



Ferris Lake pictographs

The Scotia Lake site is saved from a certain monotony of rudimentary forms—perhaps human—by the rayed head. In Schoolcraft's inventory we find a "warrior bold as the sun" that is not dissimilar (p. 89).

It was early in the summer of '59 that Irene, Peter, Christopher, and I pitched our tent on the desolate shore of **Upper Grassy** Lake, deep in the Gogama forest. Here a disastrous fire had left only a few gaunt, weather-bleached pine sticks standing above a tangle of deadfall and second growth. A strong wind whipped up the fine sand that once had been covered with forest humus, till there was sand on our bedrolls and even between our teeth. Across the lake lay an Indian's cabin, with the morning's wash flapping in the wind against a background of scrub.

Peter and I put the canoe into the water and found one little site; mostly tally marks and finger-draggings, but there was one little Maymaygwayshi. We had hoped, driving in, to

borrow a Lands and Forests boat and kicker at Ronda, but the only available one had just broken down. So we decided to paddle in to Ferris Lake, variously described as seven, nine, and eleven miles away. It turned out to be fifteen, following the maddeningly tortuous curves of a sluggish stream, or crossing swampy lakes where shifting grass islands made the map useless.

"At last," announces my diary, "Ferris Lake, and down its length to find the site. A most peculiar one: little blocks of slaty schist with figures and symbols—a horse(?) and a dinosaur (!) and a human figure or two. Fortunately I could work from a ledge and recording went fast."

It was a weary crew that waved to the aging Ojibwa couple outside the lone cabin on **Upper Grassy** as we paddled past their place in the gathering darkness. Early the next morning, when I went down to the lake to wash, there was Thomas Nephew, our neighbour, wearing the

Upper
Grassy Site #1

Upper Grassy?

not labelled by Dewdney



friendliest of smiles. I had one more site to record on this lake, and asked him to go along.

“It was a joy to have an Indian in the bow—an unusually good canoe-man, even for an Indian. And I was lucky to have him along, for most of the site was exposed to the waves and we had a wild time taking tracings and measurements. When I ran out of film it was too wet and rough to try reloading. So, back to camp—Nephew’s sixty-nine-year-old strokes as powerful as a young man’s, in a quick rhythm that tired me. . . . Talking to Nephew I learned that he portages seven miles and paddles twenty to Gogama for Church services. He has lost all knowledge of Ojibwa beliefs, apparently . . . knew nothing of the Maymaygwayshi.”

Until I succeed in pin-pointing a rumoured site on Lake Abitibi the Gogama cluster will remain the closest

to the Quebec boundary. Inside Quebec, near Lake Kippawa, I have a reliable report of petroglyphs. Farther east, in the upper watershed of the St. Maurice River, Jacques Beland has reported a number of rock paintings. Doubtless, the Shield woodlands of that province contain many more.

A definite report, via Macfie and others, of a site at Diamond Lake took us in to Lake Timagami a few days before we did the Gogama sites. Peter and I flew in to Bear Island where we interviewed eighty-year-old George Turner, son of the former Hudson’s Bay Company factor, one of the most knowledgeable men in the area, though only part Indian.

Confirming the Diamond Lake site, he also pin-pointed three sites on Lake Timagami itself. Our Beaver dropped us off at Diamond Lake just long enough to do a job on it. The rock here was a fine-textured off-white quartzite, an ideal background for the pictographs. Lake Diamond had been flooded, too, judging by the one group that was largely underwater.

A clumsy heron, the vestiges of a possible Maymaygwayshi, and a number of stick figures appear on this site. The circle with centre marked we have already seen at Cuttle Lake. Both Schoolcraft and Copway include it in their inventories: the former as “a symbol of time,” the latter as “spirit!”

Diamond Lake pictographs

