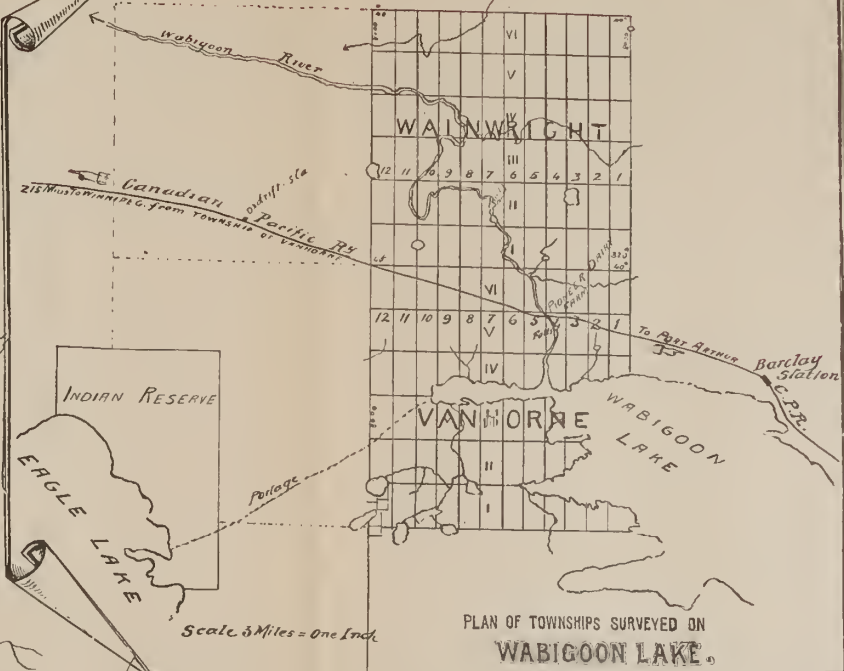


**MAP OF THE
RAINY RIVER DISTRICT**

SHOWING TOWNSHIPS SURVEYED ON RAINY RIVER,
WABIGOON LAKE AND AT RAT PORTAGE.
1895.

Scale, 20 Miles to an Inch.



THE PIONEER FARM
AND
THE WABIGOON COUNTRY
RAINY RIVER DISTRICT.

A NEW SECTION OPENED FOR SETTLEMENT
—INFORMATION AS TO THE COUNTRY AND
ITS CAPABILITIES—AN ACCOUNT OF
THE FARM ESTABLISHED THERE
BY THE ONTARIO GOVERNMENT.

PUBLISHED BY THE ONTARIO DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.



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1896.

THE PIONEER FARM

AND THE

WABIGOON COUNTRY, RAINY RIVER DISTRICT.

In the extreme western section of Ontario, about 217 miles west of Port Arthur, 80 miles east of Rat Portage, and 215 east of Winnipeg, is situated what Hon. John Dryden, Ontario's Minister of Agriculture, has appropriately called his "Pioneer Farm." A pioneer it certainly is, for the region is an entirely unsettled one, being a part of that territory until recently in dispute between Ontario and the Dominion. The farm itself is located immediately at the crossing of the Wabigoon river by the C.P.R., and a full view may be had of it from the railway train as it passes. It is here that the first steps have been taken by the Ontario Government to open up for settlement a section of country that hitherto was a complete wilderness. A year ago not an acre had been cleared, not a furrow struck, nor any seed sown; to-day a crop has been grown and gathered (the forerunner, it is believed, of many rich harvests), a comfortable house and suitable barn erected, and about forty acres cleared and plowed.

Surely if he who makes two blades of grass grow where but one grew previously, deserves the thanks of his fellow man, this effort on the part of the Ontario Government to test in some measure the unknown capabilities of Ontario's newly acquired inheritance is to be commended. But was it necessary, it may be asked, that the Government should assume this obligation? Yes, it was both desirable and necessary, and for the reason that no one appeared to believe in the suitability of this locality for agricultural pursuits, and no one was willing to hazard the experiment for himself. All such enterprises in a new country are at first experiments, but particularly was this the case in the present instance, where so much doubt and uncertainty surrounded the undertaking. As, however, a start had to be made, the Government considered that the circumstances fully justified them in commencing operations, holding that the funds belonging to the people as a whole, rather than to the individual, might wisely be employed to this end. This it was that determined the Minister of Agriculture to undertake the part of the pioneer, and by going into the district just as the ordinary settler would do, endeavor to ascertain by practical test whether he could not with confidence direct the attention of others to the region referred to.

Accordingly, the task was begun. Late in the autumn of 1894 a quantity of land was underbrushed. It was plowed the following spring and a small crop put in, consisting of wheat, barley, oats, grass and a few roots. In the early summer a house was built of the timber of the district, not an expensive structure, but a warm, comfortable dwelling of neat and substantial appearance,

such as a settler of moderate means might desire to erect. Later, a basement barn with the necessary stable accommodation was added, and the first small shipment of live stock forwarded. The first crop of grain, small as it necessarily was, now stored away in the granary, may truly be asserted to be a very encouraging one, taking into consideration that it was sown on the first plowing, and that the season was unusually wet in that locality. The wheat was well filled and hard, barley plump, oats heavy, while clover and timothy made enormous growth.

