REEL HISTORY: FILM PRODUCTION AT THE LAKEHEAD, 1911-1931

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ABSTRACT

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by Michel Beaulieu

During the early twentieth century the former cities of Fort William and Port Arthur were home to a burgeoning film industry both regional and foreign in nature. Between 1911 and 1931 the twin cities enjoyed a romance with the North American motion picture film industry and produced several historically significant films. Filmmakers at the Lakehead created one of the first films documenting street life in a Canadian city, a series of amateur feature length films, including the first made in Canada, two Hollywood feature films; and was home to both Robert Flaherty, one of the most important documentary filmmakers in history, and Dorothea Mitchell, the first independent woman filmmaker in Canadian history. The films produced in and about the Lakehead region serve as visual records of the social and cultural development in Northwestern Ontario during the first decades of the twentieth-century. Using the existing literature on early film production in Canada and numerous archival sources, this thesis is an examination of these films and the motives of the individuals and organizations responsible for their creation.

Table of Contents

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Not to be forgotten are all the library and archives staff throughout the country that have provided their help. From both the staff at the Chancellor Patterson Library Inter-Library Loans Office and the Northern Resource Centre to Dale Gervais and Bill O'Farrell at the Gatineau site of the National Archives of Canada, your expertise and skills are much appreciated. Within Thunder Bay, Tory Tronrud and the staff of the Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society especially need to be thanked.

Special mention must also be made of Historian Elinor Barr who had the foresight to save Dorothea Mitchell's personal papers from certain destruction. While a plethora of information has been gleaned from an assortment of newspaper articles and interviews throughout the country, it is from the carefully preserved documents long relegated to "local history" that have made much of this research possible. Barr's wealth of knowledge and collection of archival material, and the many books she has authored about the history of Northwestern Ontario, have proven to be a boon for contextual information and chronological guidance.

Thanks must also go out to my family and friends who have been supportive even if I have not really told them what I was doing. Thank you to the Kailiks who have welcomed me into their home and kept me watered and fed. Also, what would a thesis be without the thanking of Mom and Dad for so many things that there are not pages enough for them to be written. Last, but definitely not least, Alyson who arrived early in this endeavour but remained in spite of me.

This is dedicated to Dante and Milton, that way no one can be offended. While all mistakes contained within are solely my fault, they also bear responsibility because they are cats.

Introduction

In 1929 an historic and quintessentially Canadian series of events occurred in the hinterland region of Port Arthur and Fort William, Ontario, collectively known as the Lakehead. In this frontier realm of Canada better known for the fur trade and lumber industry, where its citizens clung to the last vestiges of the British Empire, one of the most culturally and socially significant periods of film production in the history of Canada occurred.[1] In less than two years a group of unknown amateur enthusiasts, led by the first independent woman filmmaker in Canadian history, attempted to produce not one but three feature-length films during a period when Canadian feature film production, for all intents and purposes, was not supposed to exist.[2]

Reel History: Film Production at the Lakehead, 1911-1930 explores how the production in 1929 of "A Race for Ties" by Dorothea Mitchell and the Port Arthur Amateur Cinema Society (PAACS) is remarkable for much more than being the first feature-length amateur film in the history of Canada. What distinguishes "A Race for Ties" and makes 1929 a pivotal moment in Canadian film history is that the film was the climax of events that paralleled the development of film in Canada and challenged the traditional interpretation of the early years of production in the country.

The Lakehead's participation in the history of Canadian film production begins shortly before the First World War and ends with the Great Depression, coinciding with

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[1] Despite much of the region's population being non-British in origin, many of the activities of the residents of Fort William and Port Arthur during the early twentieth-century were designed to promote British nationalism. For example, an attempt to socially engineer the "immigrant child" was undertaken through local organisations such as the Playground Association.

[2] While other women filmmakers such as Nell Shipman were active in Canada prior to 1929, Dorothea Mitchell's accomplishments are unique. As far as her films are concerned, they are truly independent productions; neither intended for commercial gain nor benefited from any fashion of professional help.

the emergence of Canada as a nation and the destination for hundreds of thousands of European immigrants. However, unlike many other aspects of Canada's past, the country's relationship with film during the silent era (1911-1930) is considered to have been insignificant and has been dismissed for its scattered and regional nature.[3] Professional historians, despite the belief by many that the culture of Canada is in grave peril, have neglected, except for brief instances, to explore the social and cultural implications of what is now recognised as one of the most influential forms of mass communication in history.[4]

However, scholars such as J.M.S. Careless have long advocated a broader approach to the study of history in Canada. This approach, now widely adopted, calls for a more inclusive writing of history, one that combines "the limited identities of class, region, and gender."[5] As a result, an increasing number of works have discussed the development of Canada by "more than number and size."[6] Yet, despite the identification of films growing cultural and social significance in the fabric of Canadian society, it has not benefited from the same rigorous examination that gender, labour, ethnic history have undergone.[7] The handful of studies that do touch upon the history of film in

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[3] The standard interpretation of the growth of Canadian society can be found in almost any general history of Canada. See, for example, Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974) and John Herd Thomson and Allen Seager, Canada, 1922-1939: Decades of Discord (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985). The regional nature of the early development of film is discussed in Peter Morris Embattled Shadows: A History of Canadian Cinema, 1895-1939 (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978) and Pierre Véronneau & Piers Handling, ed. Self Portrait: Essays on Canadian and Québec Cinemas (Ottawa: Canadian Film Institute, 1980).

[4] Paul Audley, Canada's Cultural Industries: Broadcasting, Publishing, Records and Films (Toronto: James Lormier and Company, 1984), 21.

[5] J.M.S. Careless quoted in John Herd Thomson and Allen Seager, xiii.

[6] Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, 1.

[7] In his discussion of the implications of film on the profession of history, Charles W. Jefferies commented in December 1941 that "people nowadays get much of their information and their conceptions of life, past

Canada discuss it as part of the greater debate on nationalism, art, literature, and the serious threat of the "northbound tidal wave of American mass culture, radio programs, professional spectator sports, and magazines."[8]

Clearly, in Canada the history of film is a subject that has not been adequately studied by historians. Luckily, scholars from other disciplines have undertaken the task and challenge of writing Canada's film history because, as historian Norman Davies suggests, "no historical generalist could begin to function without reliance on the monographs and academic articles of people working at a completely different level of magnification."[9] However, while the study of film as a discipline has emerged in the last 30 years, film historians in Canada, unlike their American and British colleagues, have produced "not many standard titles on the history of Canadian film," according to historian David Frank, "[and they] seem to have been largely nationalistic in spirit, rather like the older studies of broadcast history."[10] As a result, the existing histories of film in Canada tend to either discuss the establishment of the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) in 1939 as the beginning of Canada's film industry, or explore the country's lack of a stable feature-film industry as a sign of its failure.[11] The lack of research on the

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and present, through media other than books, lectures, sermons, the long-standing established sources of instruction." Charles W. Jefferies, "History in Motion Pictures" The Canadian Historical Review 22:4 (December 1941): 361-68.

[8] Thompson and Seager, xiii. For examples of film's inclusion in the discussion of Canada's cultural history see Alan Smith, Canada: An American Nation (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), David H. Flaherty and Frank E. Manning, The Beaver Bites Back?, American Popular Culture in Canada (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), Paul Audley, Canada's Cultural Industries: Broadcasting, Publishing, Records and Films (Toronto: J. Lorimer, in association with the Canadian Institute for Economic Policy, 1983), Ian Lumsden, ed. Close the 49th Parallel, Etc: The Americanization of Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), and John H. Redekop, ed. The Star Spangled Beaver (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates Limited, 1971).

[9] Norman Davies, The Isles: A History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), xxiii.

[10] David Frank, "Short Takes: The Canadian Worker on Film," Labour/Le Travail 46 (Fall 2000): 417.

[11] The importance of the National Film Board of Canada on the Canadian cultural landscape has resulted in a plethora of historical work unique and unrivalled in Canadian film historiography. See, for example,

period both before 1939 is typically interpreted to mean that nothing of any consequence happened prior to the advent of the NFB while the Canadian industry's failure at the box office is seen as evidence of its irrelevance.[12]

Martin Knelman's This is Where We Came In: The Career and Character of Canadian Film and Seth Feldman's edition of Take Two: A Tribute to Canadian Film, although very different in scope and intent, demonstrate the form much of the writing on the history of film in Canada has taken. While Knelman argues that "the dream of having movies of our own in Canada is [not] something recent,"[13] his work only focuses on the 1970s as, he states, "our [Canadian] instant feature industry has sprung up almost completely in less than a decade."[14] Similarly, Feldman, in his update of the landmark Canadian Film Reader, remarks in 1984 that "it [Canadian film] is a history of beginnings."[15] The contributors to the work hoped that Take Two would be "evidence of a cinema culture that has learned from its struggles and that may, finally, free itself from the shuttle between centre stage and oblivion."[16]

Gary Evan's two works John Grierson and the National Film Board: The Politics of Wartime Propaganda (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), and In the National Interest: A Chronicle of the National Film Board from 1949 to 1989 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991). See also David Barker Jones, Movies and Memoranda: An Interpretative History of National Film Board of Canada (Ottawa: Canadian Film Institute/Deneau, 1981).

[12] For examples of scholarship on the development of what is considered Canada's featureless film industry see Kirwan Cox, "Hollywood's Empire in Canada: The Majors and the Mandarins through the Years" Cinema Canada no. 22 (October 1975), Sandra Gathercole, "The Best Film Policy This Country Never Had," Cinema Canada no. 47 (June 1978), Michael Spencer, "Inside the Wagon Train: A Cautionary Tale," Cinema Canada (June 1986), and Virginia Kelly "Against All Odds," Cinema Canada (September 1987).

[13] Martin Knelman, This is Where We Came In: The Career and Character of Canadian Film (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), 6.

[14] Knelman, 6.

[15] Seth Feldman, ed. Take Two: A Tribute to Film in Canada (Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 1984), viii. See also Seth Feldman, Canadian Film Reader (Toronto: P. Martin, 1977).

[16] Feldman, ix.

That the history of Canadian film between 1895 and 1939 needs rescuing from oblivion is a common theme in most of the existing scholarship. However, as Gene Walz states in his introduction to Flashback: People and Institutions in Canadian Film History, the history of film in Canada "is not monolithic or orderly or continuous; it is not, therefore, easily chronicled."[17] Walz argues that many of the major contributions to Canadian film history that remain unrecognised are so "because film history in Canada is not the history of industry, but of many industrious people and organisations, separated by both space and time and rarely if ever united in grandiose, common enterprise."[18] In the most clearly articulated statement of its kind in Canadian film historiography, Walz provocatively calls for "a chorus of voices engaged in the kind of painstaking, cross-country chronicling of every nook, cranny and anything else that might relate" to the history of film in Canada. For film historians, "to fill in the blanks in our past," Walz states, they "must not only rediscover the contributions to our film culture that have been overlooked or forgotten... [but] also reappraise the positions of those people and institutions already recognised."[19]

With respect to the history of Canadian film before 1939 few have heeded Walz's call. It is interesting that, despite being written over 20 years ago, Peter Morris' Embattled Shadows: A History of Canadian Cinema, 1895-1939 remains the only comprehensive book length study of the period. Cited in almost every study on Canadian film, Morris' work established the foundation of the history of film production in Canada. However, by its very nature, the search for a national cinema is incompatible

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[17] Gene Walz, ed. Flashback: People and Institutions in Canadian Film History (Montreal: Mediatexte Publications Inc., 1986), 11.
[18] Walz, 11.
[19] Walz, 11.

with the history of film in the early twentieth-century as explored by Morris. This is because, especially during the silent era, film production in Canada was scattered and regional in nature, more influenced by changes and technological advancements in the United States than in other parts of the country. It is therefore not surprising that Morris' introductory statement, that "the study of Canadian film history is still in an embryonic state," is as apt today as when it was first written.[20] In fact, despite a shared belief by many film scholars like Chris Gittings that "Embattled Shadows is not exploited as much as it could be in our syllabus and research," there has been little forward movement in the field.[21] Morris himself, in the preface to the 1992 reprint, comments that "the most fundamental correction would necessitate re-writing the first eleven pages of the book" (the period covering the very early years of Canada's film history).[22]

Generally, surveys of Canadian film history have been the only works to include any discussion on the period between 1894 and 1930.[23] Most recent works on the history of English Canadian film have focussed on both the development of feature films in the country and the role that the United States and various levels of government in Canada have had on that development.[24] Two such examples, as their titles suggest,

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[20] Morris, 1.

[21] Christopher Gittings, Canada's National Cinema (New York: Routledge, 2002), 3.

[22] Morris, 1.

[23] See David Clandfield, Canadian Film (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987), Sylvian Garel et Andre Pâquet, eds. Les Cinéma du Canada: Québec, Ontario, Praries, côte Ouest, Atlantique (Paris: Editiions Centre Georges Pompidou, 1992), Marcel Jean, Le Cinéma Québécois (Montreal: Boréal, 1991), Peter Morris, The Film Companion (Toronto: Irwin, 1984), Peter Rist (ed) Guide to the Cinema of Canada (London: Greenwood Press, 2001), and most recently Wyndam Paul Wise, Take One's Essential Guide to Canadian Film (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

[24] The exception is the work performed by film historians in Quebec. A number of historical works have been published in the last 10 years that delve somewhat into the early history of film in that province. Notable are the works by Germain Lacasse, André Gaudreault, and Pierre Véronneau. See Germain Lacasse and André Gaudreault, "The Introduction of Lumière Cinematographe in Canada" Madeleine Beaudry trans. Canadian Journal of Film Studies 5:2 (Fall 1996): 113-123. André Gaudreault, Germain

are Ted Madger's Canada's Hollywood: The Canadian State and Feature Films and Michael Dorland's So Close to the State/s: The Emergence of Canadian Feature Film Policy.[25] Madger's study chronicles, once again, the economic development of the industry after the founding of the NFB. Madger's insight into the dependency on the United States, while groundbreaking in terms of Canadian film history, is merely a new adaptation of an old formula used by historians for nearly a century. On the other hand, Dorland devotes two entire chapters on "The Writing of Canadian Film History" and "The Problem of Knowledge Formation," but he, too, stops short of any detailed analysis of events prior to 1950, instead cryptically arguing that they were contributing factors in Canada's development of a featureless film industry.

Both studies reinforce the continuing focus on the role of government in the history of Canadian motion pictures and the dominant interpretations of the relationship between the Canadian state and the culture of Canada already prevalent in Canadian film and historical scholarship. In the case of Dorland's study, aside from his criticism of Morris' Embattled Shadows, no attempt has been made to explore the pre-NFB motion picture history of Canada. In both Canada's Hollywood and So Close to the State/s the role of state intervention and early American influence is mentioned but not thoroughly examined between the years 1895 and 1939.

Lacasse, and Pierre Sirois-Trahan, Au pays des ennemis du Québec pour une nouvelle histoire des début du cinema au Québec (Québec: Nuit Blanche, 1996), Germain Lacasse, "Cultural Amnesia and the Birth of film in Canada" Cinema Canada no. 108 (1984): 16-17., Germain Lacasse and Serge Duigou, L'Historiographe (Les débuts du spectacle cinématographique au Québec) (Montreal: Cinémathèque québécoise, 1985). For Véronneau see Self Portrait: Essays on the Canadian and Québec Cinemas translated and expanded with Piers Handling (Ottawa: Canadian Film Institute, 1980), and Le success est au film parlant francais: histoire du cinema au Québec vol. 1 (Montréal: La cinémathèque québécois/Le muse du cinema, coll. Les dossiers de la cinémathèque, no. 3, 1979).

[25] Ted Madger, Canada's Hollywood: The Canadian State and Feature Films (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993). Michael Dorland, So Close to the State/s: The Emergence of Canadian Feature Film Policy (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

However, So Close to the State/s best articulates the shape of Canadian film historiography and provides a glimpse into the situation facing those attempting to write about the history of the country's film. Despite the book's focus on a period outside the scope of this thesis, Dorland's first chapter is a succinct commentary on the status of film history in Canada. As he himself states, "compared to the equivalent scholarship in any number of countries not only is the writing of the film history of Canada underdeveloped, but it also remains entangled in conceptual difficulties largely if its own making."[26] Cinema, Dorland argues, "has contours that are never simply national... [but] also includes the experience of film cultures from outside Canada's national borders, notably those of the US and France."[27] The "sudden upsurge of Canadian film production" in the 1960s, according to the author, is responsible for the plethora of scholarship since and the lack of scholarly activity on what came before.[28]

This proclivity for Canadian film historians to focus on the exploration and discovery of a 'distinctly Canadian cinema' and the necessary role of government intervention has also recently surfaced in graduate work. Both the Madger and Dorland studies originated from graduate dissertations not unlike Wyndham Paul Wise's Ontario's Film Industry: A History of Provincial Policy (1991).[29] It provides the only comprehensive study of the government of Ontario's film policies between 1896 and

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[26] Dorland, 3.
[27] Dorland, 4.
[28] Dorland 7 and 14-15.
[29] Wyndham Paul Wise, "Ontario's Film Industry: A History of Provincial Policy" (Master's Thesis, York University, 1991).

