

THE

ST. MAURICE TERRITORY;

BEING EXTRACTS FROM

"THE MONTREAL COMMERCIAL ADVERTISER,"

AND

"THREE RIVERS ENQUIRER."

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THE ST. MAURICE TERRITORY.

(*From the Montreal Commercial Advertiser.*)

The Ottawa river, famous both in the verse of Moore and the ledgers of our wealthiest merchants, is the largest tributary of the St. Lawrence, and joins it about forty-five miles above Montreal. Next, and almost equal to it in length, volume and commercial importance, is the beautiful St. Maurice, emptying into the St. Lawrence at the town of Three Rivers, and about ninety miles below Montreal—equi-distant between that city and Quebec. With good anchorage and facilities for loading and discharging ships of large size—with a central position, backed by a rich country and a large and splendid river behind, water and rail communication with Montreal and Quebec—the proposed railroad (towards which the municipalities have already subscribed handsomely) connecting Three Rivers with the Grand Trunk Road at Richmond, and the near proximity of the Richelieu River and Chambly Canal, forming the great highway of commerce between Lower Canada and the United States, tapping the St. Lawrence only forty-five miles above. With such a happy combination of advantages, it requires no prophet to read the prosperous future of this part of the Province. Quebec has no back country, no inland river to feed its commerce or form a local trade, consequently it can only be a military post or shipping port for the upper St. Lawrence. Montreal has some back country, but no river to open it up, and little water power for manufacturing purposes. Its importance is derived from the fact of its being the head of ship navigation, the terminus of railroads, and the distributing depot of the import trade of the St. Lawrence. Three Rivers, on the contrary, possessing all these advantages in common with Montreal, has the additional and very important one of being situated at the mouth of a stream draining an area of inland country upwards of forty-five thousand square miles in extent; inexhaustibly rich in timber, minerals, and other natural products, and possessing water power without limit for manufacturing purposes. Here is the outlet for all that the bounty of nature may give, or the hand of art create in a new, fruitful and exten-

sive territory. Already, indeed, under the stimulus of the lumber trade alone, has the town made rapid strides towards the importance it will eventually attain in a much higher degree; and with the aid of the Provincial Government and the impetus of individual enterprise, the boundless resources of this fine river are in a very satisfactory course of development.

Ascending it, we come first to the "St. Maurice Forges," nine miles from the mouth of the river, where a justly celebrated and very superior quality of iron is manufactured from ore beds in that vicinity. Other forges near by are also in operation. Passing on about seven miles further, we come to the flourishing village of the "Grais." Here are extensive saw mills driven by water power, and manufacturing annually seven million feet of sawn lumber, with ample room and power for more establishments of the same or any other kind. Three miles above this point we come to one of the wonders of the new world—the Falls of Shawinigan, 165 feet in height, in volume of water and picturesque magnificence next only to Niagara, and for all purposes of utility, infinitely surpassing it. Here the traveller instinctively pauses, and well he may. He has seen as he approached, the broad and ample basin below the Falls, evidently one vast workshop to be driven by the mighty agency above. He makes the ascent, and sees before him a wide, calm and spreading bay, receiving depot and custodian, for the extensive country above, of all its natural riches, to be here taken by the hand of art and transformed and fitted for the purposes of commerce. The conviction is irresistible; he cannot avoid it, for so obvious and palpable are the capabilities of the place, that in contemplating them he sees not the possibilities of a century but the certainties of a decade of years.

Leaving this remarkable spot, we ascend still further, till at the distance of twenty miles above we come to "Les Piles," nearly on a direct line between Quebec and Ottawa City—the new Capitol of Canada. Up to, and at intervals far beyond, this place, Government has constructed excellent public roads leading from Three Rivers, and also greatly improved the navigation of the river. Here too is the terminus of a proposed railway, connecting with the North Shore Road at Three Rivers, in aid of which the Provincial Government has granted four million acres of land. This road is to pass Shawinigan (below) and will greatly facilitate the business and hasten the growth and settlement of the country. Ascending still further, we see on all sides the Govern-