THE COUNTRY.

Many people are incredulous when told that good land, sufficient in extent to comprise a good sized country or more, exists in this region. And perhaps after miles and miles of tedious journeying through the desolate rocky waste that lies extended along the northern shore of Lake Superior, like the bleached skeleton of a once fertile country, their incredulity is not so remarkable. "There is nothing here but rock," they assert, "we must go on to Manitoba's fertile plains." The farther west they can locate, the better some of them seem to like it, and many are content to lead lives of solitude and isolation, far from markets and far from railroad communication, while regions near at hand possessing these advantages, and others as well, are passed over. They too often lose sight of the fact that there is a distance limit from one's market beyond which the raising of agricultural products ceases to be profitable.

Now, the first question the interested reader will naturally ask is: What is the Wabigoon country like? What are its advantages?

The casual traveller, not especially interested perhaps in the products of the soil, may not remark from the car window that the region differs very materially from the country he has recently been passing through. The light growth of poplar, spruce, jack pine and tamarack interspersed with blackened stumps, presents nothing new. But if he be a close observer, he will certainly see that the railroad cuttings, instead of running through sandy, gravelly soil, or the solid rock as heretofore, now pass through a clay deposit, indicating that the formation of the country has undergone a complete change. Then let him leave the train, and, wading through the underbrush, climb to the top of the nearest elevation; let him look to the north, the south, and the east and the west, and he will see a vast extent of unbroken, rolling country, dotted here and there with clumps of small timber with a light growth of underbrush between, so light, in fact, that hundreds of acres lie there almost ready for the plow. But more than this, there is not a rock, not a stone even, to be seen anywhere.

THE SOIL.

Generally speaking, the soil consists of a strong clay of greyish color, changing in lower lying sections to a clay loam, or occasionally even lighter soil. It is wonderfully free from stone, and pulverizes readily when turned to the sun and air. Referring to the quality of the land, the surveyor employed by the Depart-

ment says, "The township of Wainwright is the best township I have seen in the north; fully three-fourths of it is fine arable land." Abundant natural drainage is afforded by the light ravines, through which small creeks run to the river, so that very little swamp land is to be found anywhere.

THE WATER SUPPLY.

The country is well watered and the water is pure and good. Wabigoon lake, a beautiful sheet of water about 30 miles long by five or six miles wide, lies at this point not quite a mile south of the railroad track. It is dotted with picturesque islands, its shores are well wooded, and it contains a plentiful supply of fish, including whitefish, maskinonge, herring, pike and pickerel. From it the Wabigoon river, flows north and west, a broad navigable stream with abundant water-power at intervals.

THE TIMBER RESOURCES.

A glance at the burned logs and stumps which everywhere meet the eye convinces the observer that the country was once well wooded. But in all probability, fierce fires have swept across it on several occasions, leaving little but a few clumps of dead timber, which now constitute a valuable supply of fuel for the settler. The country has not all been burnt over, however, at least not recently. Away in the distance to the north-east, east and south there may be seen a thick forest growth, but the timber is small and easily cleared.

Looking to the future needs of the settler, the Ontario Government has thoughtfully reserved a pinery in the vicinity, where a plentiful supply of building material may be obtained, the logs being conveyed by water a distance of some five or six miles. Cedar for fence posts, etc., may be had within easy reach.

THE CLIMATE.

The Wabigoon country is undoubtedly as wholesome a one as could be found in the whole of Ontario, both for man and beast. No malaria or fever exists, nor is the water alkaline to cause dysentery and other troubles. The summers are moderately warm, and the autumn months, with their fine bracing atmosphere and bright sunlight, are simply perfection. In winter the cold is steady, but the snowfall is usually light. For 1895 plowing was commenced at the farm on May 2nd, although it might have been started a trifle earlier. The plow practically stopped running on November 5th.

A DAIRYING SECTION.

But it is as a dairying section rather than a grain growing country that the Department desires to bring it to the attention of the intending settler. It is not anticipated that he could well compete with the western prairie farmer in the production of wheat, whereas for dairying and stock-raising the conditions are all in his favor. Clover and grasses grow most prolifically, the former being

indigenous and producing two crops a year. Fine natural pasture is supplied in the prairie grass and wild peas, while cattle thrive on the wild hay to be obtained in all the creek bottoms. Moreover, the scrub growth also found there protects cattle from flies in summer, and the valleys themselves form a very desirable shelter in stormy weather.

ACCESS TO MARKETS.

Next comes the important question of markets. One of the foremost advantages of this region is that a good market is brought to the very door of the settler by the ready means that exist of railroad and water communication. Rat Portage, a growing, milling town, with a population of about 4,000, including the suburbs of Norman and Keetwatin, not being in an agricultural district, has to obtain nearly all its food supplies from Manitoba, and offers a good market for dairy products, fresh meat, etc. It has been ascertained also that the C.P.R. dining cars are prepared to take a considerable quantity of produce of this kind.