1985. However, due to its scope and the period it examines, the study offers little insight into how rural communities or the general public felt about the government's activities.[30]

In addition, while a reappraisal of institutions such as the NFB and the role of its founder, John Grierson, have occurred, few have heeded Walz's call for a more lively exploration into the foundations of film in Canada.[31] Existing calls to push back the boundaries of the study of Canadian film has largely fallen on deaf ears, and, as noted above, existing film history in Canada has seldom gone beyond a nationalistic search for its 'holy grail' – something known as the Canadian film.[32]

While Canadian scholarship should not, like so many Canadian films, "fool the audience into thinking it was American," it should undertake the same breadth, varied scope, and vigorous research as being performed elsewhere in the world.[33] For example, Americans Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery's study Film History: Theory

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[30] Also attracting attention in recent graduate work are the first public screenings of motion pictures in Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa. Both Matthew Smith and Charles Tepperman's theses provide two very unique perspectives of this event. Smith's "Introducing a New Medium; Newspaper Reviews of the First Film Screenings in Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, and New York in 1896" is an "examination of newspaper and magazine articles, advertisements, reviews and commentaries pertaining to the introduction of motion picture technology." (ix) Alternately, Tepperman's "The Perfect Order of a Canadian Crowd: Cinema in Ottawa, 1894-1896" focuses on the same period, uses the same resources, but examines the reception of the first films exhibited in Ottawa. However, while providing new insight into the history of film in Toronto and Ottawa, in many ways both are re-examinations of two cities already discussed in many works. See Matthew Smith, "Introducing a New Medium: Newspaper Reviews of the First Film Screenings in Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and New York in 1896" (Masters Thesis, Concordia University, 1996) and Charles Tepperman, "The Perfect Order of a Canadian Crowd: Cinema in Ottawa, 1894-1986" (Masters Thesis, Carelton University, 2000).

[31] For an example of the reinterpretation of John Grierson's contribution to Canadian film see Joyce Nelson's The Colonized Eye: Rethinking the Grierson Legend (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1988).

[32] Gene Walz stands out in the historiography of Canadian film for his continuing dedication to this principle. Much of his work demonstrates the overlooked contributions of Canadians not living Toronto, Montreal, or Vancouver – the cities most often considered synonymous with Canadian film. Walz's work on Winnipeg native Charlie Thorson, for example, delves into the life and work one of Canada's foremost, but forgotten animators (Cartoon Charlie: The Life and Art of Animation Pioneer Charles Thorson (Winnipeg: Great Plains Publications, 1998). In addition, as editor for the Canada's Best Features (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002) his introduction includes the first updated scholarly overview of the history of film in Canada in over a decade.

[33] Jay Scott "Burnout in the Great White North" in Seth Feldman, ed. Take Two: A Tribute to Canadian Film (Toronto; Irwin Publishing Co., 1984), 30.

and Practice informs much of the methodology surrounding this thesis.[34] Consciously echoing the E.H. Carr's What is History?, Allen and Gomery "place film history within the context of historical research in general," by providing "examples of various types of film historical research."[35] Important to the development of this thesis is the study's demonstration that the object of historical film research cannot be narrowly defined.[36] As they suggest, film history is "more than just the history of individual films."[37]

Beyond an exploration of the individual films produced at the Lakehead, the life of Dorothea Mitchell and her involvement in early film in Canada will also be examined in this thesis. Her contribution to the history of film in Canada is unique as her participation occurred in a period typically bracketed by film scholars such as Kay Armatage by Nell Shipman's "pioneering presence in the silent era... from which a hiatus ensued that was not broken until the state formed the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) in 1939."[38] A product of nineteenth-century colonial culture and society, Mitchell embodied much of the spirit and determination that was necessary for film production in Canada during the early twentieth century. Her appearance on the Canadian frontier and her pioneering spirit reveal a character reminiscent of the

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[34] Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery in Film History: Theory and Practice (Boston, Massachusetts: McGraw-Hill, 1984).

[35] Allen and Gomery. Iv.

[36] Allen and Gomery., 36-38.

[37] Allen and Gomery., 37.

[38] Kay Armatage, et al. "Gendering the Nation" in Armatage, et al. Gendering the Nation: Canadian Women's Cinema, p. 4. The history of women in Canadian film is intermittent at best, as few historical articles and, as Armatage contends, no books have been written about women filmmakers (see Kay Armatage, The Girl From God's Country: Nell Shipman and the Silent Cinema (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003). In addition to this work Armatage has produced on Shipman, women working in Quebec have been the subject of some book-length studies. While much of the literature examines the role of French women working in the National Film Board of Canada (see, for example, Claire Brassard, et al. Les femmes á l'Office national du film du Canada: une etude sur légalité au travail (Montréal: Office national du film du Canada, 1978).), some, such as Joceylne Denault's (Dans l'ombre des projecteurs: Les Québécois et le cinema (Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1996), 17-27 provides insight in to the very early participation of women in the Province.

"memsahib" or "lady boss" of colonial India. As such, she "carried the weight of the Empire on their shoulders and took [her] responsibility seriously."[39] Mitchell's leadership role in the creation of the Port Arthur Amateur Cinema Society ensured that something distinctly "Canadian" would be created.

Keeping in mind the advice of Allen and Gomery, the purpose of this study is to begin to fill the void left by those writing in the history of Canadian film. Reel History is not an exploration to discover "lost" Canadian films, nor is it an attempt, like Seth Feldman's Take Two, to bring "Canadian cinema culture... from the shuttle between centre stage and oblivion."[40] By investigating film production at the Lakehead between 1895 and 1931 this thesis examines the history of industrial film production rather than just a few feature films made north of the 49th parallel.[41]

The opening chapter, "Historical Threads," establishes how the parallel developments of the Lakehead, film in Canada, and the early life of Dorothea Mitchell as a "memsahib" or "lady boss" in training laid the foundation for future film production at the Lakehead. In addition to the general discussion of the history of the region, the development of the economic factors necessary for film production are focussed upon.

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[39] Ronald Harpelle "Company Wives: The Memsahibs of Latin America," unpublished article (2003): 10. For additional information see also Rosemary Marangoly George, "Homes in the Empire, Empires in the Home," Cultural Critique, (winter 1994): 108-109 and See Ann Laura Stoler, "Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Gender Race, and Morality in Colonial Asia, in Micaela de Leonardo ed., Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 73. Dorothea Mitchell's mother, Norrie Mitchell, was a memsahib while the family lived in India. Correspondence between Mitchell's mother and servants from 1886 to 1889 revels that, although the Mitchell's were on friendly terms with their domestic help, the relationship was, essentially, a master –servant one. (Personal Papers of Dorothea Mitchell, Collection of Elinor Barr).

[40] Feldman, p. ix.

[41] This concept is founded on William O'Farrell's suggestion at the 1998 Miami Conference of the Association of Moving Image Archivists that this is how the history of film needs to be approached. See "Industrial Revolution: How Business Has Made and Used Movies," Report on the panel Miami Conference Proceedings of the Association of Moving Image Archivists (1998), http://www.amianet.org/04_Annual/Annual.html

Likewise, Mitchell's life is examined to establish the development of her character and attitudes that played a part in the later events in her life.

Chapter two, "Hustle and Bustle: Early Film and Images of Fort William and Port Arthur," examines the social and cultural reasons for the first film produced in and about Port Arthur and Fort William, Ontario during the late 1910s and early 1920s. Explored are the activities of local industrialist James Whalen and the Ontario Motion Picture Bureau and how the "booster" spirit of the decade informed their decision to produce films about the region. In addition, this chapter examines Dorothea Mitchell's emigration to Canada and how she, by capitalizing on her skills and education developed in India, was able to realise some of the potential portrayed in the early films of the region and become the "Lady Lumberjack" of the Canadian northwest.

The third chapter, "the best picture ever made in Canada," continues this exploration, but focuses instead on the region's flirtation with Hollywood production between 1927 and 1930. The activities and puzzling existence of Thunder Bay Films Limited and the period of "Quota Quickies" is juxtaposed against Dorothea Mitchell's increasing involvement in the cultural and business activities of the region.

The fourth chapter, "The Port Arthur Amateur Cinema Society" examines Dorothea Mitchell's leading role in establishing Canada's first amateur film society and how she, unwittingly, became the first independent woman filmmaker in Canadian history. Her participation in creating the Port Arthur Amateur Cinema Society is juxtaposed against the growing amateur film movement in North America and how the

economic and social preconditions established in the preceding chapters culminated in the creation of Canada's first feature-length amateur, or avant-garde, film.[42]

The Lakehead is an odd place to make film, but then Dorothea Mitchell was not a typical woman. The history of film production at the Lakehead is not so much about the films themselves as it is the personages and events that made a region, over 1200 kilometres from the cultural influence of Toronto, participate in most of the major "epochs" in early film production in Canada. This is the story of how the production of "A Race for Ties" in 1929 and the contribution of Dorothea Mitchell should not be as surprising as it first may seem.

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[42] Many such as Jan-Christopher Horak see the amateur film movement in the 1920s as the first expression of avant-garde filmmaking. See, for example, "The First American Avant-garde" in Jan-Christopher Horak, ed. Lovers of Cinema: The First American Film Avant-Garde, 1919-1945. (The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995).

Chapter 1
Historical Threads

In order to examine film production at the Lakehead, an understanding of the modern history of the region is required. Like much of Canada between 1875 and 1929, the Lakehead had the potential for unbounded economic and societal success. As the Port Arthur News Chronicle proclaimed in 1906:

> The assets of Canada are stupendous, the country reeks with underdeveloped riches, agricultural soil, minerals, water power, navigable lakes and rivers, a healthy invigorating climate, in fact, everything that makes a country great, waiting only for capital and energy of a man to develop it.[1]

From the heyday of Fort William as the inland headquarters of the Northwest Company, to the brink of the depression in 1929, the Lakehead was seen as region of untapped resources, on the precipice of development, and continually in the midst of progress. However, if not for a series of fortuitous developments, the former cities of Fort William and Port Arthur would have become footnotes of the fur-trade era of Canada and not fostered the economic, social, and cultural climate necessary for innovation in Canadian film production.[2]

The Lakehead's rise from economic backwater to the gateway of the Canadian West was the direct result of the introduction of railways and the discovery of silver in the region in the late nineteenth-century.[3] Jean Morrison contends that Fort William and Port Arthur "came into existence as places of trans-shipment for the staple products of

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[1] Port Arthur Daily News, 20 March 1906.

[2] For a detailed examination of the Lakehead's role in the fur-trade see Jean Morrison Superior Rendezvous Place: Fort William in the Canadian Fur Trade (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2001).

[3] Thorold J. Tronrud, Guardians of Progress: Boosters and Boosterism in Thunder Bay, 1870-1914 (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, 1993), 11.

the west in exchange for the manufacturing goods of the metropolitan centres."[4] A major transshipment point along the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), the Lakehead was the most important link between the East and the West. Consequently, the CPR was responsible for much of the industry and population that journeyed to the "head of the Lakes" in the first decades of the twentieth-century. The goal of the CPR, in addition to its fulfillment of the promise by Sir John A. Macdonald to link British Columbia by rail to the rest of Canada, was to encourage European immigration to the West and stimulate East-West trade. For the Lakehead the construction in 1875 of the CPR's terminus in Fort William ensured the region's survival and success in the post-fur trade era.[5]

The first industry to take advantage of this new means of transportation was mining. While the first mining boom in the region took place in the early 1840s, it was not until the discovery of silver at Silver Islet in 1868 and later at Silver Mountain that the industry had a significant economic and demographic impact on the Lakehead.[6] Mining attracted many businesses, investors and immigrants to the area and had a profound effect on the region's future.[7] The silver boom resulted in the establishment and growth of Fort William's sister city, Prince Arthur's Landing (later Port Arthur), the eventual designation of both hamlets as towns in 1892 and 1898 respectively, and the development of infrastructure which included things such as town halls, churches

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[4] Jean Morrison, "Community and Conflict: A Study of the Working Class and Its Relationship at the Canadian Lakehead, 1903-1913" (Masters Thesis, Lakehead University, 1974), 4.

[5] Bruce Muirhead, "The Evolution of the Lakehead's Commercial and Transportation Infrastructure, " in Thorold J. Tronrud and A. Ernest Epp, eds. Thunder Bay: From Rivalry to Unity (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, 1995), 78.

[6] Elinor Barr, "Silver Makes a Firm Foundation" in Thunder Bay: From Rivalry to Unity, 56.

[7] Some of these individuals include, but are not limited to, Thomas Marks, James Whalen, Oliver Daunais, Thomas Keefer, D.F. Burk, and, more importantly to this study, James Flaherty father of Robert Flaherty.

representing various denominations, schools, and an inter-urban street car system.[8] Despite a decline in population following the closure of most the region's silver mines in the early 1890s, the population of Port Arthur and Fort William rose from a few hundred to over 3,000 by 1885.[9]

The significance of the railway and the mining boom is that a small isolated region of the country was turned into a destination for capital investment and immigration.[10] Prince Arthur's Landing came to symbolize, "the freedom, adventure, mystery and wealth of frontier America, the dime store novel Deadwood, Dodge or Carson City of Canada... the village was described as the focal point of a mineral-rich region with unlimited potential."[11] Even following the collapse of the market for silver, with the CPR as the only significant object of development in the region, it still had potential. In addition to assisting immigrants to settle in the western part of Canada, the CPR also acted as a conduit from which 'settlers' could transport their goods back to the Eastern markets. The most prominent of these goods became wheat and, as a result, Canada experienced its first economic boom of the twentieth century, underpinned by "King Wheat." The Lakehead, as the central terminus for Canada, benefited immensely

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[8] The most remarkable of these services was the establishment in 1892 of Canada's first municipally owned street railway. See F.B. Scollie, "The Creation of the Port Arthur Street Railway 1890-95, Canada's First Municipally-Owned Street Railway" Papers and Records vol. XVIII (1990): 40-58 and Mark Chochla, "Sabbatarians and Street Cars," Papers and Records vol. XVII (1989): 25-36.

[9] E. Arthur, "Inter-Urban Rivalry in Port Arthur and Fort William, 1870-1907," in A.W. Rasporich, ed. Western Canada Past and Present (Calgary: McClelland and Stewart West, 1975), 60 and J.P. Bertrand, Highway of Destiny, (New York: Vantage, 1959), 227.

[10] Joseph Mauro, Thunder Bay: A History, (Thunder Bay: Letho Printers, 1981), 104.

[11] Mauro, 86.

from the accompanying national expansion and its fortunes increased with every bushel transshipped.[12]

With the increasing importance of wheat and rail transport, in 1901 the Canadian Northern Railway (CNR) elected to make the town of Port Arthur its Lake Superior terminus. Initially lagging behind Fort William, Port Arthur vaulted into prosperity as a result. Wheat exports from the region rose from 4 million bushels in 1882 to 115 million in 1914.[13] With the demand for wheat, the storage capacity in both Port Arthur and Fort William was increased from 1.5 million bushels in 1885 to 87 million bushels by the late 1920s. The wheat that flowed through the Lakehead was integral to the feeding of millions in Europe during the war of 1914 and the United Kingdom afterwards. By 1928 over 423 million bushels of grain passed through the elevators at the head of the lakes, and was loaded onto ships or rail cars to be shipped to the markets of the world. The importance of wheat export was such that at the time of the stock market crash in 1929, the cities of Port Arthur and Fort William were the biggest grain handling ports in the world.[14]

As in the era of silver mining, the wheat boom also attracted individuals who later shaped the history of the region. While in the early years the railways took an active role in the construction of grain elevators, by 1912 engineers and investors such as C.D. Howe began to move into the twin cities and take control of industry.[15] The shipment of grain, wood, and other resources also precipitated the creation of a shipbuilding

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[12] James Stafford, "A Century of Growth at the Lakehead," in Thunder Bay: From Rivalry to Unity, 41 and Tronrud, Guardians of Progress, 13.
[13] Stafford, 41.
[14] Muirhead, 90-92.
[15] Stafford, 42.

industry. Shipping and shipbuilding played an integral part in fostering the urban development of the cities of Port Arthur and Fort William.

In 1908 the industrialist James Whalen established the Western Dry-dock and Shipbuilding Company. Despite being over 1000 kilometers from the nearest ocean, Western Dry-dock became the largest company of its kind in Canada. Importing skilled labourers from all over the country, its existence epitomized the impact, and reinforced the optimism that the railway industry had on those in living in the region.[16] Resulting from the increasing accessibility of the region and the demand for labour during the first decade of the twentieth–century, the population of both Fort William and Port Arthur increased from 4,000 to 16,500 and 3,200 to 11,200 respectively.[17]

The emergence of the Lakehead as a major transshipment point in Canada coincided with the emergence of what became the Canadian film industry. As film historians contend, the "birth of Cinema" is a misnomer and, like any new-born child, it underwent a considerable period of gestation. The early period of film was the embodiment of technological and creative advancements from a variety of countries and cultures. Certainly the constant traffic of immigrants from Europe provided stimulus for an industry that first sought to capture scenes of everyday life in Canada.