ment works—booms, slides, dams, roads, &c. till passing the Falls of “La Grande-Mère,” we come to Rat River, one of the numerous tributaries of the St. Maurice, about eighty miles from its mouth, where there are flourishing farms and settlements belonging to the lumber interest. Passing still further on and upwards, we come to the Vermilion River, another tributary of the St. Maurice, distant about 120 miles from Three Rivers, whose waters circle round to the south-west until they approach the head waters of the Ottawa. Above this still, we come to numerous other rivers, and some posts of the Hudson’s Bay Company, and are surrounded on all sides by interminable forests of pine and spruce timber, one of the staple products of Canada, and always the first tribute paid by the newly occupied districts into the hands of enterprize. From the Falls of Shawinigan, indeed, up to the extreme head waters of the St. Maurice, a distance of about two hundred miles, these forests cover the whole face of the country, varied only by an intermixture of the hard woods, maple, beech, birch, elm and other varieties; and at intervals will be found fine farms belonging to lumbering firms, where oats and hay are raised for the support of their cattle, and to obviate the expense of transportation from the settled districts below.

And now, descending again in our light bark canoe, affording as it does the most rapid and convenient form for travel in these remote parts, we glide rapidly downwards towards our starting point, hailing as we, pass some jovial crew of raftsmen or upward-bound canoe, and even beholding to our astonishment a steamboat plying on waters that, till recently, wotted not of steam in any shape save from the voyageur’s primitive kettle of tea or smoking pail of pea-soup. We note too on all sides traces of the importance attached by Government to the increasing business of the river, as seen in the roads opened, dams, slides and booms constructed, and other improvements made to facilitate the lumbering and general interests of the country.

Finally, we arrive again, perhaps on the second day of our downward journey, at the Falls of Shawinigan, making the land at the foot of the bay first referred to, which is formed by the river turning out of its direct course abruptly to the left. Here the waters seem first to gather themselves, as if reluctant to spend their energies idly; but the laws of gravity are imperative, waiting neither on the hour nor on man; and after sweeping slowly round the bay to its furthest extremity on the left, the river approaches the brink of the Fall, plunging over the rock, and at the distance of about 800 or 1000 feet below, (including a rapid at

the foot of the fall) emerges into a smooth and extensive bay, semi-circular in form, and cutting back so far into the land which forms the fall, as to approach within three hundred feet of the waters of the upper bay; thus forming a kind of peninsula or bulkhead, one-third of a mile or more in length, and three hundred feet wide at the narrowest part of its neck, giving a "head" of one hundred and fifty feet of water, with unlimited supply.

This peninsula and land immediately adjoining it, (in all about five hundred acres) belong to private individuals. The Government has also reserved in the immediate vicinity several hundred acres for the site of a town. A few years will probably demonstrate the wisdom and foresight which prompted this reservation. The whole surrounding country is settled, and within six miles are the celebrated springs of "St Leon." The curative properties of those waters attract annually many visitors from all parts of Canada. In fact the scenery and geographical position of this place, in addition to its extraordinary capability for manufacturing purposes, all point with confidence to the probability that, at no distant day, it will become the Manchester of Canada.

And first, in the probable course of things, will come the manufacture of lumber, a trade which, in itself, if carried to any extent, leads naturally to the establishment of factories in many other departments of business. The lumber trade is especially *the* trade of all newly opened countries accessible from the adjacent settled districts, and it increases in ratio with population and civilization. Canada, as a whole, supplies mainly not only the mother country, but also a large part of the demand from the northern, eastern, and central parts of the United States. The annual consumption of the Burlington, Whitehall, Troy, Albany and Boston markets, probably exceeds one thousand million feet. Part of this is supplied from the south-western part of New York. The great bulk of the remainder finds its way to market from Canada through Lake Champlain and the Chambly Canal, tapping the St. Lawrence midway between Montreal and Three Rivers, and comprises the supply from all sources from the Ottawa river, forty-five miles above Montreal, to Quebec, ninety miles below Three Rivers. Recently, however, much of the Ottawa lumber has gone for a market to the far west; and though the raw material is still plenty on that river, yet its production is annually becoming more and more expensive, and can hardly compete with the fresh cut and cheaper facilities of the St. Maurice.