Then it should be remembered that between the line of the C.P.R. and the American border, there lies a region rich in deposits of gold, iron and other minerals, and of considerable forest wealth, the possibilities of which are only beginning to be made known, and it is thought that the future will witness here the upbuilding of extensive mining and lumbering industries. Along the Seine river and Rainy lake, many mining claims have been taken up and are being developed, and already the lumbering industry is extensive, a large quantity of railway ties, cordwood, etc., being taken out every winter. At the present time no less than 300 men and forty teams are engaged in the vicinity of the farm, thus affording not only a ready market, but a means of employment for the settler during the winter months.

Now, as a glance at the accompanying map will show, Wabigoon river and lake drain the region immediately to the south, and afford the only outlet for the timber found there, besides forming a direct route for taking in supplies. At the present time these supplies are passing the very door of the Government farm, and the question that presents itself is whether they shall continue to be provided by Manitoba, or whether the limited quantity of arable land in the vicinity shall be utilized for that purpose. Thus it will be seen that the agricultural development of the Wabigoon region has a direct bearing on the progress and development of the whole district, and that its importance can hardly be over-estimated.

With these facts in view, the value of the water power afforded by the river at the railway crossing will be readily appreciated. A portion of the fall, which has a drop of fully fifteen feet, is shown in the accompanying photograph. This, with Wabigoon lake as a reservoir, furnishes an inexhaustible supply of power which will prove of great value for manufacturing purposes. It is at this point that a town site has been reserved by the Government.

INFORMATION FOR SETTLERS.

No pains have been spared by the Government to facilitate settlement. Two townships, named Van Horne and Wainwright, have been surveyed and laid out in half sections of 320 acres. Other townships will be surveyed as occasion may require. For the convenience of traffic the C.P.R. authorities have agreed to remove their station from Barclay to a point opposite the farm, and from this station the Government will at once begin the construction of a colonization road, leading through the centre of the townships.

THE CLASS OF SETTLERS WANTED.

There are in Ontario to-day many capable and industrious young men, the sons of farmers, whose parents are unable to purchase farms for them; or it may be they have a little capital at their disposal, yet find it impossible in the older settled districts to procure land cheap enough to suit their pockets, and see but little prospect of obtaining farms and homes of their own. Others there are who, owing to the depressed state of agriculture, find it well nigh impossible on rented farms to make ends meet. Good, solid Ontario farmers and farmers' sons, with a little capital at their command, and anxious to secure unencumbered homes for themselves—these are the settlers the Department would like to see located at Wabigoon. Settlers totally without means are bound to meet obstacles well-nigh impossible to overcome. Such are not only helpless themselves, but stand in the way of the progress and prosperity of the district. A few intelligent settlers of the class indicated, if located on the land and prosperous, as they would soon surely be, would induce others to follow their example, and result in a very short time in a thriving settlement being established.

HOW LAND MAY BE SECURED.

The Government, being anxious to reserve the land for the bona fide settler, and to prevent it falling into the hands of speculators, where it might remain unproductive to the detriment of settlement, have decided upon the following conditions: That the amount of land each settler may purchase shall not exceed half a section, or 320 acres; that the price paid shall be fifty cents per acre, one-fourth down and the balance in three equal annual instalments with interest at six per cent. The settler will be required to clear and put under cultivation at least ten per cent. of the land purchased, and to erect a habitable house of not less than 16x20 feet. When this has been done, and the purchaser has resided on the land for at least six months in each of the three years, or for two years continuously, and has fully paid for the same, he may obtain his patent.

The Superintendent at the Pioneer Farm, Mr. A. E. Annis, whose post office is Barclay, Ont., will act as Land Agent, and will be found prepared to give information and assistance to those requiring it, and intending purchasers should communicate with him.

REDUCED FARES.

It is expected that those desiring to personally inspect the Wabigoon country with the view of purchasing a location may be able to obtain reduced fares from the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. Information regarding special low passenger and freight rates on settlers' effects, to bona fide settlers only, may be obtained by writing to L. O. Armstrong, C.P.R. Colonization Agent, Montreal.