The development of the technology that made projected moving pictures possible was a product of technological continuity, rather than spontaneity. The achievement of projected reality was the culmination of a millennium of innovation and creativity.[18]

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[16] Muirhead, 85.

[17] Muirhead, 76.

[18] See C.W. Ceram, Archaeology of the Cinema (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc. 1965) and Michael Chanan, The Dream That Kicks: The Prehistory and Early Years of Cinema in Britain (London:

However, it was not until the latter half of the nineteenth-century that technological achievements made this possible. Key to this was, as Charles Musser contends, "the demystification of those magical arts in which observers confused the 'lifelike' image with life itself."[19] In his study, The Emergence of Cinema, Musser demonstrates that the invention of projected moving pictures was only another in a series of innovations that resulted from the development of the magic lantern during the 1650s, the adaptation of photography to projection around 1850, and the synchronization of film with recorded sound, which achieved permanent commercial standing in the late 1920s.[20]

The technological advancements in photography made by people such as Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre in the 1830s led to a period of extensive experimentation.[21] Between 1850 and 1894 a wide variety of machines were built based upon the basic principles established by magic lanterns and photography.[22] The pivotal moment was Eadweard Muybridge's answer to the question of whether or not all four hooves of a horse left the ground while galloping.[23] After many trials and experiments he set up a series of cameras, each tripped by an electromagnetic trigger, and took 24 stills that

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Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980) for a more complete examination of the development of early moving images.

[19] Charles Musser, The Emergence of Cinema (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 16.

[20] Musser, 16.

[21] Benjamin Hampton, History of the American Film Industry (1931; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1970), 6.

[22] Musser, 45.

[23] At times this event has been a hotly debated topic in film history. The more recent works by film historians such as Charles Musser and Robert C. Allen discuss the achievement of Muybridge without discussing this "bet" with California governor Leland Stanford. However it has been mentioned in most of the major works and I have elected to use material from the description provided by William K. Everson in his American Silent Film (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 17-18. See also Rebecca Soint's recently published River of Shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West (New York: Viking, 2003).

revealed horses do lift all four feet off the ground when they run.[24] Muybridge patented his *Zoopraxiscope*, a machine that projected a series of images from a turning glass wheel, and toured throughout Europe and the United States giving lectures on animal locomotion with the aid of his invention. As a reporter for the San Francisco Chronicle prophesied, Muybridge's invention had "laid the foundation of a new method of entertaining the people, and we predict that his instantaneous photographic, magic lantern zoetrope will make the round of the civilised world."[25]

Although not immediately enamored with the idea of moving pictures, after meeting Muybridge in February 1888 Thomas Edison set his assistant, William K. Dickson, to experiment with the idea of developing moving pictures to be used in conjunction with his already popular phonograph. In 1894, Edison demonstrated for the first time his Kinetoscope, the end result of Dickson's tinkering. While not the first machine, Edison's business sense and world famous name ensured that by 1897 the Kinetoscope could be found in parlours and other places of amusement throughout the United States and Canada.[26] Given the success of Edison's machine, investors from all over the world began to experiment with the medium. The goal soon became to break free of the stand-alone machine, and its single paying customer, and to find some way to project moving pictures.[27] In a cramped basement in Paris on 28 December 1895, mere months before Edison intended to stun the world with his latest invention, Louis

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[24] Musser, 48-53.

[25] "Moving Shadows," San Francisco Chronicle (5 May 1880): 3 cited in Charles Musser, The Emergence of Cinema, 50.

[26] For a more detailed description of the development of Edison's Kinetoscope see Charles Musser, Thomas A. Edison and His Kinetographic Motion Pictures (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1995).

[27] Douglas Gomery, Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 6.

Lumières exhibited his Cinematograph, the first machine able to project moving pictures to be shown to a public, and paying, audience.[28] The event itself was not important, but its exhibition, and that of a host of other machines throughout the world in the following months, established the moving picture industry.[29]

Whereas the earliest films were mere recordings of events called actualities, audiences soon demanded something more entertaining.[30] Between 1907 and 1915 the moving picture industry was transformed by popularity of story films and the standardization of many aspects of the industry. Consumer brand names became important and, with the acceptance of the medium, narrative improved as more directors with backgrounds in legitimate theatre began to make films.[31] By 1910, the movie house and the story film became a permanent fixture in North American towns and cities.[32] With an increase in popularity and patrons came an increase in demand for a variety of moving pictures.

The popularity of moving pictures in the United States and the technological advancements surrounding was soon emulated in Canada. Many in the government viewed motion pictures as a means through which immigration could be encouraged. However, they were also seen as entertainment and many attempts were made in Canada to establish film production. In fact, the film industry in Canada is as old as it is in the United States. As early as the summer of 1895, exhibitions were held in Montreal,

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[28] Roy Armes, Film and Reality: A Historical Survey (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1974), 22-23.

[29] Terry Ramsaye, A Million and One Nights: A History of of the Motion Picture (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1926), 264.

[30] Sharon S. Kleinman and Daniel McDonald, "Silent Film and the Socialization of American Immigrants: Lessons from an Old New Medium." Journal of American and Comparative Cultures and Studies in Civilisations 23:3 (Fall 2000): 81.

[31] Eileen Bowser, The Transformation of Cinema (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 54.

[32] Gomery, 29.

Ottawa, and Toronto in "a beginning as auspicious as that South of the border."[33] Unfortunately, much of this early success was short-lived and, as Pierre Véronneau and Piers Handling demonstrate, the development of moving pictures in Canada was compromised in part because of its regional nature.[34]

Regional production in Canada resulted from the sparsely populated nature of the country. Canada lacked the urbanisation that was responsible for the growth of the film industry in the United States. In Canada, the regional nature of development caused film companies to disappear as quickly as they started and, unlike in Europe and the United States, no centralised area of production was created. The Canadian industry soon became distinct, according to Peter Morris, "as no focal point for production was established and major companies existed in Montreal, Halifax, Windsor, Vancouver, and Toronto before the First World War. "[35]

Potential filmmakers were also denied a readily available pool of talent as Canada's lack of a theatrical tradition, also resulting from the country's low population and geographical spread, denied producers access to the same amount of actors and technicians available in other counties with more established vaudeville and music halls.[36] Economic reasons, resulting from a low and dispersed population, hindered the

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[33] Judith Webster, ed. Voices in Canada (Burlington: The George Little Press, 1977), 35. For a more comprehensive examination the first public performances of moving pictures in Canada see Matthew Smith, "Introducing a New Medium: Newspaper Reviews of the First Film Screenings in Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and New York in 1896" (Masters Thesis, Concordia University, 1996), Charles Tepperman, "The Perfect Order of a Canadian Crowd: Cinema in Ottawa, 1894-1986" (Masters Thesis, Carelton University, 2000), and Germain Lacasse and André Gaudreault, "The Introduction of Lumière Cinematographe in Canada" Madeleine Beaudry trans. Canadian Journal of Film Studies 5:2 (Fall 1996): 113-123.

[34] Pierre Véronneau and Piers Handling cited in Michael Dorland, So Close to the United States: The Emergence of Canadian Feature Film Policy (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 5.

[35] Morris, 54.

[36] Morris, 28.

development of theatre in Ontario until the nineteenth century.[37] While in urban centres moving pictures soon found homes in theatres, rural areas were not as fortunate. Traditionally both Canadian and American film historians have held that smaller towns and settlements did not fare as well as urban centres. Certain pre-conditions, according to Peter Morris, facilitated the development of moving pictures in a region: "sufficient concentrations of population to offer potential audiences, adequate means of communication so payers could reach them, and enough public demand to bring actors to perform." These pre-conditions he contends were achievable with a "growth of settlement, the rise of towns and cities, constant improvements in communication by land and water, and the technological changes that came with industrialisation."[38]

For the residents of the Lakehead, like smaller towns throughout Canada, the earliest theatrical performances were held in the town halls of Port Arthur and Fort William. It was, therefore, in these buildings that the first films in the late 1890s were exhibited at the Lakehead. By 1903 motion pictures were common enough occurrences that they no longer warranted front-page notices in either of the twin cities newspapers. However, as both Fort William and Port Arthur had no permanent movie theatre until 1908, the majority of those exhibited continued to be shown at the town halls on an itinerant basis.[39]

Little resentment or concern was voiced in Canada despite the fact that the majority of films being shown in theatres were American in origin. It was not until the

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[37] J.M. Careless, "The Cultural Setting: Ontario Society to 1914" in Ann Saddlemyer, ed. Early Stages: Theatre in Ontario, 1800-1914 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 18.

[38] Morris, 17.

[39] For a discussion of early entertainment in Fort William's first town hall see Michel Beaulieu, "In Public Demand: Entertainment in Fort William's First Town Hall, 1892-1903," Papers and Records (2003): 3-22.

First World War and the American misrepresentation of the British and Canadian contribution to the war that concerns were voiced.[40] American films and newsreels beginning in 1917 tried to show that the Allied victory owed everything to the United States' involvement. Ironically, some in the United States were the first to speak out against the growing domination of Hollywood in Canada.[41] However, by this time the situation was so pronounced that government commissions began to refer to the film industry as an example of the negative economic and cultural impact that a dependence on American industries could have.[42]

Paralleling both the development of the Lakehead as a hinterland metropolis and the rise of film in Canada were the early years of British born Dorothea Mitchell. Even the briefest examination of Mitchell's life reveals that it was steeped in the romance and the adventure often associated with the twilight of the British imperial world.[43] The same year Eadweard Muybridge made his bet with the governor of California Governor Leland Stanford, Dorothea Mitchell was born. Her birth on June 4, 1877 gave way to 17 years of a remarkable dreamlike existence filled with travels to far away lands and a life of princely pleasures. Her father's business of transporting steel, mill machinery, and

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[40] Garth Jowett, "American Domination of the Motion Picture Industry: Canada as a Test Case," in Seth Feldman and Joyce Nelson, eds. Canadian Film Reader (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1977), 11.

[41] For example, United Artists co-founder D.W. Griffith, while on a trip to Toronto in the late 1920s, told the media there that a feature industry was not only viable in Canada, but necessary in the face of existing dependency: "You in Canada should not be dependent on either the United States or Great Britain. You should have your own films and exchange them with other countries. You can make them just as well in Toronto as in New York." See Jowett, "American Domination of the Motion Picture Industry: Canada as a Test Case," 20.

[42] S.M. Crean, Who's Afraid of Canadian Culture (Don Mills: General Publishing Company Limited, 1976), 65.

[43] Unless otherwise indicated, the narrative of Dorothea Mitchell is a composite of numerous sources contained in the bibliography.

railway materials to the far reaches of the empire allowed this "daughter of the empire" to witness Britain at the height of its power.[44]

Within this context, Dorothea Mitchell's father moved his family to Bombay to better their lives. Far from being disappointed, Mitchell was intrigued and delighted by the idea.[45] Whereas in England Mitchell's family was, at best, middle-class, in India they lived in luxury and her mother took on the role of a memsahib who had servants to carry out even the most basic duties.[46] Both Mitchell's summer home in Poona, the birthplace of Indian nationalism, and the regular dwelling in Bombay, the heart of the British Raj, were far beyond the means of the typical British or Canadian families of the late nineteenth-century.[47] In suburbs called "civil lines and camps," the family villa, sheathed in marble with fountained gardens, overlooked the city of Bombay while their summer home was replete with riding stables and other elitist leisure activities.[48] It was here that Mitchell's formative years were spent and much of her character developed.[49]

The British Empire was male centred and so was Dorothea Mitchell's household. Until her death Dorothea Mitchell believed that her mother had been disappointed in having only daughters. This may very well be the reason why the Mitchell girls were

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[44] See Andrew Porter, "Introduction" in The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1-31 and Alfred LeRoy Burt, The Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth from the American Revolution (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1956). For a discussion of the the development of the railway and introduction of the British middle-class into India see Ian J. Kerr Building the Railways of the Raj, 1850-1900 (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[45] Unknown Thunder Bay Paper c. 1968 (Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, Dorothea Mitchell File)

[46] Correspondence between Mitchell's mother and servant from 1886 to 1889 reveals that although the Mitchell's were on friendly terms with their domestic help, the relationship was, essentially, in keeping with the notion as established by scholars. (Personal Papers of Dorothea Mitchell, Collection of Elinor Barr)

[47] Poona emerged between 1885 and 1905 as the home of India's first cultural nationalist leadership. Begun as a desire for "suarai" (self-rule) many such as Vasudeo Balwant Phadke and Vishnu Hari Chiplunkar were residents of Poona and nationally known political activists.

[48] Stanley Wolpert, A New History of India. 5th ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 245.

[49] Vivienne Chadwick, "Mills, Magnets, Measles" Victoria Daily Colonist 19 August 1962.

encouraged to participate in activities that were not considered practical or consistent with the life of a proper young woman of the nineteenth-century.[50] Mitchell's mother encouraged her children to develop both the creative and practical sides of their personalities. Coupled with domestic instruction, Mitchell was taught the manly pursuits of riding and, under the tutelage of the local undertaker, carpentry. This was combined with instruction in the proper intricacies of high society such as dancing, and the development of a variety of artistic and social skills through lessons taken with British officers and local citizens. However, for much of the time Mitchell was also left to her own devices to explore and absorb her cultural surroundings.[51]

While her upbringing and her many achievements have been described as "mannish," Mitchell was far from anything but a daughter of the empire. As one journalist commented in the late 1960s,

> at all times she had to compete in what was very strongly a man's world, never once does one get the feeling that Miss Mitchell was other than a quite feminine woman who found herself to be the 'man of the family' in her early twenties... Instead of sitting down to weep about this state of affairs [being the head of the family], Miss Mitchell set about to prove that she could achieve the position thrust upon her.[52]

Dorothea Mitchell's sojourn in India ended with the deterioration of her mother's health and the family's decision to return to England in 1894. Mitchell's father continued to travel back and forth to India, while the family settled into "a simpler life."[53]

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[50] Margaret S. Belford, "Lady Lumberjack" Victoria Daily Colonist 3 March 1968.

[51] Elinor Barr "First Draft: Insert for Moonlight Melodrama Production" National Film Board of Canada, 1. (Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, Dorothea Mitchell File)

[52] "Lady Lumberjack" Victoria Daily Colonist 3 March 1968.

[53] Mitchell quoted in Doris Farmer Tonkin, "Young Miss Homesteaded in Ontario" Winnipeg Free Press Weekly 17 February 1963, 3-4.

Unfortunately, this too changed when news reached England in 1897 that he had died suddenly of an illness in India.

The death of her father forced the young woman to support both her sister and mother as a nursery governess, "one of the few ways open to young ladies of the era."[54] However, Mitchell soon decided to look for another method to support her family as "there was no future in that [nursery governess;] as soon as the children in the house were old enough for school you had to find another position."[55] Later, Mitchell worked at a variety of jobs including managing a hotel, but primarily she worked at what could be found.[56] As one journalist wrote she just "fell into jobs."[57] However, by 1904, it became evident that financial support for Mitchell's family had to come from elsewhere. So being the most adventuresome of her family, she joined the mass migration of Europeans to North America and left for Halifax with only two letters of recommendation in her pocket and the hope of supporting her family. Little did she know that her hopes would be realised in unconventional ways and in one of the most remote cities in Ontario.

The history of moving picture production at the Lakehead was subject to three historical threads that speak to the evolution of early film in Canada. While the development of the Lakehead and the simultaneous "birth" of cinema were largely unrelated, they were forged as part of a desire to broaden the frontier of western "civilization." Industrial development and the technology of film came together in

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[54] Mitchell quoted in Vivienne Chadwick, "Mills, Magnets, Measles," Victoria Daily Colonist 19 August 1962 and Marcy Brown, "You Find Adventure' in Travel," Victoria Daily Colonist 9 December 1971.

[55] Mitchell quoted in Brown, "You Find Adventure in Travel."

[56] Chadwick, "Mills, Magnets, Measles."

[57] "To Autograph her Work," Port Arthur News-Chronicle c. 1968. (Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, Dorothea Mitchell File)

Canada and at the Lakehead as two forces of change. Similarly, the death of Dorothea Mitchell's father and her decision to move to Canada, coupled with the increasing movie-going culture in the twin cities of Port Arthur and Fort William, ensured that the region had an appointment with film history in Canada.

Chapter 2
Hustle and Bustle: Early Film And Images of Fort William and Port Arthur

Initially intended to attract British immigrants, many of the earliest films produced in Canada were used to demonstrate to the world the industrial potential and the "civilised" nature of the country. The first true filmmaker in Canadian history, James Freer, made the earliest of these films. A farmer from Manitoba, he purchased a camera in 1897 and began to film scenes of the province including the Canadian Pacific Railway and grain harvesting. Freer caught the interest of the railway and in 1898 it sponsored a tour of Britain where Freer and his films promoted immigration to the Canadian West.[1] His show, "Ten Years in Manitoba," consisted of a series of moving pictures accompanied by lectures. The latter were often on "the value of agricultural pursuits in Canada... the richness of Canadian soil and the large free grants of land which are given to emigrants by the Canadian government."[2]

At the time most of the films playing in Britain were "mildly interesting comedies, trick films, vaudeville acts, short melodramas, or scenic films."[3] During this early period of film production little care was given as to the origin of films and most were "little more than depictions of interesting scenes drawn from life."[4] This changed with the onset of the Boer War in 1899 as films began to demonstrate the Dominion's commitment to

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[1] Freer also exhibited his moving pictures throughout Canada. He came to the Lakehead during his second tour in 1902.