It is fair to presume, therefore, that much of the lumber required for

the southern markets must come from the St. Maurice; and it is certain also that no river in Canada has, in a geographical point of view, such a complete choice of markets, or commands more easy access to them. Herein is its peculiar advantage over the other tributary rivers of the St. Lawrence. In less than three days, rafts can be taken from Shawinegan to the Quebec market, or loaded on barges at Three Rivers and started on their way to the United States. Mills will cut for whichever market may at the moment offer the best inducements. The cost of lumber in the log at the mill, say at Shawinegan, is from three to four dollars per thousand feet, board measure; sawing, about two dollars; rafting to Three Rivers and loading on barges, one dollar; freight to Troy or Albany, from three to four dollars; in all say eleven dollars. The commonest quality of pine sells readily in Troy or Albany for thirteen dollars per thousand, and from that price to an average of thirty dollars. Twenty dollars, however, is a fair average for the yield of the river in pine; and large quantities are sold even at Three Rivers, at better proportionate rates, to southern and eastern buyers, who, in the hope of saving a commission, go northward to the mills and seek to buy direct from the manufacturers. Extensive steam mills and machine shops are already established on the main land at the mouth of the St. Maurice river, where large quantities of lumber are annually manufactured; and there are islands in the mouth of the river upon which planing mills and other factories might be established with very great advantage. Labor is exceedingly cheap, being supplied chiefly by the French Canadian population, who are as honest, frugal and hardy a race as any under the sun. Their wants being comparatively small, they depend upon the operations of the lumberman for their winter's employment. It needs now only the capitalist and the mechanic—money and skill—to give form and direction to that tide of wealth which must ere long, and under any circumstances, roll down the whole course of this magnificent river. The opportunity for investment is one which, after the current year of low values, will probably never occur again.

THE PILES RAILWAY.

(From the *Three Rivers Inquirer*.)

SIR,—It has been stated, among others by the Hon. L. T. Drummond, that *The Inquirer* has done more than any other agency, to bring the St. Maurice district, and its resources, before the notice of the public.

I believe the statement is correct. It is, however much to be regretted that within the last year or two, your views of our railway policy, as expounded in *The Inquirer*, have, in my opinion, helped rather to militate against the St. Maurice interest. True, *The Inquirer* originated, and continues to support, the scheme of a branch road connecting this City with the Grand Trunk at Arthabaska : which road would, as has already been shewn, greatly facilitate the opening up of this immense territory, as well as furnish to Three Rivers an easy access to all the markets in the world, at all seasons of the year. The Arthabaska branch is but inserting the end of the wedge. If you would lay the country open, you must supplement that scheme with a railroad to the Piles on the St. Maurice. I know that you have cast ridicule on that project ; but if I mistake not, when you called it, "an absurdity," the epithet was used in reference to the immediate profit the working of the road might be expected to yield to stockholders. You did not, nor could any one pretend to say, that such a road, in conjunction with a steamer to La Tuque, could otherwise than benefit the lumberman and the settler. Your plan, as set forth in last Saturday's *Inquirer*, of constructing colonization roads on the same principle as now recognised by Government for building railways, that is by grants of wild lands, is open to the old objection, that these lands will fall into the hands of monopolists. What difference is there between the monopoly of lands by a railway company, or by an ordinary road company ? As to the profits which in either case may be realised, I think the advantage lies with the railway company. Except indeed, that in addition to grants of land, your road company has also the right of erecting turnpikes—a right which our *habitans* would consider as an unjust burden, and to which they would never willingly submit. Although a railway to the Piles might not prove remunerative for a few years in traffic returns, yet the earnings would from the outset, defray working expenses and leave the lands as a clear profit. Whether the railway to the Piles, and steamer to La Tuque, would render the lands granted to this company as valuable as would the opening up of an ordinary road through alternate blocks, say of ten miles each, to a common road company, is the question now to be considered. It has been found in Canada that wherever the lumberman has successfully operated, there the settler has established himself ; because the lumber trade has opened a market for him in the very heart of the wilderness, and thus invariably proves the best agency for settling our lumber districts. If then you foster the lumber trade of any particular locality, you adopt the very