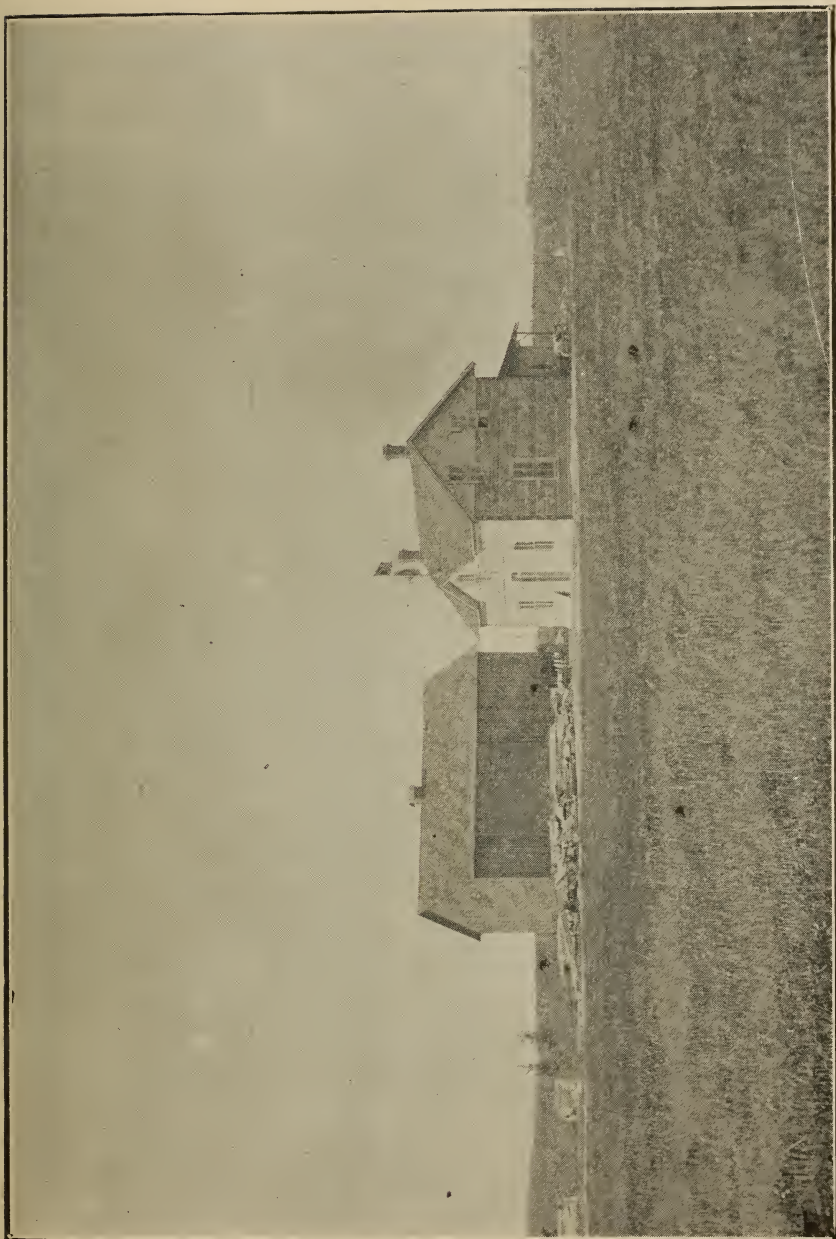
As, however, some may not feel disposed to expend the money necessary to enable them to view the country before deciding to locate, the Department would advise that, wherever a number of persons in the same neighborhood are anxious to obtain further information, they should select one of their number to act as a land explorer in their behalf, each contributing his proportion to the expenses of the trip. This person could then visit the country and report to them its suitability to their individual requirements.

It should be understood that the Ontario Government cannot undertake to give financial assistance to persons who contemplate changing their location from one part of the Province to another, as such an expenditure would benefit merely the individual and not the Province as a whole, and is therefore not in accordance with the Government's policy in such matters.

The chief advantages of the Wabigoon country may be summed up as follows :

1. Easily cleared land : Two men and a team can underbrush two acres a day on an average. This work should be undertaken preferably in the early fall, after which the land should be plowed and thoroughly cultivated with the harrow, and again replowed the following spring, when it is ready for the crop. The lightness of the snowfall admits of underbrushing, etc., being carried on to some extent during the winter months.

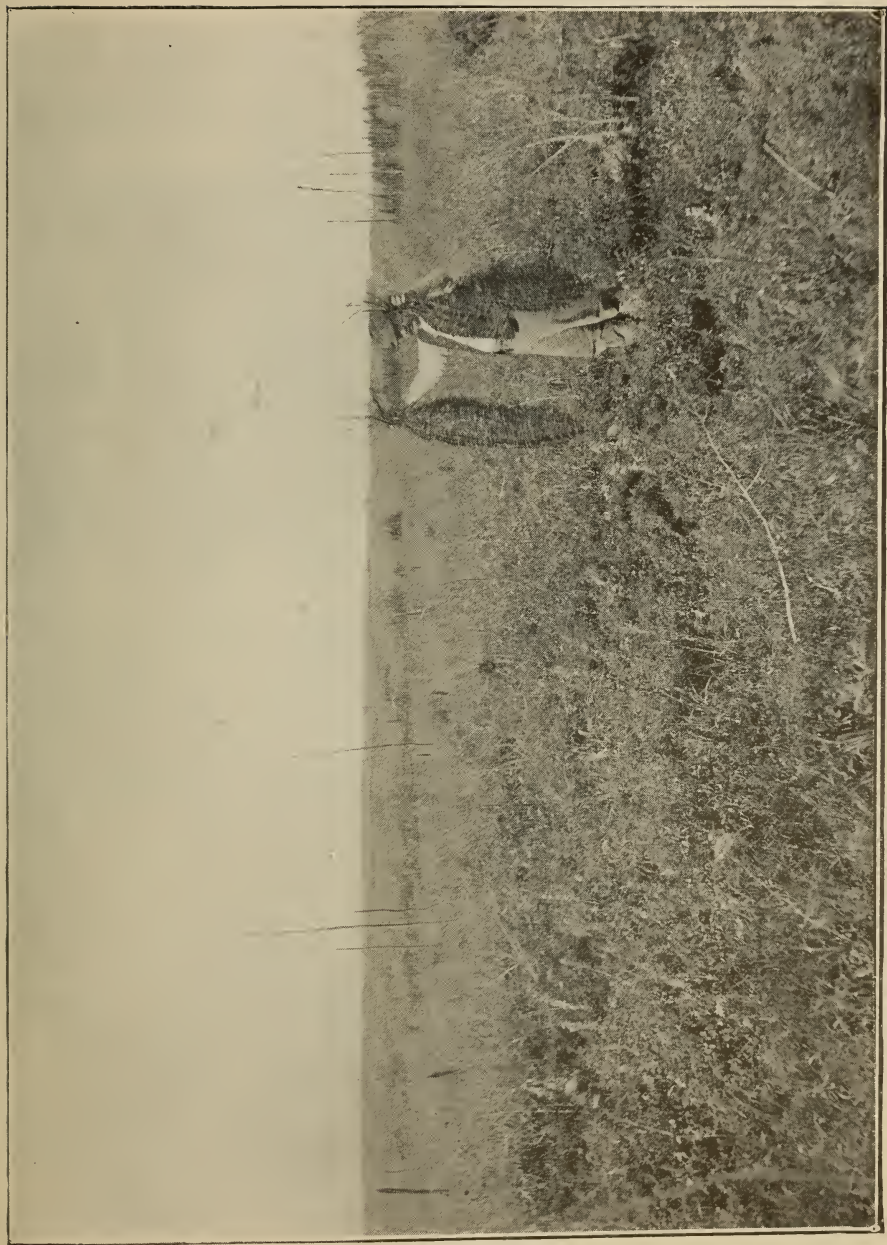
2. Ease of access by means of railway, road and water communication.
3. The existence of good markets close at hand.
4. Sufficient timber for building, fencing and fuel.
5. Cheap land, a good soil, an abundant supply of pure water, and a healthful climate.
6. Plenty of fish and game to supply the need of the settler.
7. Winter employment in the lumber camps.