[2] Optical Magic Lantern Journal and Photographic Enlarger, IX (April 1898): 54 and Henry Hopwood, Living Pictures, (London: Opticians and Photographic Trades Review, 1899), 232; See also Ted Magder, Canada's Hollywood: The Canadian State and Feature Films (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 3-4 and Peter Morris, Embattled Shadows: A History of Canadian Cinema, 1895-1939 (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978), 30-33.

[3] Morris, 13.

[4] Morris, 27.

ardent Britannic nationalism.[5] This nationalism often materialised in the form of scenes depicting the economic potential of the country with a view of surpassing the success of the United States.

It was for these and other reasons that Dorothea Mitchell, who "became the man of the family" after the death of her father, immigrated to Canada to support her mother and sister and to seek a better life in what many believed to be one of the last strong-holds of the British Empire.[6] Her decision to migrate to Canada in 1904 was not arrived at in haste, but was informed in large measure by the Government of Canada's increased efforts to attract British immigrants. Not unlike thousands of other immigrants who flooded to Canada, Mitchell's decision to move to one of the "colonies" was influenced by both personal reasons and promises by the Canadian government of free land and a better life waiting.[7] The fact that the Canadian government sponsored propaganda films were playing throughout Britain was not coincidental to Dorothea Mitchell's decision to emigrate. Her choice of Canada was arrived at "because she'd been told that there was all kinds of work,"[8] and, as she told CBC in the 1960s, "it was

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[5] Morris, 29.

[6] Doris Farmer Tonkin, "Young Miss Homesteaded in Ontario," Winnipeg Free Press Weekly 27 February 1963, 3.

[7] For more information on migration and emigration see Stephen Constantine, "Migrants and Settlers," in Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis, eds. The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): pp. 163-187 and Marijory Harper, "British Migration and the Peopling of the Empire." in Andrew Porter, ed. The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): pp. 75-87. For a discussion of the effects of gender identities in the workplace and the origin of the immigrant female workforce in Canada between 1880 and 1950 see Joy Parr's The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

[8] Mitchell quoted in Pat Dufoour, "The Lady Became a Lumberjack," Victoria Daily-Times 25 November 1967.

the place to come to in those days, everybody was talking about Canada."[9] For a product of the British Raj, the prospects could not have seemed better as it was believed at the turn of the century that Canada, specifically the West, would remain British in character.[10]

In fact, Mitchell was a "settler of the right kind to emigrate from [Britain]" as she epitomized all those imperial qualities sought after by the Canadian government.[11] Before long she moved from Nova Scotia to Hamilton and then to Toronto where she found that there "was no problem at all about getting jobs... No one asked about experience or references or anything. It seems you were hired if you looked reasonably efficient."[12] Mitchell proved to be efficient enough to find several jobs and even started a small business. Within a short time Dorothea Mitchell was well established in Canada and could look to a secure future.

In Toronto, she worked as an assistant manager in a hotel and later as a manager of a rooming house.[13] By 1908, she began to plan for her mother and sister to come over from Britain and purchased a rooming house with the intention of running it as a family business. Dorothea Mitchell was so determined that she even supplemented her income by giving dance lessons. Unfortunately, due to ill health her mother was unable to join Dorothea and she was unwilling to run the house by herself. Therefore,

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[9] "Voice of the Pioneer" CBC Radio interview with Dorothea Mitchell, c. 1960. Collection of Bill McNeil, National Archives of Canada.

[10] According to Doug Owram, this idea was largely promoted as part of the Expansionist movement between 1856 and 1900. However, by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century this assumption no longer held weight with the influx of southern and eastern European migrants to Canadian urban and rural areas. See Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).

[11] The Bioscope 3 February 1910 quoted in Morris, 36.

[12] Mitchell quoted in Marcy Brown "You Find Adventure in Travel" Victoria Daily Colonist 9 December 1971.

[13] "Exploring Comes at 90 – After Everything Else," The Victoria Daily Colonist 18 June 1967.

Mitchell decided to sell the rooming house and answer an advertisement for companion-help for a mining engineer and his wife operating out of Silver Mountain, Ontario.[14] Silver Mountain was at the Lakehead, a long way from Toronto, but an attractive option for someone who had a sense of adventure and a desire to succeed. Just as propaganda films lured British immigrants to Canada, newspaper articles extolled the virtue of the Lakehead.

The same images and themes evident in these newspapers advertisements and in many of Freer's films are also apparent in the moving pictures made about Port Arthur and Fort William between 1907 and 1926. Many of the films produced about the Lakehead during this period focus on the economic, social, and industrial strength and potential of the region. In the early twentieth-century, the residents of Port Arthur and Fort William viewed their progress and future development as synonymous with the desire to replicate the prosperity of the United States. They were based on a belief that "the great city opportunities which have passed the United States during the past hundred years are all available in this century and greater ones."[15] The implication was that the Lakehead was the new Promised Land and people like Dorothea Mitchell would see these films in town halls, theatres, and church basements across the province.

The fascination of residents of the cities with the urban metropolis that was becoming the United States was exemplified in the "booster" spirit of the decade. Boosterism was prevalent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century and it was a

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[14] Dorothea Mitchell kept the newspaper clipping for her entire life. The advertisement in an unidentified Toronto newspaper read, "Desired: an educated young woman as companion-help to Superintendent's wife in mining camp, N.W. Ontario. Some office duties." (c. 1911). See also Dorothea Mitchell, Lady Lumberjack (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1968), 1.

[15] Port Arthur Daily News-Chronicle 20 October 1906.

means of promoting the potential of the Canadian West. According to Thorold J. Tronrud,

> at its simplest level, boosterism describes that wide range of initiatives taken by business groups, individuals and municipal governments to promote their communities... it was an ideology of growth which defined spirit and self-image of the community as a whole.[16]

Similarly Alan Artibise demonstrates that boosters measured "their city's growth in qualitative terms [by the] number of rail lines, miles of streets, dollars of assessment, size of population, and value of manufacturing and wholesale trade."[17]

The comparison to urban success in the United States was a natural choice. In the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century the economic growth of the United States was unparalleled. As demonstrated in the Weekly Herald, the potential of the region was often framed in comparison to major American metropolises:

> We [the Lakehead] are subsisting upon delicacies procured from the far points of the compass. We stand in the gateway to the ocean.... We are nearer London, England, than New York City. We look toward the South and we can almost see the smoke rising from the modern London – Chicago. We go north and return with millions from our Klondyke... Some fine morning we will awake to find this the centre of a busy, mighty people; we have all the industrial possibilities of any country... While other communities totter and fail, our will stand. Our growth has been that of the oak; when it reaches its maturity it will be known for its strength.[18]

The city that both Port Arthur and Fort William were most frequently compared to was Chicago. As the Port Arthur Daily News-Chronicle suggested, "like Chicago, Port Arthur was located both as to water and railway communications to become the national

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[16] Thorold J. Tronrud, Guardians of Progress: Boosters and Boosterism in Thunder Bay, 1870-1914 (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, 1993), 5.

[17] Alan Artibise, "Boosterism and the Development of Prairie Cities, 1871-1913" in Alan Artibise, ed. Town and City, Aspects of Western Canadian Urban Development (Regina: University of Regina Press, 1981), 213.

[18] Weekly Herald 18 November 1898 quoted in Tronrud, Guardians of Progress, 9.

distribution point of this country and the metropolis of the West."[19] Similarly, another article in 1910 attempted to draw a direct parallel between the harbours of Port Arthur and Fort William and that of Chicago. According to the Port Arthur Daily News-Chronicle "the two cities at the head of Lake Superior have a greater Western tributary and have greater harbour facilities than Chicago" had when it began to boom.[20]

In many ways the development of the Lakehead in the early twentieth-century was reminiscent of Chicago's between 1820 and 1890. The growth and economic success of Chicago and its outlying regions were natural choices for emulation. The business elite of the Lakehead and the provincial government of Ontario saw that Chicago, like the Lakehead, began as a fur-trading outpost that entered the mid nineteenth-century with a bleak outlook.[21] However, the industrialisation and continental policies of the American government spurred a period of railway growth. From its modest two tracks in 1850, by 1856 more than 3,000 miles of track was providing the roadbed for 58 passenger and 38 freight trains daily.[22] Chicago's position as the focus of this transcontinental network allowed the hinterland fort of 1820 to develop into the railway capital of both the United States and the world by 1871.[23]

The railway's effect on the development of the region was profound. In addition to the maintenance and supply yards required, with the railroads came an influx of

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[19] Port Arthur Daily News-Chronicle 21 March 1906.

[20] Port Arthur Daily News-Chronicle 2 February 1910.

[21] See Dominic A. Pacyga and Ellen Skerret's first chapter in Chicago: City of Neighbourhoods (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1986) for a brief description, with visuals, of the early settlement of the river area now known as "the loop."

[22] Harold M. Mayer and Richard C. Wade, Chicago: Growth of a Metropolis (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1969), 40. See also Perry Duis, Challenging Chicago: Creating New Traditions (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1976) for a discussion on the modernization and development of Chicago.

[23] Mayer and Wade, 35 and 40.

settlers, businesses, and investment. Drawn by the city's growing position as a major world wheat handling centre, Chicago's function as "a railway hub allowed it to become the great interchange through which the mid-western agricultural bounty was collected for movement to the east.[24] The growth of Chicago's prominence in the railroad industry "was only rivalled by its growth in the Lake Traffic."[25] The construction of canals, dredging, and a variety of other improvements assisted "Chicago to branch out like the arteries of a growing organism, knitting the agricultural settlements and trade centers into an economic unit and joining the Chicago Region with the outside world."[26]

With such historical parallels, it was only natural that boosters at the Lakehead would endeavour to compare the region to Chicago and other large American cities located on the Great Lakes. Interestingly, of all the booster techniques utilised in the early twentieth-century, moving pictures, arguably one of the most influential media, has been little researched.[27] The ability of moving pictures to reach both literate and non-literate audiences was only matched by photography, and, like photographs, early audiences believed what the saw on screen was an actual depiction of life.[28]

In manner, appearance, and purpose the earliest moving pictures made in, or about, the Lakehead were part of the same booster tradition that developed this image

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[24] Duis, 9 and Irving Cutler, Chicago: Metropolis of the Mid-Continent, 3rd ed. (Dubuque, Iowa: The Geographic Society/Hunt Publishing Company, 1982), 201.

[25] Mayer, p. 42

[26] Daniel H. Burnham, Jr. and Robert Kingery, Planning the Region of Chicago (Chicago: Chicago Regional Planning Association, 1956), 81.

[27] Tronrud in Guardian's of Progress does briefly mention the use of films, but as it was not specifically the scope of his work no analysis of the film is included.

[28] For a discussion of photography's use see David Mattison, "In Visioning the City: Urban Historical Techniques Through Historical Photographs" Urban History Review 13:1 (June 1984): 43-51, M.F. Fox, "Bird's-Eye Views of Canadian Cities: A Review" Urban History Review (1977): 38-45, and Jim Burant, "Visual Records and Urban Development" Urban History Review 12:3 (February 1984): 57-63.

of the West. Primarily travelogues and industrial films, the moving pictures made between 1911 and 1926 used images and text to highlight the twin cities as both the Canadian Chicago of the North and a haven for adventurers.[29] The idea of producing films at the Lakehead also followed the evolution of that medium in North America. An interesting facet of early production was the correlation between permanent theatres and an increase in film production.[30] Beginning as early as 1900, residents of Port Arthur and Fort William had been active participants in the growing continental movie-going culture.[31] In fact, film historians such as Peter Morris argue that the impact of the establishment of permanent theatres was so profound that most film histories originate from this point.[32]

Yet beyond the exceptions like the Holland Brothers, Ernest Ouimet, George Scott, and James Freer it was not until 1911 that domestic production companies in Canada began to make films. Most of these companies were of two types; fiction films made for the American market or those claiming to be producing an "all Canadian" drama, but in reality making only a scenic or promotional film.[33] At the Lakehead, early moving pictures highlighted the same industries that had made Chicago the metropolis

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[29] This was preceded by the use of panoramic photographs used to highlight the prosperity and potential of regions. See Joseph Earl Arrington, "William Burr's Moving Panorama of The Great Lakes, The Niagara, St. Lawrence, and Saguenay Rivers," Ontario History LI:3 (1959) for a brief, but interesting, example.

[30] Peter Morris briefly discusses this on page 27 of Embattled Shadows.

[31] For a discussion of this phenomenon in the United States see Kathryn Fuller, At the Picture Show: Small Town Audiences and the Creation of a Movie Fan Culture (New York: The Smithsonian Institute, 1996) and Douglas Gomery, Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992).

[32] Morris, 27.

[33] Morris, 46.

it had become by 1910 and the boosters imagined a similar historical development for Port Arthur and Fort William.

The image portrayed by the early filmmakers and the aspects of Canadian society they focussed on were constructed as self-fulfilling prophecies. Prosperity, modernity, security, and productivity were the themes of the earliest essay films made in Canada. In the Canadian West, a region were boosterism was the most prevalent, "new ideas and perceptions evolved out of previous ones"[34] and, just as at the Lakehead, the image of the prairies was one of a "new and better society... a garden of abundance in which all material want would be provided and where moral and civic virtues would be perfected."[35] The films made at the Lakehead during this period attempt to depict such an imagined community with varying success.

At the turn of the twentieth century, James Whalen was one of the key industrial figures at the Lakehead who imagined the region as the next metropolis of the North. A consummate booster for the cities of Port Arthur and Fort William, he was involved in almost all aspects of the regional economy. His fortune was built upon the natural resources of the area and his continued success relied upon the prosperity of local industry, real estate, and ship building in which he had invested heavily.[36] Whalen also had an interest in moving pictures, building the Lyceum theatre in 1908. Realising the potential of film, he purchased the Commercial Motion Picture Company of Montreal in 1911 to show his vision of the region and promote his business interests. The result was

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[34] R. Douglas Francis, Images of the West: Changing Perspectives of the Prairies, 1690-1960 (Saskatoon: Western Producers Books, 1989), xvii.

[35] Ibid., 106.

[36] For more information on the life of James Whalen see Raymond Furlotte's brief examination of his life in The James Whalen Empire (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Hydro, 1990).

"Port Arthur and Fort William: Canada's Keys to the Great Lakes" which was intended "to be the grandest booster film made to that date at the Lakehead."[37]

Like William Van Horne, the man responsible for financing James Freer's films, Whalen was a great believer in modern promotional methods. His "Port Arthur and Fort William: Canada's Keys to the Great Lakes" was an attempt to show how, like the Chicago of the nineteenth-century, the twin cities were indeed the keys to the great West and all the economic promise held therein. Filmed between 1911 and 1913, the Whalen Film, as it was referred to locally, also served to highlight his financial interests as the footage focuses primarily on his companies, property, and investments. Within the film are scenes depicting the region in a manner reminiscent of the newspaper articles of the time.

Contained within the first glimpses of the cities are all the aspects a booster would wish to demonstrate to his audience. Behind the breakwater stands the harbour, in defiance of nature and protecting the residents of the Lakehead from the fury of Lake Superior. The spectator is made aware, through images and title cards, of the breakwater, the Prince Arthur Hotel, the Canadian Northern railway station, and a

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[37] *Port Arthur and Fort William, Ontario: Keys to the Great Lakes*, 45m., Commercial Motion Picture Company of Canada, 1913, 45mm (James Whalen Collection, National Archives of Canada). The film itself remains the earliest moving picture made at the Lakehead still in existence. It is also the longest film of its type still in existence in Canada and one of the most interesting examples of boosterism by a Lakehead resident. The only moving picture to precede "Port Arthur and Fort William: Canada's Keys to the Great Lakes" was "The Making of A Loaf of Bread." Shot in 1907 by a British Entrepreneur, it was purported to have been funded from Ottawa and eventually shown in London, England. However, the only discussion of this film occurs in Guardians of Progress and a newspaper clipping from Morning Herald 22 October 1907.

variety of grain elevators. These and others are in the style of the literature and film commonly depicting American cities of the period.[38]

The importance of Port Arthur's harbour is the first part of the region to get attention. The icebreaker *James Whalen* is shown opening up the harbour to allow "some of the 62 steamships clearing from Winter-berths, sailing East with grain cargoes" to get underway.[39] Each ship clearing port is briefly highlighted with their name and size stated for the audience.[40] The film establishes that all of the ships are going to feed the multitudes of the east. A variety of scenes further demonstrates the amount of water traffic in the region. Intended, like the street scenes, to show a thriving water system, the footage is oddly self-defeating as many vessels in each shot merely go back and forth in front of the camera.[41] Also shown is the reason why many of these ships used the harbour for a winter berth. One of the region's prominent companies, James Whalen's Western Dry-Dock and Shipbuilding Company, is the focus of scenes. The largest of its kind in Canada at the time, the Dry-Dock's continued operation rested on the success of the harbour and the business generated from the thriving cities of Port Arthur and Fort William.[42] Included with these exterior shots are those filmed inside showing the technology used by and skills of the workers.[43]

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[38] It is the contention by many writers on film history that the success of silent films rested on the a priori knowledge of the subject matter by the audience.

