

ALGONKIN

Forest and Park,

ONTARIO.

LETTER TO THE HONORABLE T. B. PARDEE, M.P.P., COMMISSIONER
OF CROWN LANDS FOR ONTARIO.

Toronto:

PRINTED BY WARWICK & SONS, 26 AND 28 FRONT ST. WEST,

1886.

ALGONKIN

[*Blackwood, A.*]

13.
10.
3326

Forest and Park,

ONTARIO.

LETTER TO THE HONORABLE T. B. PARDEE, M.P.P., COMMISSIONER
OF CROWN LANDS FOR ONTARIO.

Toronto:

PRINTED BY WARWICK & SONS, 26 AND 28 FRONT ST. WEST,
1886.

LETTER

TO THE

HONORABLE T. B. PARDEE, M.P.P.,

Commissioner of Crown Lands for Ontario.

TORONTO, 2nd August, 1886.

SIR,—I had the honor to address you last year on the subject of setting apart and maintaining a portion of the public domain in Ontario for a National Forest and Park to be called Algonkin Forest and Park.

In the present communication I propose to show the necessity for such an institution, and to describe its locality at greater length.

PRELIMINARY.

A forest has been defined to be “a certain territory of woody grounds and fruitful pastures privileged for wild beasts and fowls of forest, chase, and warren, to rest and abide there in the safe protection of the king for his delight and pleasure; which territory of ground so privileged is meered and bounded with unremovable marks, meers and boundaries, and replenished with wild beasts of venery or chase, and with great coverts of vert for the succour of the said beasts there to abide; for the preservation and continuance of which, there are particular officers, laws, and privileges belonging to the same requisite for that purpose, and proper only to a forest and no other place.”

EXPLANATORY.

Although hunting steels the constitution, it is not proposed to convert the forest into a hunting ground or that there shall be any hunting, shooting, deer-stalking or trapping therein for pleasure or pastime ; but fishing in the waters may be allowed.

It is proposed to set aside a forest reserve principally for the preservation and maintenance of the natural forest, protecting the head waters and tributaries of the Muskoka, Petewawa, Bonnechère, and Madawaska Rivers, wherein it shall be unlawful for any person to enter and cut timber for any private use, or disturb or destroy the fur-bearing animals.

If nothing is done for their protection or preservation, posterity will search in vain for any trace in their former haunts of the moose, cariboo, red deer, beaver and other indigenous animals. This forest and its foresters will be the means of protecting them in their habitat, and of taming and domesticating them, to some extent, for use and profit.

The timber need not be permitted to rot down, instead of being utilized in the arts ; but the mature trees can be cut in due season to allow the next in size a chance for growth. In these ways utility and profit will be combined : the forest will be of great benefit as a producer of timber, and will add to the provincial revenue. Its maintenance will be a matter of national concern.

 DESCRIPTIVE.

A glance at the map of the Ottawa and Huron Territory of Ontario shows that the Muskoka River which flows into Lake Huron and the Petewawa, Bonnechère, and Madawaska Rivers which empty into the Ottawa, have their sources within a very short distance of each other. Island Lake at the head waters of the Muskoka, and Otter Slide Lake at the head of the Petewawa are not half a mile apart, and each is $1,405 \frac{85}{100}$ feet above the level of the sea.

The head waters of the Muskoka, after flowing in a circuit of 1,000 miles through Lakes Huron, St. Clair, Erie, the Niagara River, Lake Ontario and the River St. Lawrence, meet and commingle in happy harmony with those of the Petewawa, Bonnechère, and Madawaska near the city of Montreal,

As a consequence of the wanton destruction of the forest, without reproduction, in the older settlements of Ontario, many streams once navigable for long reaches, with numerous water powers, are now entirely worthless for these purposes, and the little stream that formerly came singing and dancing down from the great wood on the hill is now seen only for a few weeks in the early spring, after which there is nothing left but its dry, pebbly bed.

It is of great importance, therefore, to the manufacturer to preserve the four rivers referred to, if possible, in undiminished volume.

Around the lakes and streams of this rolling plateau and Height of Land, there are numerous beaver meadows, and tracts of marsh and swamp closely grown over by tamarac and spruce, or carpeted by marsh plants, and occasionally opening into prairies with long, coarse, wiry grass and bushes.

There is much picturesque scenery in these regions, and fish and game abound in and around their waters. Brook or speckled trout are found in great abundance, while moose, red deer, beaver, and other animals are numerous in these unfrequented parts.

With a view to preserve the forests and the fauna of this locality, and its lakes and streams, it is proposed that the Townships of Canisbay, McLaughlin, Bishop, Freswick, Bower, the Township south of Bower and east of Canisbay, Peck, the east part of Hunter, and the south-west quarter of the Township east of Bower, be reserved by the Government and proclaimed a National Forest and Park.

Those who lament the destruction of our forests and fauna will be glad to see the Province in full fruition of a scheme for their preservation in this part of the public domain, keeping in view, at the same time, its importance as a means of maintaining the waters of the rivers having their sources within its boundaries.