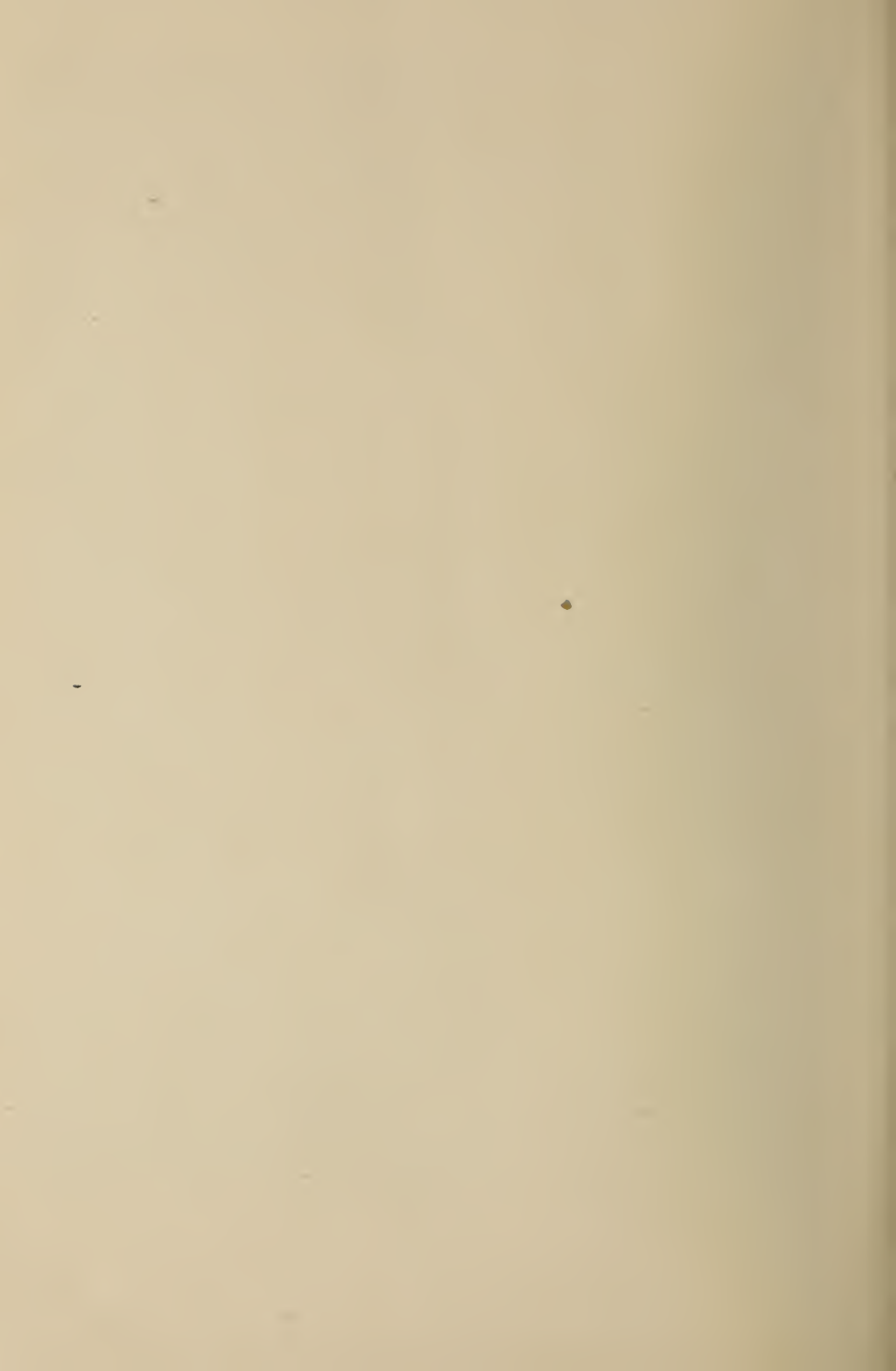
HOUSE AND BARN, PIONEER FARM.



