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spruce swamp with a colony of *Cypripedium hirsutum*, the state flower, and the rarely seen *Rubus acaulis*, the arctic raspberry; the latter known only from two localities in the state. Moreover, there are scenes of the pine and hardwood forests of the Duluth region, glimpses of the north shore of Lake Superior and Minnesota Point, with flowers that mark the trail of a botanical collector.

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## NOTES ON THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF THE OXFORD HOUSE CREE

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Nearly eight hundred miles directly north of Saint Paul, Minnesota, there stands a historic fur-trading post established towards the end of the eighteenth century by the Hudson's Bay Company. Oxford House was maintained as a rest stop for fur brigades using the Hayes River route between the main supply depot at York Factory and the Norway House rendezvous at the northern end of Lake Winnipeg. Today the post serves a reservation band of over four hundred Swampy Cree Indians where ethnological field research during the summer of 1940 was carried on by the author and Mrs. Mason.<sup>1</sup>

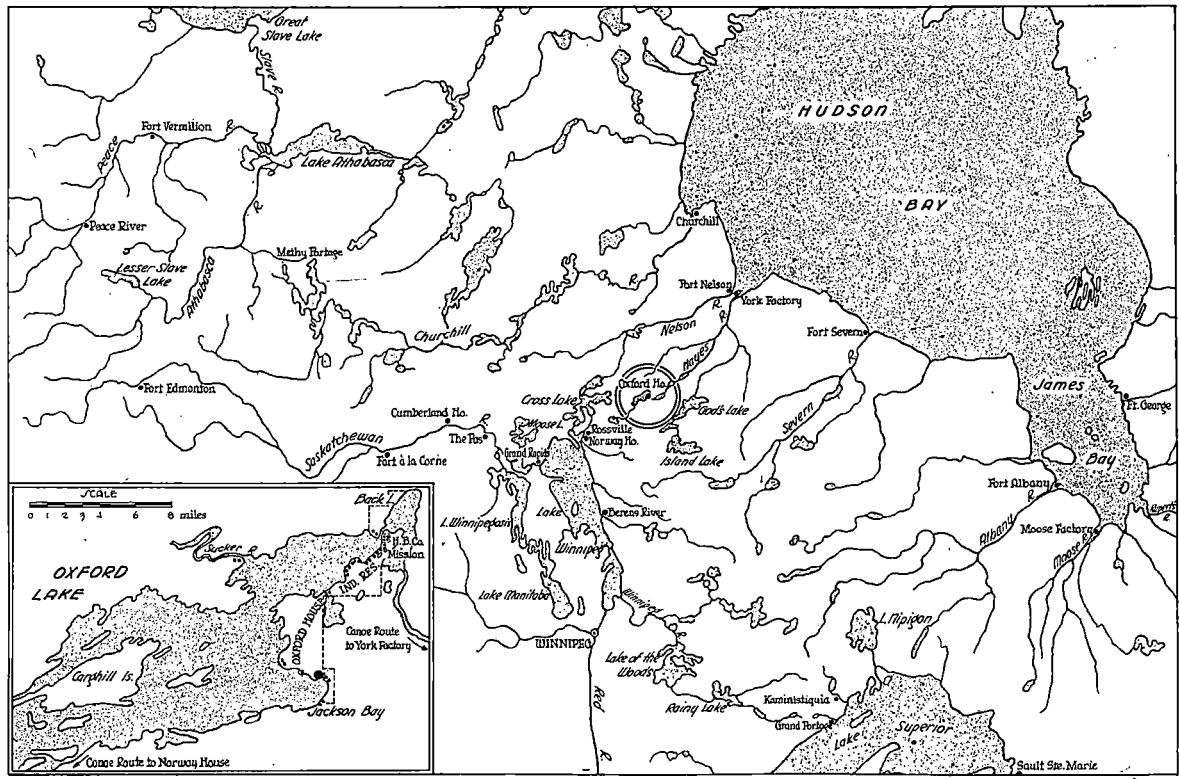
The Oxford House Cree occupy a central position in the present distribution of woodlands Cree, who inhabit central Canada from the western shores of Hudson Bay to the foothills of the Rockies between the fifty-second and the fifty-sixth parallels of latitude. Plains Cree, Beaver and Chipewyan are neighboring tribes to the west and north, while on the south dwell the Sauteaux-Ojibwa (a northern offshoot of the Chippewa). Linguistically, the Cree are classified as a Central subtype of the Algonkian stock.<sup>2</sup> The Cree are closely related to Chippewa-speaking peoples, but the two languages are mutually unintelligible.