[39] *Port Arthur and Fort William, Ontario: Canada's Keys to the Great Lakes,* TC 1. As no format exists for the citation of title cards in silent films, TC (for title card) followed by its sequence in the film will be used.

[40] These ships include the steamer's *Fitzgerald* and *A.E. Stewart* and unknown whaleback.

[41] The tug *James Whalen* can clearly be seen doing this a number of times.

[42] Bruce Muirhead, "The Evolution of the Lakehead's Commercial Transportation Infrastructure" in Thorold J. Tronrud and A. Ernest Epp, eds. Thunder Bay: From Rivalry to Unity (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, 1995), 84-85.

[43] Footage also contains images of some of the 1200 men the Dry-Dock employed. They are shown in the midst of constructing a number of vessels. In addition to the *Calgarian* and steel icebreaker *J.T. Horne,*

The film also examines a number of the region's other important industries, including grain elevators and grain handling, one the region's main economic activities. Initially introduced in the third shot of the film, grain elevators are prevalent throughout. From the beginning of the film when King's Elevator is introduced, the prominent role of the elevators is frequently referred to. The Canadian Northern Elevator is introduced with a title card careful to point out that it was one of the largest in the world, and its capacity was being expanded.[44] Similarly, the Ogilvie Elevator and Flour Mills, Empire Elevator, Grand Trunk Elevator, and Canadian Pacific Railway Elevator are used as focal points for many of the street scenes, panoramas, and harbour shots of Fort William.[45] Often at the end of a street, or the largest landmark in the skyline, their importance is apparent even without the title cards that inevitably pay tribute to their capacity and importance.[46]

As the largest and most predominant structures in the area, the elevators were used as a platform from which some of the spectacular panoramas found in the film were shot, which outline the expanse of industrial, commercial and residential areas in the twin cities. Not unlike the early Edison street scenes, much of the remaining footage is taken from a streetcar moving through downtown areas of Port Arthur and Fort

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footage is also included of an event lauded and heralded for its "foresight to capture on film this historical event which changed the lives of so many." (see *Port Arthur and Fort William, Ontario: Canada's Keys to the Great Lakes*, TC 6). Included in the film are shots of the deck plating of the future flagship of the Canadian Steamship Lines, *the Noronic*.

[44] *Port Arthur and Fort William, Ontario: Canada's Keys to the Great Lakes*, TC 9.

[45] The panoramic, or bird's eye view, of cities was a common technique. See M.F. Fox's review of the Bird's Eye Views of Canadian Cities: An Exhibition of Panoramic Maps (1865-1908) a National Archives of Canada Exhibition (July-November, 1976) in Urban History Review (1977): 38-45 and David Mattison's examination of historical photographs in "In Visioning the City: Urban History Techniques Through Historical Photographs" Urban History Review 13:1 (June 1984): 43-51.

[46] For the Empire Elevator see *Port Arthur and Fort William, Ontario: Canada's Keys to the Great Lakes*, TC 34.

William. The inclusion of the street railway is no coincidence as both cities were always quick to point out that they, not Toronto, Kingston, or Montreal, had Canada's first publicly owned street railway.[47] These scenes are intended to demonstrate the activities prevalent in the cities. As well, downtown cores are shown, with a special focus on commercial activity. Even the expansion of these core areas is highlighted as the film also shows the excavation then underway of the Whalen office building.

Throughout "Port Arthur and Fort William: Keys to the Great Lakes" there is also emphasis on services that only a modern and urban centre could provide. Union Station and the CPR tracks in Fort William show, in addition to their economic connotations, the communication and passenger service that enabled the region to keep abreast of what was occurring elsewhere in the world. Schools, churches, political figures and other trappings of a good and moral society are also included. Like many of the films depicting Chicago and other American cities, the street scenes of Fort William include the fire department leaving the central fire hall. While the older horse drawn carriages are shown, prominence is given to the city's new automobile, a relatively recent mass-market product which symbolised the future.

Highlighted in the "Port Arthur and Fort William: Keys to the Great Lakes" are many of the industrial and commercial accomplishments of the Lakehead. The region's dependence on natural resources is tempered by the increasing amount of industry generated by the Dry-Docks and other large industry. The street scenes and panoramic views of the city intentionally show the urban layout of the city. Anticipated to be shown at industrial exhibitions throughout North America, the scenes and shots described were

[47] For more information on the street railway see F.B. Scollie, "The Creation of the Port Arthur Street Railway, 1890-95," Papers and Records, vol. xviii (1990): 40-58 and Mark Chochla, "Sabbatarians and Sunday Street Cars," Papers and Records, vol. xvii (1989): 25-36.

carefully selected to demonstrate to the rest of the continent that the twin cities at the head of Lake Superior had all the potential of Chicago and other major American cities and contained a natural beauty and resources they did not.

James Whalen, though, was not the first in Canada to use of moving pictures to promote his business interests. As early as 1908, companies had been formed with the purpose of producing films to be shown in fairs and industrial exhibitions. Many of these films were made under the auspices of provincial governments and railway companies. The Urban Company of Montreal in 1908 was contracted by the government of British Columbia to make films to show "the advantages and resources of British Columbia to the outside world."[48] And, like James Freer almost a decade before, the CPR and CNR, with backing from the federal government, continued to produce moving pictures to attract immigrants to the regions serviced by their trains. One such region was Silver Mountain. Located on the Port Arthur, Duluth and Western Railway, a branch line of the CNR, its history, according to historian Elinor Barr, "began representing Port Arthur's dream of economic growth in 1893."[49] The railway while "not as long as other railways," according to popular writer James Oliver Curwood, "[was] just as wide" and it was meant to connect the Lakehead by land to markets South of the border with the United States.[50]

The PeeDee, as it was locally known, and the mining and lumber communities it serviced were also the reason for Dorothea Mitchell's emigration to the Lakehead. In

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[48] Moving Picture World (10 June 1908): 528, The Bioscope (13 September 1908): 11), and Moving Picture World (1 July 1910): 22 cited in Morris Embattled Shadows, 36.

[49] Elinor Barr, "The 'PeeDee': The Port Arthur, Duluth & Western Railway, 1892-1938" in Thunder Bay: From Rivalry to Unity, 98.

[50] Elinor Barr, Thunder Bay To Gunflint: The Port Arthur, Duluth & Western Railway (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, 1999), 2.

1909, when Mitchell's mother decided to postpone her move to Canada for health reasons, Mitchell, still believing that "westward the course of Empire takes its way," decided to satisfy what she called her "urge for the West" and leave Toronto.[51] Her decision to move to the Lakehead was influenced by more traditional means of promotion as, before James Whalen brought to life the images of the region, no moving picture had been made examining the potential of Northwestern Ontario. During the 1910s print material encouraging migration westward was not uncommon, but one advertisement for companion-help for a mine owner's wife in the Toronto Globe especially caught Mitchell's attention. With the promise of prosperity, she was soon on her way to Silver Mountain.[52]

No sooner had she arrived when the decline in prices that had plagued the silver industry since the 1890s forced the closure of the mine her employer managed. Not yet wanting to leave the region, in early 1910 Mitchell prevailed upon the CNR to allow her to stay as both station master on the PeeDee line and postmaster in a part-time capacity while she ran her own general store. Mitchell soon found that her store was not very profitable as most patrons bartered for goods. The most common currency was lumber, and Dorothea Mitchell, half a world away from India, took up her former role as a memsahib, or lady boss, and, coupled also with the more "manly" skills she had been taught in India, purchased a sawmill, hired some workers and became known as the "lady lumberjack."

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[51] Alex Rivingston, In the Track of Our Emigrants: The New Dominion as a Time for Englishmen (London, 1872), viii quoted in Doug Owram, Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).

[52] The advertisement in the Toronto Globe read "Desired, an educated young woman as Companion-help to Superintendent's wife in mining camp, N.W. Ontario. Some office duties." See Dorothea Mitchell, Lady Lumberjack, (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1968), 1.

It was while working her sawmill at Silver Mountain that Mitchell began to fulfill the role her education as a young memsahib in India had prepared her for. Dorothea Mitchell was a daughter of the Empire and an important part of her character was the desire to further British interests in her endeavours. Like a real memsahib she preferred to only hire those who were loyal to the British Empire and, following the First World War, those who had fought for the Imperial cause.[53] It was also while working at her sawmill that she "learn[ed] to hire and handle men and horses with equal skill," and that "the right way to handle the men was to direct them in their duties and leave them to it"[54] Historian Elinor Barr credits Dorothea's mother Norrie as a strong influence as

> during their growing years in India and England, Norrie Mitchell allowed her daughters Dorothea and Vera to ride half-wild ponies, swim in strange waters and climb dangerous cliffs... these skills, along with the virtues of loyalty and honesty, stood Dorothea in good stead during the dozen years she spent at Silver Mountain.[55]

While Mitchell pioneered in the Northwest under the banner of the Union Jack, the government of Ontario formed a motion picture bureau intended to boost the various industries of the country, attract people to the province's more remote regions, and counter the growing tide of un-British pictures being show in theatres. The moving pictures made by the Ontario Motion Picture Bureau (OMPB) between 1918 and 1926 are consistent with the booster spirit of promotion and they contain the same images that attracted Dorothea Mitchell to Canada. While the moving picture industry in the United States underwent a variety of technological, aesthetic, and economic

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[53] "Voice of the Pioneer" Interview CBC Radio c. 1960s, Collection of Bill McNeil, National Archives of Canada. In one memorable incident, the four so-called engineers she had hired could not do the job. After dismissing them, Mitchell did the job of the four engineers for three months until she found suitable replacements.

[54] Barry Johnston, "Awful Gall Inspired Amateur Epic," Victoria Daily-Colonist 3 February 1929.

[55] Elinor Barr, "First Draft: Insert for Moonlight Melodrama Production," 1. Insert for a filmstrip produced by the National Film Board of Canada, Collection of Elinor Barr.

transformations between 1908 and 1926, an altogether different transition occurred north of the 49th parallel. This transition was at once a reaction to and linked to, what was occurring to the film industry in the United States. Designed to stem the tide of American images and ideals, the films made by the OMPB, and surrounding documentation reveal that their designs and ambitions were also formed and reformed by a desire to replicate, or at the very least emulate, Chicago and other American urban centres.

Established in 1917, the OMPB was created for a variety of reasons. Initially, it was an extension of a widespread movement in Canada to regulate theatres and the films being shown.[56] An outgrowth in 1911 of the establishment by Queen's Park of North America's first censor board, the OMPB initially ensured that the content of the films being shown was not of "questionable character."[57] However, resulting from a growing amount of resentment and concern over increasing American content and misrepresentation of the role of the American armed forces in the First World War, the Censor Board also began to regulate in 1917 the 'patriotic' content of American films.[58]

While much of the discussion revolved around the taxation and revenue garnered from moving pictures and their exhibition, the establishment of the OMPB enshrined the

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[56] Wyndam Paul Wise "Ontario's Film Industry: A History of Provincial Policy" (master's thesis, York University, 1991), 10.

[57] Toronto Globe 25 March 1911) Archives of Ontario, Board of Censors Files, RG 56-1-1 see also Wyndham Paul Wise, p. 11. The provinces of Manitoba and Quebec followed suit by creating their own censor boards later the same year.

[58] Garth Jowet, "American Dominance of the Motion Picture Industry: Canada as a Test Case" in Seth Feldman and Joyce Nelson's Canadian Film Reader (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1977), 11 and Wyndham Paul Wise, "Ontario's Film Industry: A History of Provincial Policy" (Master Thesis, York University, 1991), 12.

government's belief in the educational and promotional value of moving pictures.[59] Its function was often similar in purpose to that of Freer and other early filmmakers: "to carry out the educational work for farmers, school children, factory workers and other classes."[60] As Moving Picture World commented in 1918,

> The province of Ontario is far ahead of any other province or state in the adoption of moving pictures for educational purposes... five films have been made of road building and repair and several films covering the subject of 'National Service on the Land.'[61]

Similarly, Canada Weekly reported in 1918 that, resulting from the establishment of the OMPB,

> Ontario now leads the world in visual education work... These films are strictly educational films, planned and produced under the direction of well known experts... with the sole object of depicting the 'right versus the wrong way' of getting the farm work done.[62]

However, not all films were made solely for pedagogical purposes. It is apparent from the films made by the OMPB that in addition to their didactic purpose, they also demonstrate some of the same qualities of boosterism found in the film made about the Lakehead by James Whalen in 1913. As the OMPB stated in Moving Picture World in 1917, one of its purposes was "to advertise Ontario and to encourage the building of highways and other public works."[63] While not necessarily intended to "boost" the regions they portrayed, the films exude many of the same qualities prevalent in the rhetoric associated with the "boosterism" of a decade earlier.

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[59] Wise, 14-15. See also Charles Tepperman, "Digging the Finest Potatoes from their Acre: Government Film Exhibition in Rural Ontario, 1917-1922," unpublished paper (2003).
[60] Morris, 138 and Wise, 14.
[61] Moving Picture World vol. 36, no. 6 (4 May 1918): 706 quoted in Wise, 15.
[62] Canada Weekly, (4 May 1918): 13 quoted in Morris, 141.
[63] Moving Picture World 32 (1917): 819 quoted in Morris, 138.

All the OMPB films dealing with the Lakehead region made between 1918 and 1926 contain images and dialogue that are reminiscent of the effort of "Port Arthur and Fort William: Keys to the Great Lakes" to compare the region to Chicago or similar urban and industrial centres. Although originally intended for domestic audiences, the films contain images and descriptions of a region not on the periphery of the province but, judging from the footage, important to Canada and the world. The moving pictures made by the OMPB about the Lakehead also reflect the nineteenth and early twentieth-century fascination of Europeans, Americans, and the rising Canadian middle-class with tourism. The Government of Ontario attempted to show the industrial potential of its more remote regions as well as their attractiveness to tourists in the hopes that investment would follow.[64]

An examination of some of the films made by the OMPB about the Lakehead reveals the creation of dramatized boosterism. The earliest OMPB film made about the Lakehead, "A Great Lakes Romance," chronicles the voyage of the Northern Navigation Lines steamship *Hamonic* as it travels from Detroit, Michigan to Duluth, Minnesota, stopping for an extended visit at the Lakehead.[65] A travelogue, the moving picture introduces the spectator to Lake Superior's many ports of call in an attempt to sell potential passengers on the voyage. Most of the scenes in the film go beyond the scenic and ultimately portray the Lakehead as a metropolitan centre of the North.

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[64] For a discussion on the development of tourism in the early part of the twentieth century in Ontario, see Patricia Jasen, Wild Things: Nature, Culture, and Tourism in Ontario, 1740-1914 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

[65] *A Great Lakes Romance*, 9m 25s., prod. Ontario Motion Picture Bureau, sponsor: Department of Trade and Commerce, 1918, 28mm (Moravian Church Collection, National Archives of Canada).

It is not coincidental that the film begins with shots of Detroit's harbour and skyline. The first sequence makes the spectator aware, as the accompanying title card reads, that they are seeing one of the great cities of the world: "Dynamic Detroit – city charming and "motoropolis" of the world..."[66] Later, as footage shows the *Hamonic* approaching the docks in Detroit's Harbour, the audience is once again reminded of the importance of the city.[67] In the last scene, as the ship leaves its moorings, a young woman around whom the narrative is built is looking aft at the sky-scrapers fading in the distance.

These opening scenes are important as Port Arthur is later introduced in a manner harkening back to the opening scenes of Detroit. Using the Prince Arthur Hotel and CNR station as a backdrop, the sky-line of the city is shown with the harbour and lake traffic prominent in the foreground. Just as the camera focuses in on the railway station, a train carrying passengers and cargo appears and moves across the screen. Just like the vacationers aboard the *Hamonic*, the spectator is introduced in one continuous and unbroken shot to "their first glimpse of Port Arthur, Ont.-one of the famous Twin Cities."[68]

Additionally, the visit to Port Arthur is framed in terms of the "majestic" quality of the region. The viewer is introduced to the "palatial Prince Arthur Hotel"[69] and later, the passengers visit Kakabeka Falls where the audience is informed that "Beautiful Kakabeka Falls are less heralded than is their due. Less massive than Niagara, they are

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[66] *A Great Lakes Romance*, TC 1.
[67] *A Great Lakes Romance*, TC 2.
[68] *A Great Lakes Romance*, TC 20.
[69] *A Great Lakes Romance*, TC 19.

higher and equally beautiful."[70] Likewise, the Hamonic itself is portrayed as a bastion of civilisation and symbolic of all that is modern in Canada. A mainstay of the Great Lakes, it is beautifully described at every available opportunity. References are made in title cards and images are shown depicting the professionalism and attributes of the crew, the activities offered on board and at ports of call and the entertainment available on board. The film's focus on the Northern Navigation Division of the Canadian Steamship Lines and a variety of its ships is intended to show, as a company promotional booklet of the time suggests, "the round trip is one of the finest vacation cruises offered to the traveling public of North America!"[71]

The film ends with a shot of the *Hamonic's* sister ship, the *Huronic*, entering Port Arthur, leaving the impression that the region is serviced by a continuous flow of passenger ships. Although the comparisons made in "A Great Lakes Romance" were not meant to be an industrial promotion, the imagery used in the film is consistent with that found in the booster literature of the period. Similarly, two other moving pictures made in 1922 also focus upon the industry, modernity, and potential of the region.