A TYPICAL VIEW OF THE COUNTRY

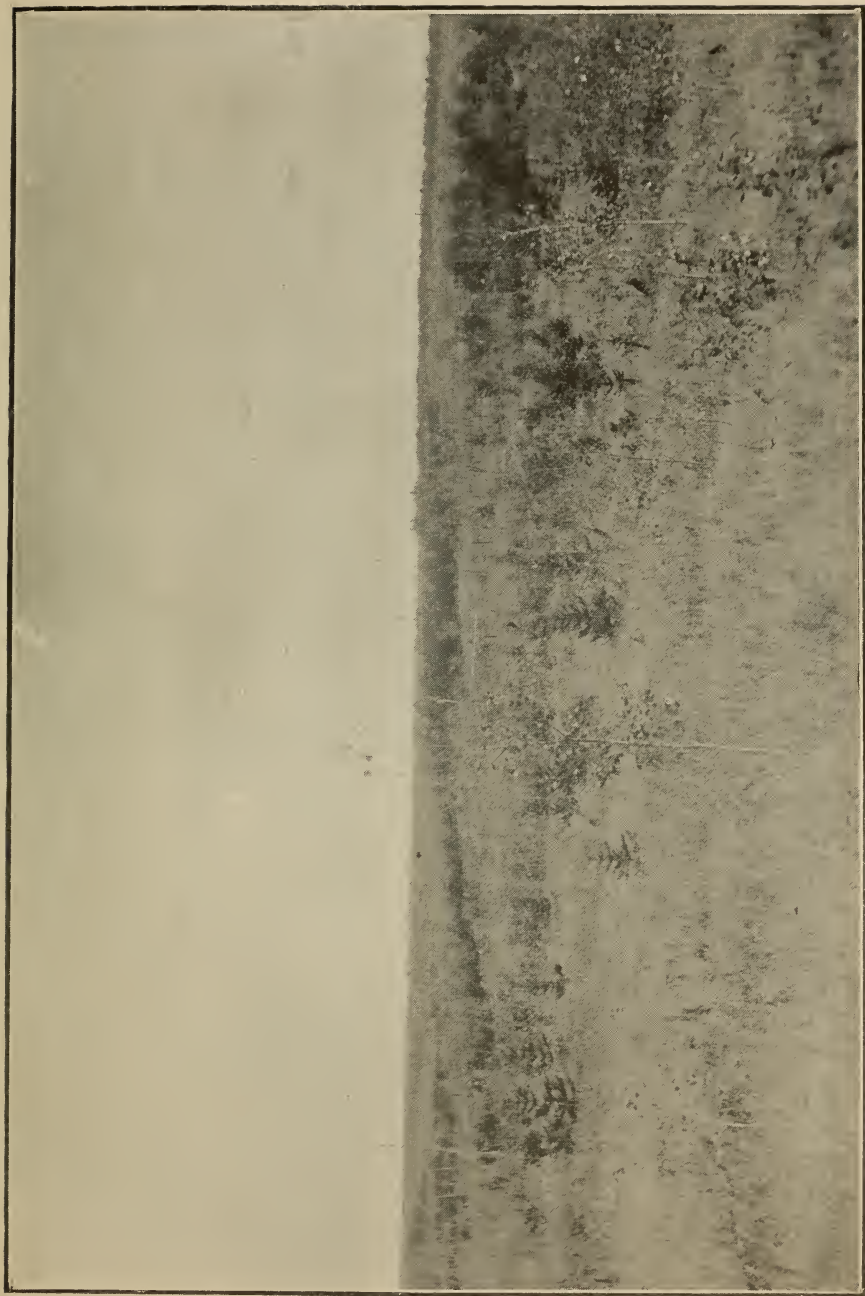


SHOWING GROWTH OF WILD PEAS.