In a subarctic environment the Oxford House Indians experience a maximum of warm weather during June, July and August when frost leaves the ground and several inches of rainfall are received. During the rest of the year extreme cold and deep snows make difficult the Indian's constant search for food and furs. In the summer lakes and streams become water highways, as thick underbrush and marshy ground render impractical any other sort of transportation than canoe travel.

Although the Oxford House band has been in contact with Eu-

<sup>1</sup> This field work was partly financed by a Research Grant awarded to the author in 1940 by the Minnesota Academy of Science.

<sup>2</sup> Michelson, Truman "Preliminary Report on the Linguistic Classification of Algonquian Tribes" *Twenty-eighth Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology*, 1912. pp. 237-239.



Map of Woodland Cree territory, including historic place-names and large-scale inset of the Oxford House area.

ropeans in the fur trade for over two hundred years, few changes had taken place in their own culture until missionaries established themselves there about 1850. By treaty in 1909, the band became wards of the Canadian government and today the Swampy Cree retain only a small percentage of their aboriginal folkways.

The English traders brought over guns, powder, shot, brass kettles, knives and hatchets. The Indian soon substituted these for his primitive equipment. As trade flourished, other items were introduced, such as cloth, glass beads, woolen blankets, clothing, red lead for paint, twine for fishnets, pewter ware and tobacco. In return, thousands of beaver, marten and fox furs were carried to London by waiting ships for the annual fur auctions.

Traffic in fur initiated a closely interacting dependence of the Indian and the trader. At one stroke the acquisition of firearms eased the Indian's anxiety over an adequate food supply, and rendered the bow and arrow of neighboring tribes ineffectual as a protective weapon against the marauding Cree. In turn, firearms made the Cree completely dependent upon the trader for an unfailing supply of powder and shot to ward off starvation and to ensure a successful fur season. With most of his time spent in the trapping of fur and with an increasing scarcity of the once plentiful woods caribou, the Indian failed to secure sufficient hides to clothe himself, and European woollens replaced leather shirts, leggings and robes. Other articles of native manufacture disappeared with the adoption of metal fishhooks, copper kettles, knives and spearheads of iron, twine for lines and nets, steel needles, glass beads and linen thread. Flour, tea, tobacco and numerous other food items became an integral part of his diet.

On the other hand, the Indian was the sole means of a rich return of fur for the trader. The aborigines supplied guides and information about the interior, as well as the primitive but practical canoes and snowshoes which enabled the trader to travel in this strange land.

A present day Cree community presents interesting examples of the change from camps of two hundred years ago. In many instances formal features are the same but the materials involved are different. To build a typical Cree summer lodge, two long poles are lashed together at one end with willow bark; by supporting a third pole, they make a tripod on which twenty-five to forty other poles are laid, the butts forming a circle ten to fifteen feet in diameter. Large pieces of canvas cover this framework, leaving a smoke-hole at the top and a south facing door which is closed by a stick-weighted flap of canvas or an old blanket. From several cross-poles lashed in the upper part of the tepee are suspended long, blackened, iron pothooks over a raised earthen fire hearth surrounded by four short logs. Utensils, moccasins, and fish which are to be sun-cured also hang from these poles. Blankets, which are rolled up and stuffed

into canvas bags, and other belongings of the eight or ten occupants are stacked near the walls on the bough covered floor.

Tepee covers of hides were universally used by the Swampy Cree until the middle of the nineteenth century when sheets of birchbark were overlapped like shingles on the conical framework. The use of hides is now obsolete, and old canvas from discarded wall-tents, tar paper, blankets or other scraps, supplemented in a few instances with bark slabs for protection from the cold, are commonly employed in the Oxford House lodge.

In latter years, canvas wall-tents, purchased from traders and heated with small iron stoves, provide a cleaner and roomier dwelling and are preferred to the tepee by fifty per cent of the Oxford House band during the temporary summer residence on the reserve. An occasional family, for sleeping and storage room, combines the wall-tent with a canvas tepee at the front where fish and game are cleaned and cooked over an open fire or a stove, leaving the main tent clean and free from smoke. About 1880, with the help and direction of Company traders, several families built the first log cabins as permanent homes on their winter trapping grounds. Nearly the whole band now inhabits one-roomed cabins for winter dwellings. These are built of pine logs, notched to fit at the corners, and have roofs of light poles covered with bark and earth or roofing paper. Beneath the usual floor of hand-sawed boards, five-foot square cellars have been dug by a few Indians for the preservation of potatoes and other perishables. Log cabins are as a rule better furnished with a few chairs or benches, an occasional table, built-in bunks and shelf space, and are heated with iron stoves. The rough floors are frequently swept with improvised brooms of pine or poplar boughs and are scrubbed with soap and water or sand. Doors are fitted with bars but the latchstring is always out. Glass windows may be bought from the trading store although a cabin seldom has more than one or two.