While not exclusively focussed on the Lakehead, both "The Great Lakes," and "En Voyage" portray the twin cities in a fashion similar to "A Great Lakes Romance."[72] Filmed in 1922, "The Great Lakes," uses, intertitle cards, images, and an animated map outlining the journey to emphasise that "of utmost importance to Canada, and more

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[70] *A Great Lakes Romance*, TC 21.

[71] Canada Steamship Lines (Chicago: Poole Bros. Inc., c. 1920). Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, Ships - General file.

[72] *The Great Lakes*, 27m 29s., prod. Filmcraft for the Ontario Motion Picture Bureau, c. 1922, 28mm (Graphic Consultants Ltd. Collection, National Archives of Canada). *En Voyage*, 9m., prod. Ontario Motion Picture Bureau, 1922, 28mm (National Library of Australia Collection, National Archives of Canada).

especially Ontario, is the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence waterway. The greatest inland water system in the world."[73] The audience is informed of the benefits of water travel, and how "transportation by boat is possible at a fraction the cost of by rail. Products of East and West are thus exchanged at enormous saving."[74] Scenes show why the voyage would begin at the Lakehead, and what products would be of so much interest.

Both the harbour fronts of Fort William and Port Arthur are featured and, as in "A Great Lakes Romance" and "Port Arthur and Fort William: Keys to the Great Lakes", prominence is given to the grain elevators that dot the shoreline. Footage is taken using a variety of techniques. The most spectacular are the aerial shots used throughout to show various cities, their landmarks, and geographic formations. Thunder Cape receives special attention as, in keeping with the educational role of the OMPB, it graphically demonstrates the features of the cape. The film also serves to highlight the spectacular scenery that can be found at the head of the lakes.

Also filmed in 1922, "En Voyage" follows the same path as the passenger ship in "The Great Lakes." As the first title card suggests, the film demonstrates to the audience that although "between the head of Lake Superior and Montreal lie over 1050 miles of continuous waterways," the region benefits from all modern conveniences and invites, "the tourist to a magnificent journey replete with varied interest."[75] Intended to appeal to Canada's growing middle-class, the film begins with a shot of the Port Arthur and Fort William waterfront. Mention is made of the breakwaters protecting the harbour and the "towering grain elevators on the Kaministikwa river" which "form Fort William's

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[73] *The Great Lakes*, TC 1.
[74] *The Great Lakes*, TC 2.
[75] *En Voyage*, TC 1.

impressive sky-line."[76] The harbour and grain elevators are shot in such a way that a later comparison to the shorelines of Toronto and Montreal can be made by the spectator. The section of the film dealing with the Lakehead ends with a shot of passenger's embarking for their voyage south and the Ontario government's reassurance throughout the film that "a splendid passenger service is maintained throughout the summer."[77]

In every OMPB film examining some aspect of the Lakehead, the grain industry always receives some attention. Just as the Sears Tower would later stand for the commercial and capital success of the United States, so were the elevators synonymous with prosperity for the Canadian west. "Building a Modern Grain Elevator" (1923) is intended to both educate and promote to its audience the important position the region plays in the grain industry.[78] As the opening title card suggests, the film chronicles the step-by-step construction of a modern elevator and the importance and prominence of Port Arthur and Fort William's grain storage and handling capacity within North America.[79] Throughout the film scenes of an industrial port are shown. Highlighted in a series of aerial shots are ships, docks, and other evidence of industry reminiscent of "Port Arthur and Fort William: Keys to the Great Lakes".[80]

First the difficulty of providing footings is highlighted through the laborious selection of a suitable site and the boring holes in the winter for the piles. A variety of

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[76] *En Voyage* , TC 5.
[77] *En Voyage*, TC 6.
[78] *Building a Modern Grain Industry*, 9m., prod. Filmcraft for the Ontario Motion Picture Bureau, 1923, 28mm (Graphic Consultants Ltd. Collection, National Archives of Canada).
[79] *Building a Modern Grain Industry*, TC 1. The capitalization of the letters is in keeping with what was in the inter-title cards.
[80] *Building a Modern Grain Elevator*, shots 1.1 - 2.1.

shots are utilised to show just how much a massive undertaking the process of building a modern grain elevator is, and how impressive is the fact that it is being done in the winter and by residents of the Lakehead. This is more than a step-by-step guide to building a modern grain elevator, but the building of progress. As a title card suggests, "if we could stay and watch these bins grow we should see them develop through the magic of science to colossal cylinders over 100 feet in height."[81]

Many of the images caught on film also reaffirm the importance of the elevator, and by extension that of the region to Canada. The piles themselves signify the best of Canadian timber and underscore the importance of the elevator to the area and the country. As a title card informs the spectator, "the best of pine and fir from the Pacific Coast and elsewhere is used."[82] Similarly, the best in modern technology is also highlighted as modern methods of construction are demonstrated by showing the carpentry shop, close-ups of the men at work, and how concrete is formed. The film ends with footage of the finished gain elevator and a final word to underscore to the audience that "the big ships come in to load the Canadian grain that ultimately will find its way to all parts of the world."[83]

In 1924 the OMPB produced another film looking at the region's part in the grain industry. One of the most interesting and creative films produced by the Board, "A Visit From Pharaoh" takes a unique approach by comparing the potential of the Lakehead in the early 1920s to that of Ancient Egypt as a hub of civilisation.[84] The film is narrated in

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[81] *Building a Modern Grain Elevator*, TC 13.
[82] *Building a Modern Grain Industry*, TC 6.
[83] *Building a Modern Grain Elevator*, TC 19.
[84] *A Visit From Pharaoh*, 4m 16s., prod. Ontario Motion Picture Bureau, 1924, 28mm (Graphic Consultants Ltd. Collection, National Archives of Canada).

both English and hieroglyphics by an "Indian Trapper" and, according to the 1927 OMPB catalogue, a Pharaoh's spirit who "disturbed by archaeologists working among the tombs of Egypt... starts on a pilgrimage which takes him to Port Arthur and Fort William."[85] Although the National Archives of Canada record for the film suggests that "the conversation vaguely relates to the images," when the film is examined within the context of boosterism the dialogue becomes quite clear in terms of the film's purpose.[86]

While at the Lakehead the Pharaoh learns that "the vaunted 'corn of Egypt' was a great bagatelle compared with the wheat shipped through the Twin Cities."[87] Comparisons are made to the region's prominent position in the transcontinental railway as compared to the great camel trains of the African desert. Similarly, the Pharaoh's pondering as to the purpose of the ships that frequent the harbour is met with the trapper's response that these vessels "have a much different appearance to your kateen-sail skiffs, but they're commercial propositions just the same."[88] The final scenes of the film are panoramic shots meant to demonstrate what the Pharaoh thinks of Port Arthur.[89] Intended to be from the eyes of the Pharaoh, the images suggest, like those from the Whalen film of some years previous, that an expansive city now sits where there was once untamed wilderness. Fittingly, the film ends with the Pharaoh leaving for Egypt only after some fishing.

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[85] Ontario Motion Picture Bureau Catalogue (1927), Graphic Consultants Collection, National Archives quoted in the National Archives of Canada's catalogue description of the film. The hieroglyphics are not real. For the most part, they are simple pictographs of situations shown in the film.

[86] Ontario Motion Picture Bureau Catalogue. As only the second reels still exists, this determination is based on the assumption that the second reel is consistent with the first.

[87] Ontario Motion Picture Bureau Catalogue.

[88] *A Visit from Pharaoh*, TC 11.

[89] *A Visit from Pharaoh*, TC 4.

However, the Lakehead needed more than bushels of grain, railway shops and trains and industry to really secure its future. Electricity underlay the expansion of modern industry and for any city with pretensions to greatness it was necessary. As Peter Baskerville has observed, "neither mining nor paper-making... proved as significant as the development of hydroelectric industry."[90] The OMPB obviously believed this too, as it commissioned a film, "More Power for the Twin Cities" (1922) which showed that the region's current and potential needs were easily met by the construction of Cameron's Falls hydro electric plant.[91] More typical of the OMPB productions, the film details the construction and operation of the facility. The resourcefulness and achievements of the region are demonstrated in a series of scenes outlining the excavation and incredible diversion of the Nipigon River to its new man-made bed. The technological accomplishments of those involved are highlighted through the artful juxtaposition of machinery to workers.[92] "More Power for the Twin Cities" ends with a view of the lines carrying the electricity produced by the plant to Port Arthur.

The city that power would be going to was captured in two films more reminiscent of "Port Arthur and Fort William: Keys to the Great Lakes" in terms of scope and composition. "The Twin Cities" (1922) and "Where East Meets West" (1925), rather than focussing upon one industry or theme, reflected the complete growth and diversity

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[90] Peter A. Baskerville, Ontario: Image, Identity, and Power (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2002), 159.

[91] *More Power for the Twin Cities*, 9m 48s., prod. Pathescope of Canada Limited for the Ontario Motion Picture Bureau, 1922, 28mm (Graphic Consultants Ltd. Collection, National Archives of Canada).

[92] See, *More Power for the Twin Cities*, scenes 6 to 9.

of the cities.[93] Although not concentrating as much on urban development as "The Twin Cities", "Where East Meets West" does examine Fort William's transition from fur trading post to "now one of the most important transhipment points in Canada."[94] The Lakehead's participation in the steel industry is examined and, like "Building a Modern Grain Elevator" and "A Visit From Pharaoh", the film demonstrates how the importance of the Lakehead's position, coupled with an ever increasing grain yield, resulted in the growth of both the cities and their grain storage capacity. It is made abundantly clear, though, that this growth consists not only of quantity, but also of the quality that the film suggests now characterises the Lakehead. In an attempt to demonstrate both these themes, the film ends with a look at the tap-rock quarries at Mount McKay, with mention made of the "battery of 90-ton steam shovels" in use and the 3,000 tons of rock excavated a day.

In addition to Mount McKay, "The Twin Cities" begins with a shot of "Nani Bozhou", the Great Spirit of the Ojibway,[95] guarding the harbours of Fort William and Port Arthur. Made nearly a decade after "Port Arthur and Fort William: Keys to the Great Lakes," many of the scenes are of the same industries and streets. In direct contrast to the "savage" nature of "Nani Bozhou," the film assures the spectator that nature has

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[93] *The Twin Cities*, 11m., prod. Filmcraft for the Ontario Motion Picture Bureau, 1922, 28mm (Moravian Church Collection, National Archives of Canada) and *Where East Meets West*, 5m., prod. Ontario Motion Picture Bureau, 1925, 28mm (Saskatchewan Archives Board: Department of Agriculture Collection, National Archives of Canada).

[94] *Where East Meets West* , TC 1. Rather odd about the film is that the only reel still in existence, reel two, was shot on 35mm, while reel one was shot on the OMPB standard 28mm.

[95] Interestingly, this does not follow local legend as to the origin of the "Sleeping Giant."

been tamed and moulded by those at the Lakehead, and this is symbolised by the "colossal grain elevators [that] stand like sentinels guarding the busy water ways."[96]

Unlike most of the other films made about the Lakehead, "The Twin Cities" places a greater emphasis on the "progressive business district" of Port Arthur and the important commercial nature of the city."[97] This is echoed in shots of services and institutions that were the hallmark of a "civilised" region. Scenes of the local municipal offices are accompanied by footage of the Port Arthur Collegiate Institute, a building of stunning proportions, and civic parks. After its scenes of Port Arthur, the film examines Fort William. Following a panoramic view of the city, a title card suggests, "the function of the twin cities has been compared to that of a bottle-neck though which is poured the product of the west."[98] In contrast, Fort William is portrayed as the typical industrial city. Rail yards, grain elevators and other elements of an industrial centre are shown in direct contrast to the previous footage of Port Arthur. Even the inclusion of Kakabeka Falls is not made because of its beauty, but for the 65,000 horsepower of electricity is provides.[99] The focus on industry of "The Twin Cities" and other OMPB films is precisely what pioneers like Dorothea Mitchell were attracted to.

In the case of Mitchell, the idea was realised that the Lakehead possessed unrivalled opportunity and promise was realised. Upon receiving news that her mother, sister, and "an old family retainer" were coming to Canada, Mitchell took the unprecedented step of petitioning the Ontario government for land under the

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[96] *The Twin Cities*, TC 11.
[97] *The Twin Cities*, TC 8.
[98] *The Twin Cities*, TC 13.
[99] *The Twin Cities*, TC 19.

Homestead Act. In early January 1911 Mitchell enquired at the Crown Land Office in Port Arthur, asking to be granted a free homestead in the area surveyed as R140 Lybster. The land was once a mining claim that had reverted to the Crown over the lack of tax payments and was now available for re-granting. Mitchell was informed that the previous owners had until 31 March of 1911 to reapply for the land and that her request would be filed.[100]

Having heard nothing by May 1911, Mitchell once again wrote to the Crown Land Agent. This time she impressed upon him that for the last ten years she had been the sole supporter for her family and needed this land to continue to do just that. Dorothea Mitchell had received no satisfactory answer from the local Crown Land Agent, even though she knew that R 140 was now available. When her request was again put off, with the Agent claiming that the previous owner had until 31 May to redeem the property, she wrote to the deputy minister of Lands and Forests, Aubrey White, to explain her situation.[101] Mitchell once again underscored the fact that she had been the sole provider for her mother and sister and hoped, "with apologies for troubling" that she would "receive a favourable reply."[102]

It arrived on 17 July 1911 when the deputy minister finally agreed she was eligible for a land grant. With her previous paper work "lost," she filled out the forms

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[100] H.A. Keefer, Crown Land Agent, Port Arthur, Ontario to Aubrey White, Deputy Minister of Lands and Forests, Toronto. 20 January 1911. This and Mitchell's entire correspondence with the Ministry of Lands and Mines can be found at the Archives of Ontario, Land File RG1, C-5 Box 1654 File #8118/85 and Collection of Elinor Barr.

[101] Deputy Minters of Mines to H.A. Keefer, Crown Land Agent, Port Arthur, 23 May 1911.

[102] Mitchell to Aubrey White, Deputy Minister of Lands and Forests, 21 June 1911.

again[103] and was finally granted her claim 29 July, but only 79 acres of it.[104] An inquiry on 30 August 1911 about her ability to take up the balance of the 160 acres entitled to her resulted in the notification by White that "while the Department has located you under the Free Grant and Homestead Act for R 140, it is not strictly in accordance with the Act. Not being a married woman you are not strictly entitled to a free grant."[105] Mitchell was, however, informed in this same letter that if adjacent land became available she would be notified and considered. Nevertheless, Dorothea Mitchell made history by becoming the first single woman to be granted a homestead in the Province of Ontario. Despite the difficulties, according to Mitchell, "obstacles to women's progress were almost non-existent."[106]

By becoming the "lady lumberjack" and establishing a homestead for herself, Dorothea Mitchell had seized upon the opportunities presented to her in the Ontario northwest. However, the attempts made by James Whalen and the OMPB to promote the region to the world were not as successful. While the films produced by the OMPB in 1917 alone reached over 700,000 Ontario citizens, the OMPB never secured a

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[103] Deputy Minister of Lands and Forests to J.A. Oliver, Acting Crown Land Agent, Port Arthur Ontario. 17 July 1911. See also Deputy Minister of Lands and Forests to Mitchell 17 July 1911 and J.A. Oliver to Aubrey White, Toronto 20 May 1911, received 22 May 1911.

[104] In her letter dated 5 August 1911, Mitchell thanks the deputy minister of Lands and Forests and, with a touch of sarcasm, it ends with "trusting that I may prove myself a satisfactory settler." Apparently Mitchell did take offence to the way she was being treated, and had had some previous contact with the White. He apologized in a letter dated 13 September 1911, writing, "I trust you did not, from my inquiry of Aug. 25th... deem me unappreciative of past favours." As the letter does not exist, "the past favours" are unknown. However, Mitchell does seem to call into question the deputy minister's "bona fides" as he states in a post-script that if she cared, he would be happy to give her references, particularly one Canon MacNab of St. Andrew's Cathedral.

[105] Deputy Minister of Lands and Forests to Dorothy Mitchell, 30 August 1911.