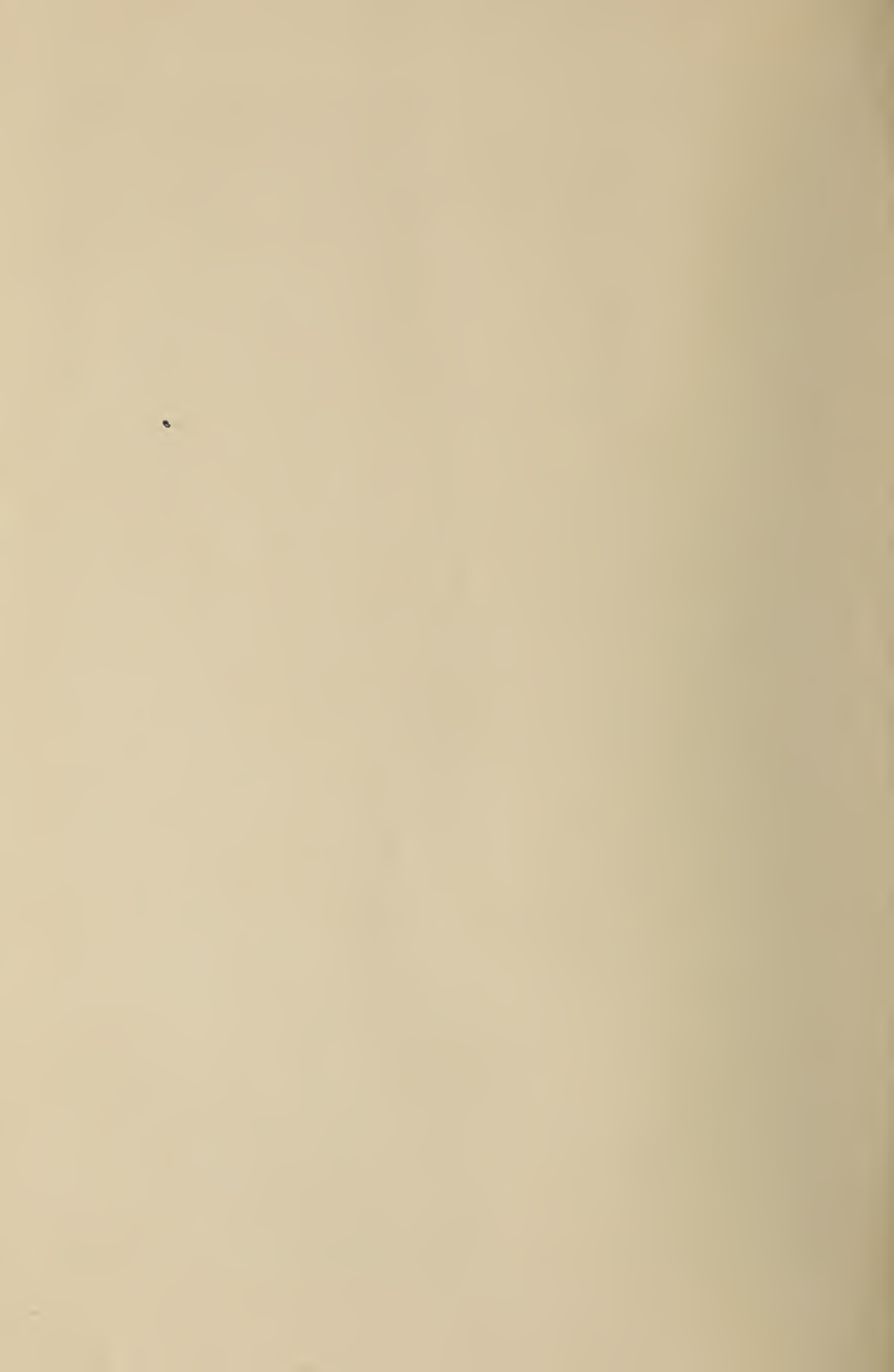




“A BROAD, NAVIGABLE RIVER.”