As the caribou-skin shelter has been discarded so has the birch bark canoe given way before the canvas canoe of the fur trader. Until fifteen years ago birchbark was a favorite working material and every man was a canoe builder. Good birch is now more difficult to secure in the north country, and a change was easily effected when the new canvas canoe was introduced. The large, nineteen-foot freighting craft is bought from the proceeds of the Indian's fur catch, to carry him to his fishnets, to transport his family, dogs and belongings to and from the winter trapping grounds, and to earn summer money in freighting supplies for the traders.

About 1821, when York Factory was still the distributing center for the fur trade west to the Rockies, freight was transported in immense wooden York boats, many of them built by Indian carpenters under white supervision at Oxford House. With the transfer of the main depot from York Factory to Winnipeg and the introduction of steamers on Lake Winnipeg, York boat traffic gradu-

ally diminished. About 1920, the Oxford House band built its last boat to freight government relief supplies. Abandoned on the shore of Oxford Lake, the historic relic was burned a year ago in a brush fire. With the passing of the York boat, Oxford House Indians now freight supplies in canvas canoes from Norway House, a round trip of three hundred miles which takes a week to ten days with fair weather. With three men traveling in a canoe, two Indians sit at the oars amidship while in the stern a third flicks his paddle from side to side every three or four strokes to keep on the course. The Indian carves his own peg oarlocks over which fits the leather loop that is nailed to the oar loom. A step near the forward thwart holds a detachable mast with a square sail which is erected when wind is favorable.

A hardy worker on the trail, the Swampy Cree wastes little time in carrying his freight across a portage by means of a long leather tumpline or headstrap. As easily as he carries a two-hundred pound load of flour and canned goods, so does the Indian overturn a heavy canoe to rest on his shoulders while he crosses a mile-long portage with a quick step. Occasionally rapids are run, but the cautious Indian usually makes a portage past rough water to keep from wetting his freight. Sometimes a canoe may be "lined" through rapids by letting it down slowly on the end of a rope. To "track" a canoe upstream against a strong current, the steersman stays in the canoe while those on shore haul on the attached tow-rope. Poling is necessary when lakes and creeks become too shallow for paddling. Rocky rapids and portages take their toll on canoes and repairs are constantly needed. Canvas patches, store-glue, and white lead are substituted for the primitive spruce gum and bark.

The outboard motor, another product of civilization, is now a factor in Indian life. Seven Oxford House Indians have bought small motors to attach to their canoes, and are now faced with the problems of unfamiliar mechanical adjustments and gasoline at one dollar a gallon. For winter travel over the deep snow that blankets the country, the modern Cree employs snowshoes, dog team and toboggan.

In spite of a recent decrease in the game and fish supply, the Cree depends mainly on his nets, traps and adopted firearms to furnish the bulk of his food. His abilities to maintain life during a famine, or to gorge himself to the bursting point when game is abundant, are still the subject of tales related in the fur trade. Our communistic primitive, heedless of the future, will invite his friends to feast upon a freshly killed moose and, during a lean winter, will share the last fish with his hungry fellows. A meat diet is supplemented with a few items from the trader's shelves, such as flour, baking powder, lard, bacon, and sugar. Tea has taken its place as an indispensable beverage.

At Oxford House food is prepared by boiling, roasting or frying. To boil the day's catch in the ubiquitous trade kettle preserves the

flavor and provides a nourishing soup. Whether it be fish, duck, moose or rabbit, the meat is cleaned, cut into chunks and tossed into the pot with a little flour, salt and a few vegetables. If a woman's kettles are all in use or if she has a minimum of time, she may roast meat by spitting it on a stick or suspending it from a low stage or a twisted cord near the fire. When on the trail or making bannock or extracting oil from animal and fish fat, the frying pan is called into service. Nearly every part of a moose or deer is prepared for the table. Delicacies include heart, liver, unborn calf and the stomach contents. A cooked moosehead provides tongue, brains, muscles about the eyes and ears, and meat on the head, nose, lower jaw and cheeks. After enormous quantities of body meat are consumed, the leg bones are cracked to secure the rich marrow which may be boiled, roasted or eaten raw. Grease is obtained by boiling the pulverized bone joints.