[106] Mitchell quoted in Marcy Brown "You Find Adventure in Travel" Victoria Daily Colonist 9 December 1971.

distributor willing to show its films around the world.[107] There are several reasons this failure. The overwhelming control of production, distribution, and exhibition by American companies blocked many Canadian films from gaining a wide audience. In addition, competition from the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau and the OMPB's continued use of the non-theatrical 28mm ensured that only community halls with that technology would view them.[108] Similarly, while "Port Arthur and Fort William: Keys to the Great Lakes" was a citywide event when it "premiered" at the Lyceum theatre in Port Arthur in 1913, there is no indication that it had much success elsewhere.[109] Despite the popularity and number of films made which attempted to boost Canada, the most effective means of attracting immigration in the early twentieth-century remained the newspaper and printed poster.

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[107] Claim made by the Ontario Government in Moving Picture World 36 (1918): 706 quoted in Morris, 142.

[108] Morris, 142.

[109] The film "premiered" with prizes being handed out to those who could identify themselves. See Raymond Furlotte, 5.

Chapter 3
"the best picture ever made in Canada"

At the same time that local entrepreneurs and the provincial government were attempting to use moving pictures to attract business and settlers like Dorothea Mitchell, the silent film industry in both the United States and Canada was undergoing significant change. The lack of "Britishness" and Canadian content in those films being exhibited in Canada resulted in the creation of government run agencies designed to produce educational and information films. Unfortunately, this focus on non-theatrical films and failure to adapt to the public's demand for feature length dramas following the historic release in the United States of D.W. Griffith's "Birth of a Nation" (1915) caused the production of Canadian film to stagnate, hampering the creation of a stable industry turning out dramas and feature films.

While the introduction of feature-length films was a new step in the evolution of moving pictures in the 1910s, it was not until the 1920s, according to film historian William Everson that filmmakers began to take themselves and their medium much more seriously. While a place still existed for the physical action films like those made by Max Sennett and his Keystone Kops, by the middle of the 1920s more and more emphasis was placed on narrative structure and dramatic elements.[1]

While drama did not first appear with the feature film, it became increasingly popular as filmmakers began to turn to traditional theatre for instant characterisation of heroes and villains and other dramatic conventions that "could be sketched in visual terms and familiar, thematic structures invoking traditional nineteenth-century ideals" for

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[1] William K. Everson in his American Silent Film (New York: Oxford University Press publication 1978), 8.

less sophisticated filmgoers.[2] Some viewed the resulting development of genre films and their continued popularity by filmmakers to be a result of their literary qualities, while others considered them a natural outgrowth of the medium.[3] Regardless of the reasoning, the popularity of genre films remained high throughout the silent period. The most popular were westerns, a genre in which most directors and producers got their start in the industry.[4] The genre film allowed for the standardisation of moving pictures, and exhibitors, to fill out programs, began to demand a certain number of dramas, westerns, comedies, and thrillers (a genre which included mysteries and detective stories).[5]

As in the rest of Canada, it was these types of films that were increasingly shown throughout the Lakehead in the late 1910s and early 1920s. For Port Arthur and Fort William, the 1920s was a period of growth and prosperity. Much of the investment and population that left following the 1913 crash in lumber and real estate did not return, but the introduction of a new industry, pulp and paper, reversed the economic decline of the area. For the first time in the region's history, the overall decline in employment was offset by an increasing number of professional and manufacturing jobs. As a result, the

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[2] Richard Koszarski, An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture (Berkely: University of California Press, 1994): 181.

[3] See, for example, Paula Marantz Cohen, Silent Film and the Triumph of the American Myth, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 11-14.

[4] See Koszarski, 182-183 and Arthur Knight, The Liveliest Art (New York: Mentor Books, 1957), 119-124.

[5] For a brief discussion of each genre see Koszarski p. 34, Eileen Bowser, The Transformation of Cinema, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994): pp. 169-173 (westerns), 173-177 ("Indian" films), 177-179 (Civil War films), 179-185 (slapstick comedy), and 185-189 (detective films, serials, and "Feminism").

1920s was a period of increased immigration and investment at the Lakehead.[6] The progress and development of the later half of the nineteenth-century and first few decades of the twentieth-century made the Lakehead a new, vigorous, and progressive region ripe for participation in the world's newest and most influential medium.

One effect of the investment in local industry and the increase in migration to the region was the growth of cultural activities in the twin cities. While railway and passengers services had long provided traveling entertainers access to the region, they were still infrequent at best. Only community run events held in the town halls of both cities augmented visiting performers. Although as early as 1879 notable traveling troupes such as the Marks Brothers frequented the Lakehead, the increasing importance of the area and the growth in population soon made the previously suitable auditoriums attached to the town halls inadequate. In 1907, the first theatre at the Lakehead was established. A converted Baptist Church, the LUNA's 200-seat capacity was brought into service, but it proved to be too small. As a result, in 1908, under the auspices of James Whalen, the Lyceum was constructed. Praised as "one of the finest opera houses in the Dominion and certainly the most complete playhouse between Toronto and Winnipeg, surpassing many theatres in those two cities, in beauty of design and taste of finish," it was only the first in a series of buildings designed with modern forms of entertainment in mind. Between 1907 and 1913 the Lakehead was graced with the LUNA (1907), Lyceum (1908), Bijoux (1908), Corona (1908), Palace (1911),

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[6] James Stafford, "A Century of Growth at the Lakehead," in Thorold J. Tronrud and A. Ernest Epp, eds. Thunder Bay: From Rivalry to Unity (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, 1995), 39 and 45-47.

Orpheum (1912) and the Rex (1913). By 1913, there were over ten moving picture houses at the Lakehead and they thrived.[7]

With the establishment of theatres and other community buildings came choirs, glee clubs and a municipal band to play at parades, sporting events, and other functions of importance. Many of these activities and events were British in their orientation, often at the exclusion of other ethnic groups.[8] Yet, as Margaret Frenette and Patricia Jasen demonstrate, despite such shortcomings cultural activities created a sense of belonging, strengthened the bonds of the community, and were an indication of its vitality.[9] It was within this context that the Lakehead began to take a more active role in the film industry.

During this period Dorothea Mitchell also began to participate in the cultural and economic activities of the twin cities as, like many women of the time, her life was increasingly filled by "an intriguing interplay of continuity and change."[10] Although Mitchell's ownership of the sawmill was unique, as was her sole ownership of a homestead, it did not occur in an urban centre where traditional employment for women remained that of domestic labour, and deviations from this were viewed with distaste and subject to private, if not public, criticism. Yet, as the decade progressed, increasing levels of migration, the Great War, and the resulting growth in strength and numbers of

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[7] The development of theatres at the Lakehead is examined more fully in Mark Chochla's "The Golden Years of Theatre in Thunder Bay" Papers and Records VII (1979): 32-39.

[8] For a discussion on ethnicity and community at the Lakehead see Chris Southcott, "Ethnicity and Community in Thunder Bay" Polyphony 9:2 (1987): 10-19 and A.W. Rasporich and Thorold J. Tronrud, "Class, Ethnicity and Urban Competition," in Thorold J. Tronrud and A. Ernest Epp, eds. Thunder Bay: From Rivalry to Unity. (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, 1995): 204-226.

[9] For a discussion on the development of community and culture at the Lakehead see Margaret Frenette and Patricia Jasen, "Community through Culture" in Thorold J. Tronrud and A. Ernest Epp, eds. Thunder Bay: From Rivalry to Unity (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, 1995), 144-154.

[10] Alison Prentice, et al. "Continuity and Change in Women's Work" in Canadian Women: A History 2nd ed. (Scarborough: Nelson Thomson Learning, 1996), 118.

women's voices began to change some traditional gender roles. Like many women who had moved west to take positions as domestic servants and teachers, Mitchell was required by environment and circumstance to adapt and perform tasks previously denied to women. This opportunity to circumvent social attitudes allowed her to both expand her education and participate more fully in a variety of endeavours.[11]

The lady lumberjack continued making inroads into the previously masculine sphere of business and commerce with the same determination that she used to bring her brand of British civilisation to the frontier of Silver Mountain. In the winter of 1921-22 Dorothea Mitchell took courses at the Business College in Port Arthur, and, by the summer of 1922, had achieved enough proficiency that, while staff was on vacation, she was given the task of teaching courses.[12] While teaching, she used her newly earned credentials and took a variety of jobs working as a bookkeeper and checker for local retail stores and the CPR freight office in Fort William. Her involvement in the Port Arthur business community was also accompanied by increased participation in the cultural life of the Lakehead. Mitchell was an active participant in local theatrical productions and was a spectator of films. For example, she played a leading role in The Great War Veteran's Association's production of "Mr. Bob" in January of 1925 and commented numerous times throughout her life on her fascination with moving pictures.[13] Both these interests developed during her frequent trips to Port Arthur while

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[11] See Prentice for a brief survey of the period and this phenomenon.

[12] Dorothea Mitchell, "Accountant by Accident," unpublished short story, c. 1971, 3 (Personal Papers of Dorothea Mitchell, Collection of Elinor Barr).

[13] Program for "Mr. Bob" held at the Lyceum Theatre, 10-11 January 1925 (Personal Papers of Dorothea Mitchell, Collection of Elinor Barr).

running her sawmill and formed an important part of her social life after she moved to Port Arthur.[14]

It was on one of these earlier trips that Dorothea Mitchell went to her first film at the Lakehead. Generally, aside from the government made films, what the residents of the Lakehead like Dorothea Mitchell watched was typically not much different from what was shown in the rest of Canada and the United States. However, despite the attraction and attention paid to moving pictures it was not until about 1909 that film was firmly established as a significant amusement.[15] The introduction of nickelodeon, the theatre of the masses, vaulted moving pictures into the mind's eye of those ranging from the elite to the lower classes.[16] The nickelodeon also allowed for a greater access to the medium, a proliferation and standardization of story films, and the development of the classical method of film narrative.[17]

Many of the earliest dramatic first films made in Canada were short interest films, often the very same promotional and educational films produced by the Ontario Motion Picture Bureau. While the goal of the OMPB was to educate the Canadian public and to entice immigration from abroad, recognising the lure of drama, it attempted to do so by entertaining moviegoers. "A Great Lakes Romance" (1918) was one such example. The film highlights the scenic beauty, the benefits of lake travel, and the potential of the ports visited; it also tells the romantic adventure of a young man and woman. Similarly,

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[14] See Dorothea Mitchell, Lady Lumberjack (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1968).

[15] Lucile M. Kane and John A. Dougherty, "Movie Debut: Films in the Twin Cities, 1894-1909," Minnesota History (Winter 1995):.344.

[16] For a discussion of this phenomenon in the United States see Charles Musser, The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907 (Berkley: University of California Press, 1990), 416-418.

[17] Tom Gunning, "Early American Film," in John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson, eds, American Cinema and Hollywood: Critical Approaches (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 32-33.

the Pharaoh's pilgrimage to Port Arthur in "A Visit from Pharaoh" (1924) and the tenacious battle of the icebreaker *James Whalen* in "Breaking the Ice" (1925) are presented in a dramatic fashion.

The purpose of these films was not strictly to entertain. Based on the images, narration, and shots found in each film, it is clear that the situation being presented, no matter how effectively portrayed or believable, was a result of the environment and the material pleasures afforded by what was being promoted. In the case of "A Great Lakes Romance" the idea that the hospitality, services, and activities on Northern Navigation Lines ships provided the atmosphere for love is apparent in every scene. Even the sometimes-comic dialogue between the Pharaoh and "Indian trapper" in "A Visit from Pharaoh," was reliant on its non-dramatic elements.

By using drama as an afterthought, the commercial success of films such as "A Great Lakes Romance" and "A Visit from Pharaoh" was negligible. Quite simply, people were not drawn to theatres to see OMPB films when pure dramas, and later feature films, were available. As early as 1918, a year after its creation, the OMPB realised that to entice the public it was necessary to "add an entertainment feature to its agricultural films by including dramatic and comic films."[18] Shortly after the election of Charles Drury as premier of Ontario in 1919, the OMPB was re-organised. [19] The activities of the board were centralised in Trenton, Ontario where a studio was purchased. A new director, George Patton, was hired to produce "features of an historical and dramatic

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[18] Moving Picture World, 36 (1918): 706.

[19] For more information on the Drury government and the United Farmers, see Joseph Schull, "Farmer Government" pp. 235-258 in Ontario Since 1867 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978).

nature in addition to the one or two reel scenic and educational releases."[20] However, with the increasing availability of American dramas this effort failed and the OMPB films were used most often to precede Hollywood features as the 1920s progressed.

The age of silent features, arguably begun in North American with D.W. Griffith's "The Birth of a Nation" in 1915, heralded, according to Richard Kozarski, "a revolution in motion picture style and content."[21] Subsequently, as the types of pictures changed so did how they were viewed. Just as storefront exhibitions and parlors were replaced by nickelodeons in the 1910s, so movie palaces replaced them in the 1920s.[22] At the Lakehead, this manifested itself in the replacement of the Lyceum by the more opulent Rex and Orpheum.

The changes that occurred in the structure and nature of the moving picture industry between 1915 and 1928 also led to the standardization of genres. The proliferation of westerns, slapstick, detective serials, and "Indian films" occurred just as disagreements between older production companies and the newer ones began.[23] This conflict resulted in the consolidation of the industry into the hands of a few, powerful American companies that controlled exhibition, production, and distribution. Those few companies producing films in Canada between 1907 and 1927 that did not rely on government contracts followed closely what was occurring in the United States. In terms of plot, technique, and conventions they were an attempt to emulate the style developed in Hollywood. All of these early companies, though, professed to be making pictures

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[20] Canadian Moving Picture Digest, (11 October 1924): 8.

[21] Koszarski, 2. While "Birth of a Nation" may be the first feature-length film made in North American, it was preceded by "Quo Vadis?" (1913) and Cabiria" (1914), two Italian film's that had in fact received favourble reviews in the United States prior to D.W. Griffith's production.

[22] Koszarski, 9.

[23] Bowser, 167.

suitably Canadian and thus imperial in scope and content. Companies with names such as the British American Film Company (1912) and the All-Red Film Company (1914) began to appear throughout the country.[24]

Although commercial film production focussed on drama, another form also made its appearance in this period. Robert Flaherty's "Nanook of the North" took the world by storm, making him the father of documentary film. Flaherty was, coincidentally, a long-time resident of the Port Arthur and a fixture within the community. While documentary film would prove to be less lucrative than features, the subject of them, like most early films made by Canadians, was rooted in the history of the nation. Unlike them, features made in Canada were "hardly more distinguishable from those Canadian content films produced by American companies."[25] The difficulty lay in the heavy involvement of American talent and material resulting from the country's lack of a theatrical tradition, the regional nature of the country which inhibited the centralisation of capital and investment, and the dominance of the American companies. In addition, despite the efforts of many filmmakers, the emphasis in Canada by various levels of government remained on educational, instructional, and promotional films. As a result as the 1920s progressed the features that were seen were increasingly American in origin.

The large number of American films that entered Canada was of little concern to the Canadian government. Both the Canadian people and government found

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[24] The first drama made in Canada by a Canadian company was the 1913 British-American Film Company production "The Battle of the Long Sault." An "Indian Drama," it examined the Iroquois expedition against the French in 1660. Another early drama of note was "Evangeline" (Canadian Bioscope Company, 1913). Based on Henry Longfellow's poem of the same name, the film looked at the Acadia expulsion. See Peter Morris, Embattled Shadows: A History of Canadian Cinema, 1895-1939 (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978), 46-52.

[25] Morris, 47.

entertainment in the weekly changes in films and cared little of film's growing importance and effect on the masses. Little attention was given to the underlying cultural impact that foreign ideals and beliefs could have on the nation. The Canadian government did not note that attendance at the movies was dwarfing all those arts considered culturally significant. Instead, as millions of Canadians participated in this medium of popular culture each week, they also inadvertently justified the centrality of American film in contemporary culture. Those who scoffed at its persuasive ability, however, consistently ignored film as an instrument of social change.[26]

By 1920 most other film producing nations were becoming increasingly alarmed by the growing dominance of the United States. Throughout the British Empire many realised that while educational and didactic films reached a large audience, they only "had a slight impact as compared to the immensely popular feature films of the period."[27] The 1920s increasingly saw the British market swallowed up by American interests. By 1924, American companies accounted for over 44 percent of films being shown in British theatres[28] and, as a result of block booking, 33 percent of all films being shown were under the control of three American companies.[29] Two years later, only five

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[26] According to Peter Roffman, between 1923 and 1927no feature-length films were produced in Canada; however, in 1927 alone over 30,000,000 Canadians visited the 1073 theatres operating in the country (Peter Roffman, The Story of Carry on Sergeant! (Toronto: Ontario Film Institute Monograph, 1979). See also Sam Kula, "Conserving the Canadian Image," in Seth Feldman and Joyce Nelson's Canadian Film Reader (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1977), 30.

[27] John M. Mackenzie, "The Popular Culture of Empire in Britain," in Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis, The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 228.

[28] Rachael Low, The History of British Film (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971), 74.