best method of settling that locality, and consequently, by its settlement, you enhance the value of its lands. Now, such road as you propose constructing, would not place the lumberman of the St. Maurice in any better position than he at present occupies. He already has a road to the Piles, for which by the way he has *paid*; and which most likely, he will still have to keep in repair. The transport of his men and provisions along this road, is more expensive and tedious than it would be by rail; and when he reaches the Piles, instead of steamer to La Tuque, he must employ canoes. All this time his men must be paid and supported. Left to themselves, as they often must be under existing circumstances, they consume double the time necessary for the journey; and if the roads are bad, break pork and flour barrels, and destroy more provisions, than would have sufficed to pay for the entire transit by rail and steamer; nor taking into account the loss of time and the inconvenience likely to result from arriving at the shanties with diminished supplies. Apart from this consideration, if your oxen and horses are sent up by rail and steamer, you prevent their being jaded, and save considerably on the hay and oats provided for their consumption. The roads you advocate could confer no new advantage on the lumberman; and not penetrating as far as the lumber districts, they would fail to provide a market for the settler, to the interior of the country, still subjecting him to visit the city or market town, by an expensive and slow mode of travel, in order to dispose of his produce. On the other hand, the railway and steamer mode of transit will draw an increased lumber trade up the St. Maurice, providing for the farmer who settles even at La Tuque, a ready market for his hay, oats, pork and flour. But if he prefers selling these products of his industry in Three Rivers, he can take advantage of steamer and railway, or if he disposes of them at the homestead, and is desirous of laying out his money to advantage, by making purchases in this city, the same facilities are open to him. According to your plan the lumber trade receives no fresh encouragement, and consequently the agriculturist has but little inducement to locate himself at any great distance from a market town. We have now to take another view of the case. The lumber growing on lands granted to any such companies, must be taken into consideration. Such roads as you propose can prove but of little avail in getting out lumber, or in lessening the expenses of bringing it to market. The Piles railway, as has been already shewn will lessen the cost and trouble of lumbering on the St. Maurice. The timber on

lands granted to the St. Maurice Railway Company, will, on the construction of the road, at once assume an increased value. Supposing that there are to be found on an average, only ten pine trees per acre, and only calculating them worth one dollar each, the company will find itself in possession of timber amounting in value to *three millions, seven hundred and fifty thousand pounds cy.* This it will be remembered is apart from the value of the land, *or the rich minerals* which are known to abound on them. It has been objected by some residents of Three Rivers, that a railway to the Piles would have the effect of removing manufacturing operations from this city to the Shawinegan, where water power, to any extent, may be obtained. These persons have not considered, that supposing such to be the result, Three Rivers would still be the gainer. The more numerous the industrial operations carried on in the interior, the greater the prosperity of that city which serves as the outlet to such riches; and the fact that Shawinegan offers these advantages, is another argument in favor of the Piles railway. It is a popular cry with some parties, "Oh! a railway to the bush, why the profits would not pay the grease for the wheels." A wise man wrote, "he is a fool who answereth a matter before he heareth it," and those who raise this cry, had better first reason the matter out, or permit me to do it for them. If the road led where no one travelled, the cry might have some meaning; but such is not the case in this instance. If I do not mistake, *The Inquirer* stated, about the time that the Piles road was opened, that about a hundred cart loads of shanty supplies, passed over it in one day. Why, some of our Three Rivers carters have made little fortunes within the last four years from this source of employment. Supposing that business did not already exist, it is a fact well known in the history of railways, that they soon create a traffic for themselves. They afford such speedy and cheap transit, that distance, along a line of railroad, is hardly taken into calculation. With such a mode of conveyance to the Piles, the farmer of that locality would count himself as near Three Rivers, as if he resided in the Banlieu or St. Marguerites. Were the road in question, once in operation, an active trade would immediately spring up in firewood for the Montreal market. The St. Maurice lands being in many parts thickly grown with hardwood trees, and the labour of chopping being less expensive than in the Eastern Townships, we could supply that market cheaper than they. The great business of the Piles railway, in my opinion, must consist of