When a woman cleans a catch of whitefish and suckers, she tosses heads and tails to her half-starved dogs. After the fish have been cleaned, washed and hung on a stage to be sun-cured, the entrails are rendered in a pan and the oil extracted is carefully stored in fish bladders or other containers to be used as a cooking substitute for lard. Bread or bannock and tea may be considered the two most important items which the Cree has adopted from the white man's fare. Flour and a little baking powder, mixed with melted lard and water, are kneaded into a stiff dough. A flat cake shaped to fit in a frying pan is inclined before the fire in such a way that the bannock may be easily browned. When well made this bread is quite wholesome and will keep for several days. Since butter is still a luxury for the average Indian, bannock is spread with lard or other grease and washed down with great quantities of hot tea.

A monotonous fish diet in July and August is relieved by wild raspberries, strawberries and blueberries. In late autumn thousands of whitefish are netted and hung in rows of ten to a stick on stages to feed man and dogs during the long winter. Recently, Oxford Indians have not been able to catch more than are required for a single day, but cleaned fish are occasionally preserved by being smoked on a stage of green sticks over a low fire. A surplus of moose, deer, muskrat or rabbit, when cut into thin strips and smoked in a similar manner, will keep for some time. Pemmican, made by pulverizing dried meat to a powder and mixing it with grease, suet and berries or raisins, is carried by trappers on the winter trail when a minimum of baggage is desired.

When the first frost strikes in early September, Indian families at Oxford House pull down their tents, load their dogs and belongings into canoes and take water routes in all directions to their winter camps which are to be found on lakes and streams twenty to eighty miles away. By October the great majority of the band has deserted the reserve and is engaged in putting up a large supply of fish for the winter. Traps are inspected and dog-harness, snowshoes

and toboggans are overhauled before the first snowfall, which often coincides with the opening of the trapping season on November 1. With their families comfortably settled in log cabins at base camps, trappers work in pairs with dogs and toboggans to set out traplines which may be ten to fifteen miles long and take from one to three days to visit. An Indian makes the rounds of his traps about once a week, or oftener if he is more energetic than his fellows. Steel traps are purchased from the trader, as snares and deadfalls have been discouraged by the government. Nevertheless, many Cree still build these primitive traps in much the same way as did their forebears three centuries ago. Rabbits are jerked into the air by a noose of "jackfish twine" attached to a spring-pole. Heavier cord is used for loops fastened to short lengths of wood which catch in the brush to hinder the flight of snared foxes, lynx or other animals.

Deadfalls, as constructed at Oxford House in 1940, may be recognized in travelers' descriptions of over a century ago. In the center of a half circle of stakes about fifteen inches high, one end of a baited stick rests beneath another short stick which in turn supports a heavy log. When a weasel snatches the bait, he disturbs the short stick which causes the log to fall upon the helpless animal, killing or disabling it. A more complicated trap, employing a series of sticks and a length of cord delicately arranged to support the deadfall log, is built for larger fur-bearing animals like the marten. After the Indian kills the animals, traps are reset and that evening the game is skinned, or he may wait until his arrival at the base camp to flay his whole catch at one time. All pelts, except that of the beaver, are removed in one piece as one would peel off a glove. They are slipped over wire or wooden stretchers to be hung outside in the cold air until the trapper leaves for the trading post. A beaver skin is removed flat and stretched taut with cords within a willow hoop.

Fishing for jackfish or pike, sturgeon, suckers and whitefish is performed in very much the same way as among the earlier Cree. From traders, women buy balls of gilling twine which they wind on their wooden net needles for the weaving of fish-nets sixteen meshes wide and forty or fifty yards long. To keep the net afloat, paddle-shaped sticks of wood are attached by slits at one end to the top side-cord at intervals of fifteen or twenty feet. Rough, stone sinkers tied to the base of the net, anchor it when it is stretched across the current of a small stream. In the early morning, men and women in canoes visit the nets where, with the struggling fish in their teeth, they free them from the entangling net which is straightened out anew for another catch. The nets are searched at least once a day. Regularly every three or four days, they must be hauled out, cleaned and checked for tears in the mesh, for new nets are expensive to make and old ones must last a long time. After being mended they are spread on racks to dry before they are set out once more in the evening.

