehart pipers were also in attendance.

The Forestry Branch, Rotary Club, Police and Fire Departments were also represented. The first auto in North Bay, the first post office and other scenes typical of the olden times were included.

Nothing was overlooked in the presentation of the humorous aspect to the spectacle which was in evidence throughout. The old police dogs, the police patrol and a ravenous gang of fire eaters provided no end of merriment. The police dogs were a formidable looking outfit and even the horse which was drawing the patrol had occasion to balk a couple of times while a youth with a fire extinguisher seated on the fire fighter's cart had the time of his life in squirting drops of water at the spectators. No one could have enjoyed himself more than did that youth.

The clowns performed in usual style. One with a monstrous bow tie, and a pair of shoes as incredibly large, attracted considerable attention while among the merry markers were a number of dancers who executed everything from the "Hootchie kootchie" to the highland fling and before the end of the parade were calling for talent from the throng. A fiddler situated in a prominent position ground happy melodies such as the "Little Brown Jug" and "Casey Jones" while the dancers staged the "elemand left" stunt and other men dressed as ladies crossed their lily white hands and the genist? with their black and tan gave little doves a healthy swing.

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Bright Spots in the Parade

“How dear to our hearts
Are the scenes of our childhood
When loud? Recollections recall
them to view:
The Old Oaken Bucket
The moss covered bucket
The iron ? bucket
That hangs in the well”

Even the officials of the committee on arrangements were astounded when the mass of floats gathered at the west end of Main street, between 9 and 10 a.M. It was a sight that will live long in the memory of everyone who lined the route of the parade. Only about 40 minutes were lost in the starting of the long line which was remarkable in view of the fact that the Marshals had to set every individual float in its proper place. At the outset, it appeared as if the noon hour would pass before the parade would be underway but in a remarkably short time, after the Parade committee got down to work a confused mass was untangled into an impressive spectacle.

From start to finish the Pageant moved over its prescribed route. A little delay occurred when the tail-end was stopped on the Main street. But it was all for the best as it enabled the crowds to witness the antics of the funny characters.

Among the characters in the Pageant section a lot failed to recognize T.J. Bourke representing Father Le Caron of 1615 vintage.

Every member of the Lions float, the Indian settlement were ? in splendid form. John [several words blurred] in Canada in [three lines blurred from damages to the

original paper] ed the early missionary, was also good in costume.

Chas. St. Germain represented Champlain on the Knights of Columbus float. The design and characterizations on this was one of the best in the parade.

Lottie Britton and Alex Gillie, employees of the Canadian Pacific Railway in the early days, piloted Lucy Dalton, the replica of the first engine used in the service along the streets. Wm. Dreany and Harry Hughes looked out from the tail end of the caboose as they did when North Bay was only a water tank and a few surrounding shacks.

Bill Rankin was telling a whole lot when he caused his first mode of transportation to appear on the streets. Very few, however, thought it was so far back.

Harry Quirt was noticed perched up as a character in the T & N O float with his famed violin resting under his chin. Harry still dr[aws] a wicked bow ? caused old feet to ? as he ? notes.

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