sawn lumber for the United States market. As before observed, the Shawinegan presents any number of mill sites ; and saw mills, worked by water power, are more remunerative than steam mills. The terminus of the Piles road in this city, will of course be in connexion with the Grand Trunk wharf of the Arthabaska branch. It may not be generally known, *that this branch will place us in the most favorable position of any lumber district in America, for supplying five New England States, with an article which every one of them is at present lacking.* The bright yellow pine deals of our native forests, placed on the car at Shawinegan, might be embarked here on the Grand Trunk ferry boat, and, hooked to the engine on the south shore of the St. Lawrence, never break bulk till they reached their destination in the United States. This project was the darling scheme of that cherished citizen of Salem, whose untimely end, precipitated by the accident of the ill fated *Montreal*, was mourned over in the United States as a public calamity. The construction of such roads as you advocate are good in their place, but they must not be suffered to supercede those that bring in their train more important advantages. Ordinary roads conduce to the settlement of the country, and chiefly benefit the agriculturist ; but they cannot compare with railways for creating traffic, and giving an impulse to manufactures and to commerce. To my mind, the matter resolves itself into this, " ordinary roads are good, but railroads are better ; grants of land to a company for making a common road will prove remunerative ; but a grant of land on the St. Maurice to a company that will build a railway from Three Rivers to the Piles, cannot fail to be a fortune to the happy individuals concerned." As the North Shore Railway Company cannot lay claim to these lands without building the Piles road, *in case of accident*, it would be *wise* in the people of Quebec to devote one half of their recent vote, to the construction of the Piles Railway, and commence the work *immediately*. I remain, &c.

A FRIEND TO PROGRESS.

Three Rivers, 15th April, 1858.

(From a Correspondent of the *Three Rivers Inquirer*.)

The River St. Maurice, according to the nearest computations that can be made, drains an area of about forty-five thousand square miles. This extensive region, once believed to be barren and uninhabitable, so far as explored, presents every inducement both to the settler and the

lumberman. There are extensive tracts, somewhat hilly indeed, but these are covered with forests of the finest pine. On the other hand there are wide reaches of level land, covered with hard wood of a heavy growth. Throughout it is beautifully watered, and intersected with rivers. The course of the main St. Maurice is nearly from the north. To the east and west, the tributaries spread out far more than a hundred miles on either side. Such is the country which now partially explored, was almost utterly unknown some four years ago. At that not very remote period, settlement had not extended quite fifteen miles up the St. Maurice. All beyond was an unbroken wilderness. About that time, however, the Public Works were commenced; the lumbermen began to embark their capital freely on the St. Maurice; roads were made, and settlement rapidly followed. Take for example the line of the "Piles Road." Three years and a half ago, from Cote Turcotte upwards, there was not a single settler. Starting now from that place (distant from this place about fifteen miles) you can travel for fourteen miles through a dense settlement. In that distance you will meet with two churches, two post offices, and numerous stores. The houses are not mere log huts, but good substantial buildings of hewn wood, in some instances clap-boarded over. The settlement is divided into two municipalities, and the people and the councillors project roads, and dispute about improvements, in a manner which would do credit to the most restless and energetic settlement in Western Canada. As to the amount of the population, I cannot speak positively, but it must be considerable. At one of the churches referred to, not less than a hundred and fifty seven children received their first communion in one day last summer, and all this, bear in mind, where there was not a tree cut three-and-a-half years ago.

But this is not the only settlement springing up on the St. Maurice, or occasioned by the trade which has begun thereon. On the east side, settlement has advanced more rapidly than on the west, of which we have been speaking, and is approaching the source of the Rivière-des-Envies, opposite the Grandes Piles. From the Ste. Anne-de-la-Perade (nearly half way to Quebec) to Berthier, half way to Montreal, the settlements are extending, and will extend still more, as the demand for produce to supply the lumber establishments in the interior increases.

In the mean time the new road to the Grandes Piles has thrown open the country to La Tuque, a distance of 120 miles up the St. Maurice. The money expended on this road is unquestionably the most judicious investment yet made by the Government in the territory. All the traffic of the St. Maurice already goes over it, and settlement is pouring in, but as it is now the main highway leading up the St. Maurice, it is certainly of the greatest importance, as you justly state, that the lower portion of the road, that is to say, the part lying between this and Cote Turcotte, (a distance of fifteen miles) should be put in thorough repair, and made equal to the Government roads which have been made from that place to the Grandes Piles.