The aggregate area of land in the territory to be reserved may be estimated at 330,000 acres, and the area of water at 60,000 acres. These waters are formed of lakes that are lovely in their sheen, and brooks and rills with solitary, stainless pools, "dappled with many a golden light, playing as with living lustre over the beautiful mosaic of their pebbly floors.

ABOUT RAIN-FALL.

Water-shed lines branch out from mountain summits.

All rivers and streams have their sources among high lands and hills. Destroy these sources and their beds dry up.

All high lands and mountains should be preserved in perpetual forest, as trees prevent evaporation by retaining the moisture which percolates the ground and gives rise to numerous springs and rills.

Rivers owe their origin to atmospheric precipitation. The volume of water in different seasons depends on the mode in which the water reaches its channels.

1. When water from rain fall is drained off without penetrating the soil, a torrent is produced. This occurs when the forest has been cut away and the ground is bare.

2. Rain water which penetrates the ground by infiltration, and collects in subterranean channels gives rise to springs and rills which open out in lakes and rivers. The soil when covered by dense forest is porous, acts as a reservoir, and its gradual drainage equalizes the delivery of rivers and feeds them in the dry season.

3. The melting of snow on the summits of high mountains in summer need not be taken into consideration here as a constant source of rivers in Ontario, as the highest point of the table-land of the St. Lawrence is not more than 1,680 feet above the sea.

The rolling inequality of surface of the wooded plateau under consideration is the cause of extensive lakes which tend to equalize the flow of its rivers by acting as their reservoirs. The general elevation also of the plateau is influential in determining the annual average of precipitation, or the degree in which the rain-bearing winds in passing over it become drained of their moisture.

On the other hand, radiation from the bare parched surface of a country affects the atmosphere to excessive dryness. Rain-bearing clouds, as they come within this dry atmosphere, are dissipated before their watery contents can reach the earth, while the clouds floating over a better wooded district yield a copious rainfall.

One of the influences unfavourable to rain in warm climates is the absence of vegetation and especially of trees. Many districts in France have been materially injured in respect of climate by denudation. On

the other hand, rain has become more frequent in Egypt since the more vigorous cultivation of the palm tree. A bare sandy or rocky soil is no less influential in producing aridity.

PRACTICAL MANAGEMENT.

Create the forest and define its boundaries by statute ; provide for the extinction of all existing claims, the appointment of a forester and suitable assistants, and the framing of forest laws and regulations.

The main source of revenue will be its timber. Seekers for health and pleasure in the summer season may be allowed to lease locations for cottages or tents on the shores of the Great Opeongo Lake, and a site on that lake for a hotel and farm can be offered to public competition at an annual rental.

In addition to the ordinary labors of the workmen within the precincts of the forest and park, their other duties may be stated in the following rhymes :—

You shall true liegeman be
 Unto the King's Majesty :
 Unto the beasts of the forest you shall no hurt do,
 Nor to anything that doth belong thereunto :
 The offences of others you shall not conceal,
 But to the utmost of your power you shall them reveal
 Unto the officers of the forest,
 Or to them who may see them redrest :
 All these things you shall see done,
 So help you God, at his holy doom.

RESPECTING THE NAME OF THE FOREST.

At the time of the discovery of America the Algonkin Indians were lords of the greater part of what was formerly known as Canada, and principally inhabited the great basins of the St. Lawrence and Ottawa Rivers.

After their defeat in the St. Lawrence Valley, by the Iroquois, they abandoned that valley and joined their kindred north and west. History finds them, early in the 16th century, seated about the shores of Lakes

Huron, Michigan, and Superior. They were divided into numerous local bands bearing generally some local name, but differing in scarcely any appreciable degree in language, looks, manners or customs. They included the Nipercineans, Ottawas, Montagnais, Delawares, Ojibways, Wyandots, Mississaugas, and over thirty other different tribes. The Nipercineans, who are deemed the true Algonkins by ancient writers, lived at Lake Nipissing.

In adopting the word, we perpetuate the name of one of the greatest Indian nations that has inhabited the North American continent.

CONCLUSION.

There is a gloomy grandeur in the natural forest. The noble pines and stately oaks bespeak the growth of centuries. The winds sound solemnly among their branches, and the rooks caw from their hereditary nests in the tree tops.

It is in wandering through such scenes that the mind drinks deep but quiet draughts of inspiration and becomes intensely sensible of the beauty and majesty of nature. It is here that the imagination of the poet kindles into reverie and rapture, and revels in almost incommunicable luxury of thought.

In view of the foregoing facts and statements it is hoped that this letter will not be considered an attempt to do what signifies nothing when it is done.

The Commissioner of Crown Lands who establishes Algonkin Forest and Park raises a monument that will not crumble nor decay, and his memory will be cherished in the warmest corner of many hearts.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

A. KIRKWOOD.