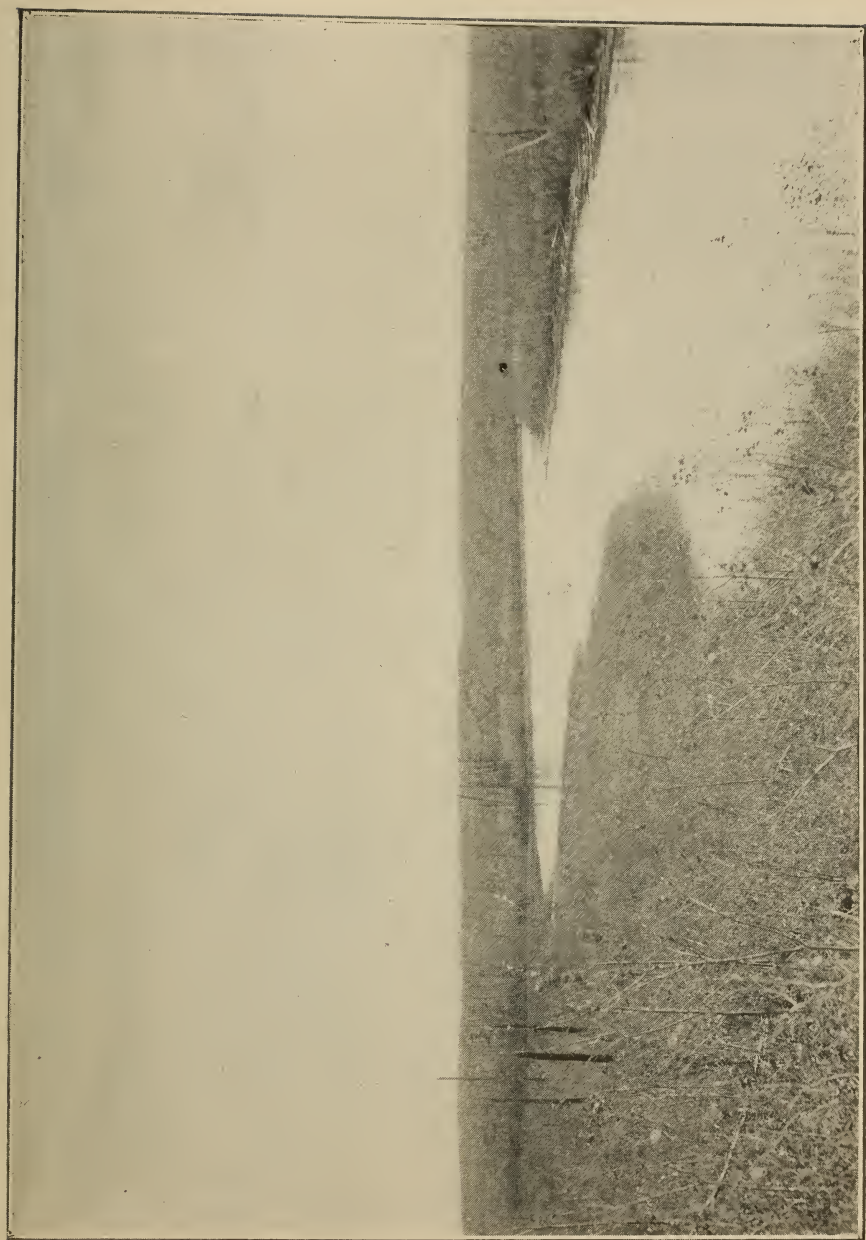


“HUNDREDS OF ACRES ALMOST READY FOR THE PLOW.”

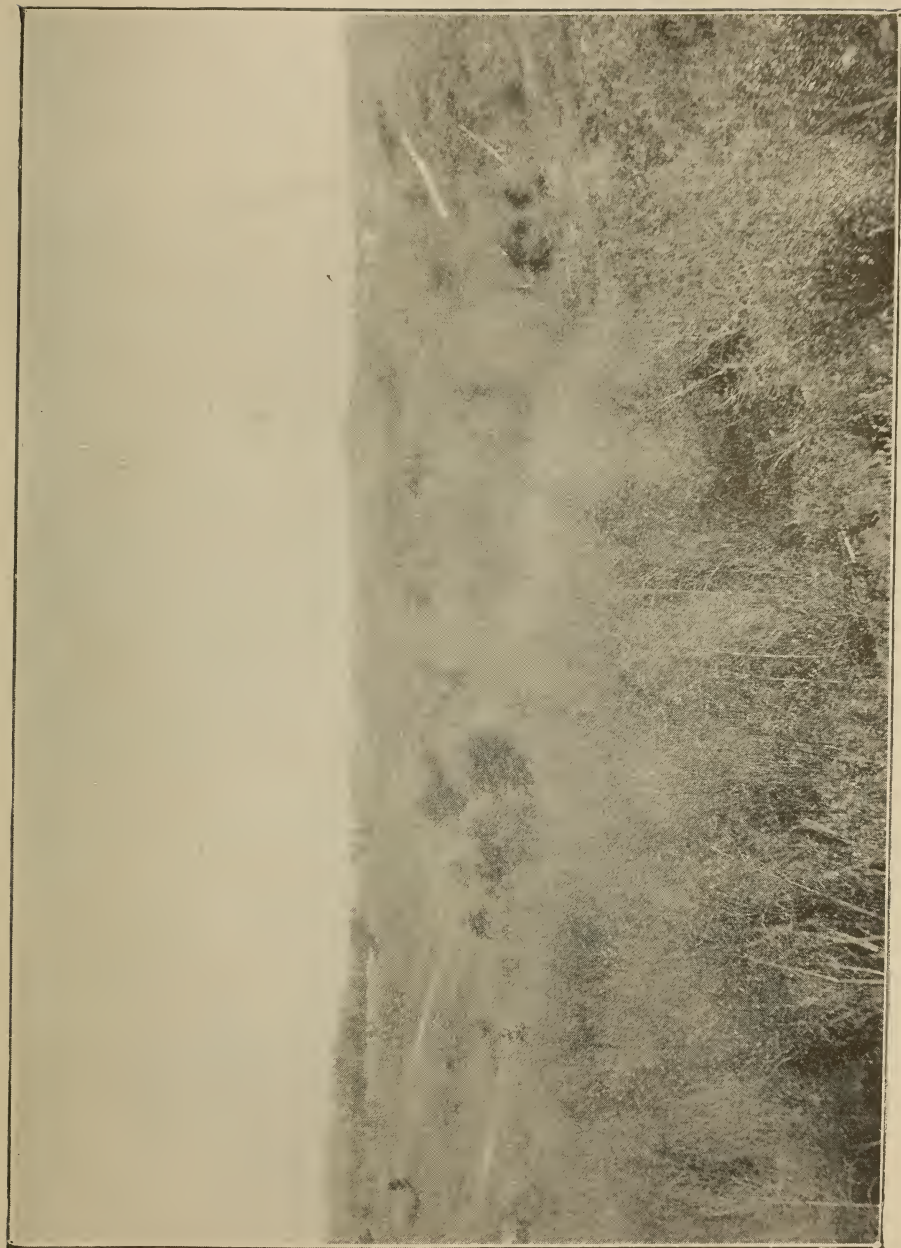




WATER-POWER ON THE WABIGOON.



VIEW OF THE WABIGOON RIVER.



A CREEK BOTTOM.