The first two centuries of contact with traders on the bay pro-



duced among the Cree a curious dress of mooseskin, beaver fur and English woollens as the primitives experimented with European fashions. At the present time, the Cree is usually attired in white man's costume, although he retains his soft mooseskin moccasins and mittens, as well as an occasional deerskin parka for winter wear. Until recently, other native dress products included hooded coats and robes which were woven from rabbit skins. Only the sleeping robes are now made from this material by the Oxford House natives. From a cut across the inner side of the hind legs, the rabbitskin is peeled over the head in one piece and fitted over an upright log. Beginning at the tail, the Indian cuts a half inch strip of fur spirally to the head. In order to have fur on all sides, the six to eight-foot strip is twisted between the palms and wound with other strips into a ball. Carried along by a bone needle the fur string is woven into a robe of appropriate width from a crossbar suspended on the wall. As the weaving progresses, the robe, which may include as many as sixty to three hundred skins, is rolled up on the bar.

Another primitive material prepared for clothing is dressed moose- or deerskin. Similarly treated, both skins are passed through several stages: flaying, scraping, drying, softening, pulling and smoking. When an animal has been skinned, its warm hide is stretched on a rectangular frame and with a knife or scissors the woman clips the hair close. A scraping tool is made by breaking a moose tibia in half and filing the broken part to a sharp chisel-like edge. With the joint end of the bone held in the hand, all superfluous fat, meat and hair is scraped from both sides of the hide which is then left to dry outdoors for several weeks to become stiff and hard. To be softened it is soaked in a solution of water and grease, soap or even oatmeal, after which two women stretch and pull the wet skin over a low fire until it is dry. Fairly soft and white at this stage, skin of the caribou may then be used for upper flaps of moccasins, but mooseskin is regularly smoked at Oxford House to prevent it from becoming moldy. The softened skin is fashioned into a rough envelope and suspended by thongs from a rack or a tripod, the open end hanging above a smudge-fire that is fed with rotten wood or punk. After two hours the skin is reversed and smoked on the other side to a dark brown color, when it is ready to be cut up for moccasins.

The Swampy Cree in the vicinity of Oxford House make two principal types of moccasins. Described by Skinner as the "ordinary northern type",<sup>1</sup> the one-piece moccasin made for summer use has a seam from the toe to an oval vamp over the instep. From a short cross-seam at the heel a vertical seam rises to the top of the moccasin. An ankle flap, which is open at the front and extends six or eight inches up the leg, is sewed with linen thread to the upper edge

<sup>1</sup> Skinner, Alanson "Notes on the Eastern Cree and Northern Saulteaux." *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History*, vol. 9, part 1. New York, 1911. p. 20.

of the moccasin, and ankle thongs are attached to securely bind the flaps. Covering the vamp is a piece of deerskin embroidered with intricate floral designs in silk, or more commonly with beadwork since silk is quite expensive and more difficult to use. However, beadwork designs, in general, follow the same outline as those embroidered in silk. The oval vamp is bordered with several lines of silk-wrapped horsehair, within which lies a wide margin of colored beadwork arranged in two rows of interlocking triangles and a central U-shaped block of floral patterns or geometrical designs on a white background. Individual variations within this essential outline, including diamonds, squares, bars, triangles, and crosses as well as a variety of leaf and flower forms, are too numerous to be classified.

The winter type, or "mitt-moccasin", has a larger vamp, no seam over the toe, and usually no design as beadwork would be easily destroyed by the constant wear of the snowshoe strap. Children's moccasins with simple beaded designs sewed on by young girls are generally of this type. As dressed mooseskin is not waterproof, moccasin rubbers without heels are bought from the trader's stock and are worn continuously throughout the summer. Rubbers are discarded in winter, however, as the dry snow does not penetrate the moccasins.

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## THE COLORS OF BEARDED IRISES

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### ABSTRACT

Chemical experiments have been carried out in order to find out why bearded irises have such a wide variety of colors. Fifty-seven varieties of iris were analyzed in order to determine what pigments and what precursors of the anthocyanins were present. The results of these analyses lead to several interesting conclusions which are enumerated below.

1. Flavonol and anthocyanin are two possible precursors of the anthocyanins. Only small amounts of the former, and none of the latter, were found.

2. Yellow and white irises fail to produce anthocyanin colors for two distinct reasons. In some of these irises the mechanism for the transformation of the chromogen into the pigment is lacking. In others the chromogen  $\rightarrow$  pigment transformation takes place, but the pigment exists as colorless pseudobase.

3. Some of the well-known colors of irises, such as tan and brick red, are due to anthocyanin underlaid by yellow plastid pigment. Other colors, such as blue, are due entirely to anthocyanin, no plastid pigment being present.