[29] These companies were European, First National Pathé, and Paramount. See George Perry, The Great British Picture Show, (London: Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, 1974), 53 and Rachel Low, The History of British Film, 75 for more information. Interestingly, unlike most British and Canadian film historians Perry takes the position that the Cinematograph Act was "immensely successful." Unfortunately, he does not take into account that the 128 films made by British studios in 1928 were not necessarily made on British soil.

percent of films shown in Britain were of British origin.[30] By 1927, much like in Canada, the "British film industry was on its way to extinction."[31]

As a result of public and political pressure, at the Imperial Conference of 1926 the government of Britain announced its intention to impose some form of quota on all films not domestic in origin.[32] The proposed Cinematograph Act was intended to restrict the number of American films shown and to secure a certain percentage of screen time for British films.[33] While in complete agreement with the British, the Canadian government, led by Mackenzie King, and other dominions were concerned that the quota would unfairly be applied to members of the empire. After intensive lobbying by Mackenzie King a compromise was reached where films made by Commonwealth members would be considered British and be subject to the same rights and considerations as productions made in the United Kingdom.[34]

As much as this compromise was popular in the dominions, it was also very controversial. In Britain, the Labour Party and others opposed it as they believed it would result in a stagnation of quality and the proliferation of sub-par British productions. As George Bernard Shaw commented, "my contempt for it deprives me of speech."[35] Like Shaw, the American industry was also not in favour of the quota and

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[30] Morris, 177.

[31] Political and Economic Planning, The British Film Industry: A report on its history and present organisation, with special reference to the economic problems of British feature film production (London: PEP, 1952), 41.

[32] For a brief discussion in the events leading up to the Cinematograph Act, see George Perry, The Great British Picture Show (London: Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, 1974).

[33] Initially the quota for exhibitors was 7.5 percent of films rented for exhibition in British theatres must be British in origin and 5 percent of films shown were to be British, but it was raised incrementally until 1936 when it was set at 20 percent. See Low, 97 and Morris, 180.

[34] Morris,177.

[35] Bioscope 17 March 1927.

lobbied heavily for it to be revoked. The regulation resulted in an influx of poorer quality moving pictures that were British in origin but made in Canada.[36]

While newsreels and interest films with imperial content were popular in Canada, steps were not taken, as elsewhere in the Empire, to counter the threat posed by American feature films. Public outcries over the increasing number of American films being shown in Canadian theatres had no effect on the various levels of government in Canada. Additionally, not all involved in the Canadian film industry were in favour of the Act.[37]

Despite the protected outlet for Canadian productions that the Cinematograph Act provided, those influential in the Canadian industry like Ray Peck, director of the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau (CGMPB), and Ben Norrish, head of Associated Screen News of Montreal, argued against the quota as "to put a quota law against the United States in Great Britain would tend to place a bonus on inefficiency."[38] Those advising Ottawa believed that "if Canadian films were worthwhile making into films, companies will be sent to into Canada to make them."[39] Coincidentally, not long after Peck's meeting with various Hollywood officials in the spring of 1927, a period of

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[36] Roy Armes, A Critical History of British Cinema (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 78.

[37] Sandra Gathercole, "As the grapefruit grows: A Short critical history of Canadian film policy," Cinema Canada, 94:1 (March 1983): 29.

[38] Ray Peck quoted in Moving Picture World 84 (1927): 15 also cited in Morris, 179. Similar in scope to the OMPB and other provincial bureaus responsible for moving pictures, the CGMPB's mandate was to introduce region of the country to promote Canada to abroad was believed the most effective way to protect Canadian culture and to enhance awareness of Canadian problems would be to continue to focus on resources on the production of newsreels, short films, and informational films similar to those already being produced by various government agencies.

[39] Lewis Selznick quoted in Morris, 57.

film production began that was best described by film historian Peter Morris as "the years of the quota."[40]

The British quota law was an opportunity for Canada to develop an indigenous feature film industry, but it instead led to its further stagnation. With the help and support of Peck and Norrish, American producers were able to capitalise on a loophole discovered in the legislation. With the British willing to allow Canadian made films not to be subject to tariffs, Hollywood companies were encouraged to come north and produce a portion of their production in Canada and thus become "Canadian" by the terms of the legislation.

While most of the resulting production boom occurred in British Columbia, one company was also formed in Fort William.[41] Organised in the spring of 1927 with a capitalization of $500,000, Thunder Bay Films has been described as "one of the most curious companies of the period."[42] Film historian Peter Morris contends in his study Embattled Shadows that Thunder Bay Films was "apparently well intentioned," but in terms of purpose, activities, and outcome the company had all the markings of a quota company.[43] The establishment of the company was not, at least according to local

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[40] This is the title of the sixth chapter in Peter Morris' Embattled Shadows.

[41] British Columbia was the centre of much of the quota production. Building upon the many scattered attempts of independent productions by the likes of Nils Olaf Crisander, A.D. Kean, and Kenneth James Bishop between 1927 and 1938, the province experienced a period of film production unmatched until the late twentieth-century.

[42] Morris, 185.

[43] Although established in early 1927 and the Cinematograph Act was not passed until December 1927, it is of little consequence. As Mark Gasher and Colin Browne both demonstrate in their examinations of the British Columbia film industry, the possibility of a British quota was open speculation as early as 1925. In the case of British Columbia, politicians and the business elite were "eager to promote the region as the film capital of the Empire." See Mike Gasher, Hollywood North: The Feature Film Industry in British Columbia (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002), 29 and Colin Browne, Motion Picture Production in British Columbia, 1898-1940: A Brief Historical Background and Catalogue (Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1979), 21 and 69.

papers, a sudden or impulsive decision. Company President S.V. Halstead and his "associates" were reputed to have been working for three years on a plan to form "a motion picture company to produce Canadian pictures, with the North Country scenery as its background."[44]

Like so many companies operating in Canada at the time, the goal of the company was to transform the region into Hollywood North. Thunder Bay Film's intention "to make Canadian pictures for the export trade," and it was to be funded by Canadian investors.[45] Assisted through the co-operation of the Canadian government, the company hoped to highlight the advancement Canada was making in film production. The CGMPB under the direction of Peck, and the "picture department of the railways," agreed to provide exchange services.[46]

Support of the residents of the Lakehead was deemed necessary by the company to "boost a Canadian enterprise," and Thunder Bay Films endeavoured to appeal to the region's long history of boostering industry.[47] For $25 "the good citizens at the head of the lake district" were given the opportunity to purchase one of 200 shares being offered so they too could participate in the enterprise.[48] To accomplish this, its first film would "establish the company on a firm enough basis to establish and maintain at the head of the lakes a co-operative studio of big producers, which will enable all film

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[44] Fort William Daily Times-Journal 16 April 1927.
[45] Canadian Moving Picture Digest (7 May 1927): 16 and Fort William Daily Times-Journal May 1927 (Tunder Bay Historical Museum Society Newspapers Clippings).
[46] Fort William Daily Times-Journal 27 July 1927.
[47] Fort William Daily Times-Journal 27 July 1927.
[48] "Thunder Bay Films First Stock Issue," Canadian Moving Picture Digest 19:5 (4 June 1927): 13.

producers looking for north country atmosphere, to use the facilities here and thus form a motion picture centre in Canada."[49]

To entice local investors worried about the integrity and stability of the company, the role of prominent local citizens and the experience of the management were highlighted in the initial share offering. Throughout the life of the company, its productions were billed as being "backed by the people of Fort William."[50] Frequently highlighted was the decision-making role of W.Y. Montgomery, the Vice President and a Port Arthur man, and Mayor J.E. Crawford as the company's auditor.[51]

Despite the participation of prominent local figures the principal figures in the company were two men from California. Originally from Northeastern Ontario, the president and producer of Thunder Bay Films, Sargeson V. Halstead was, according to Canadian Moving Picture Digest, a "veteran of film circles" who had "for the past several years been active in Canada."[52] In addition to his managerial background, Halstead was also to provide Thunder Bay Films with its first six scripts. Based on his life while a mining engineer in Northeastern Ontario, the stories he wrote were promised to provide a distinctly Canadian flavour to the company's productions.

Like Halstead, the production manager and director, Louis W. Chaudet, was also an experienced filmmaker. Originally from Kansas, he was a "prominent member" of the Motion Picture Director's Association and brought experience and instant notoriety

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[49] Fort William Daily Times-Journal 16 April 1927 and similar statements can be found in Canadian Moving Picture Digest (4 June 1927): 13.

[50] Canadian Moving Picture Digest (15 October 1927): 7.

[51] Canadian Moving Picture Digest (4 June 1927): 13. W.Y. Montgomery was a local real estate dealer and J.E. Crawford was both Mayor of Fort William and a chartered accountant during the period of Thunder Bay Films' existence.

[52] Canadian Moving Picture Digest 29 September 1928.

to Thunder Bay Films with a record of over 120 successful screen productions to his credit.[53] A former photographer and vaudeville comic, Chaudet was one of the first directors to move to California. Initially producing comedies for Nestor and a series of low-budget westerns, before signing with Thunder Bay Films, Chaudet had recently completed a film based on a James Oliver Curwood novel.[54]

One of the best-known novelists and screenwriters of his time, the Michigan-born Curwood (1878-1927) was the author of stories, book, and films read and watched by both Canadians and Americans with almost unmatched relish and vigour. His popularity was so great in Canada that he was billed as the man "who needs no introduction."[55] For example, Chaudet's "In the Tentacles of the North" (1926) was written by Curwood and received widespread attention as "a daring, gripping, exciting drama of the Arctic" and its promotion by the Vital company in 1926-7 was not unknown to Canadians who "from coast to coast were drawn to the Curwood name."[56]

James Oliver Curwood was also no stranger to Northwestern Ontario. The same year Dorothea Mitchell moved to the Lakehead, Curwood began his annual pilgrimage to Canada. Between 1909 and 1927 he spent up to 6 months each year in the "Canadian Northwest," some at the Algoma Hotel located in Fort William. Curwood also sought inspiration and refuge from the same railway line that was home to Dorothea Mitchell between 1909 and 1921. Interestingly, as station-master for the CPR, post-master, and proprietor of the only general store in the area for the first half of the 1910s

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[53] Fort William Daily Times-Journal 27 July 1927.
[54] Fort William Daily Times-Journal 14 January 1929.
[55] For an example of the type of acclaim Curwood had in Canada, and, specifically, in the movie going culture of the time see Canadian Moving Picture Digest 13 February 1926.
[56] Canadian Moving Picture Digest 13 February 1926.

she no doubt met Curwood and either sold him supplies or boarded him on his visits. According to historian Elinor Barr, Curwood "immortalised the [Port Arthur, Duluth & Western Railway], as the Poverty Destruction & Want in a 1922 romance entitled The Country Beyond."[57] While in the northwest, Curwood penned many of his most famous novels including Wapi the Walrus which was later made into Ernest Shipman's "Back to God's Country." Before his death at the age of 47, he wrote over thirty novels, numerous short stories and, during the period in which he frequented Northwestern Ontario, scripted and had his work adapted in over 130 films.

At the same time that Curwood was producing scenarios for Selig Films, Chaudet was directing for the company. In 1926, after the decline of the company and the exit of both Curwood and Chaudet from its employ, they collaborated on two films, "Tentacle of the North," based on the Curwood story by the same name, and an adaptation of his popular novel The Courage of Captain Plum."[58] One of the last films produced before Curwood's death, "A Captain's Courage" (1926), marked the introduction of Chaudet to some of the cast he and Halstead later employed for a Thunder Bay Films production.[59]

Both the female starts hired by Thunder Bay Films and a number of the supporting cast also had previously worked on Curwood films before coming to the Lakehead. A resident of Missouri, Dorothy Dwan was best known for her roles in a

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[57] Elinor Barr, Thunder Bay To Gunflint: The Port Arthur, Duluth & Western Railway (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, 1999), 2 and James Oliver Curwood, The Country Beyond: A Romance of the Wilderness (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1922), 259.

[58] Two films entitled "Tentacles of the North" and "In the Tentacles of the North" were produced in 1926. Both are identical except that one was released by Rayart and the other by Sylvian.

[59] *Tentacles of the North*, 50m., dir. Louis Chaudet, prod. Rayart Pictures, perf. Gaston Glass and Alice Calhoun, 1926, 16 mm. Based on a short story with the same title, the plot is about a young man who finds a girl stranded on a ship where the entire crew has died, and the men on his ship chase them into the Arctic. It was also released the same year under the title "In the Tentacles of the North" by Ben Wilson Productions and Sylvan Films. "A Captain's Courage," dir. Louis Chaudet, prod. Ben Wilson Productions, perf. Richard Holt, Eddie Earl, Jack Henderson, Al Ferguson, Lafe McKee, and Dorothy Dwan, Rayart Pictures, 1926.

variety of Tom Mix westerns, and her appearance in Chaudet's "A Captain's Courage".[60] Her supporting actress, Peggy Olcott was described as "a character actress of repute" and the cast was rounded out by a variety of veteran Hollywood actors such as Mitchell Lewis and Bobby Mack.[61]

Despite many in Port Arthur and Fort William being "star struck", these "stars" were nothing more than "B" actors. With the exception of a few career moments, most were character actors who fulfilled much the same role in film after film. In addition, many like Chaudet were nearing the end of their careers and their tenure with Thunder Bay Films was one of their last jobs, as they did not successfully make the transition to the talkies by the 1930s. This was not unusual for quota companies as "it seems to have been Canada's fate during this period to acquire the services of Hollywood rejects: the aging, the unknown, and the minor."[62]

Nevertheless, the community's enthusiastic reception of the cast demonstrates that, while it is doubtful anyone had heard of those in the employ of Thunder Bay Films, they were enthralled by the presence of the company in the region. The excitement of Hollywood coming to the Lakehead spurred articles with bold titles like, "Thunder Bay Films to Start Work on Northern Picture"[63] and "Filmdom Ladies Reach the Lakehead to Enact Roles."[64] During the first year of Thunder Bay Films' existence, local papers chronicled every move of the company providing free promotion and shamelessly

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[60] Tom Mix was the most notable star of westerns in the silent era. Beginning with his first film, "Ranch Life in the Great Southwest," (Selig, 1910), he was a fixture until the advent of talkies. He wrote, directed, and starred in Selig films until 1917 when he left for Fox. Between 1917 and 1928 he made an average of five films a year with his popular co-star Tony the horse.

[61] Fort William Daily Times-Journal 14 January 1929.

[62] Morris, 185.

[63] Fort William Daily Times-Journal 27 August 1927.

[64] Fort William Daily Times-Journal 3 September 1927.

boosted the region as Hollywood North. When the two female 'stars' arrived, the Daily-Times Journal was quick to point out their association with the crème of Hollywood. They were depicted in terms that endeared them to the pioneering spirit of the residents Port Arthur and Fort William. For example, after a tiring day of preparing costumes, both Dorothy Dawn and Peggy Olcott took the time out from what would have otherwise been a day of rest to talk to local reporters. When asked if they felt they were on a deserted island being at the Lakehead, Dwan replied, "certainly not! These two cities you have here are beautifully situated and I am sure there must be delightful scenery hereabout. I think I am going to like it very much during our stay."[65]

This interview was the only one given to local papers. In fact, except for the three weeks spent filming the exteriors for "Spirit of the Wilderness," this was the only time in the company's existence that the cast and crew were actually at the Lakehead. In addition to exteriors being filmed at a "break neck" speed, the actions of some of the cast are also curious. When Dorothy Dawn and Peggy Olcott arrived, the local papers reported that "they pitched in to help seamstresses prepare their costumes for shooting" by toiling "energetically and with infinite care and precision on the working of beads for fringes and other essential effects in a production which aims to reproduce scenes from aboriginal days.[66] Despite the assurance by Halstead that this was a result of the good natured and co-operative spirit of the ladies, this is very questionable for individuals reputed to be "stars" of the highest calibre.[67]

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[65] Joseph Mauro, Thunder Bay: A City's Story (Thunder Bay: Joseph Mauro, 1990), 112 and Fort William Daily Times-Journal 3 September 1927.

[66] Fort William Daily Times-Journal 3 September 1927.

[67] The Fort William Daily Times-Journal wrote on 3 September 1927 that, "it was stated by the director [Halstead] that it is altogether unusual for stars to take upon themselves such duties but immediately following their long journey they volunteered to help out and the result was a tiring day."

There was also some inconsistency in the hiring practices of the company. Thunder Bay Films was adamant that in addition to the 'stars' being imported, local talent would be used in its films. The balance of the cast was made up of extras, selected carefully from local talent and some of the local "Indians" were used in the picture.[68] Halstead told local papers that he planned for those "who will be coached in motion picture acting" eventually to educate Canadian talent.[69]

This education, Sargeson Halstead argued, would go a long way to help overcome the hurdles that filmmakers in Canada needed to get over to compete. Optimistically, Halstead stated that there was "no reason why one of the biggest industries in the world, and one of the greatest money making enterprises" could not be established at the head of the lakes.[70] However, the claim that Native people in the films were drawn from the local population is questionable. [71] Like all quota companies formed during the period, the publicised purpose of Thunder Bay Films was "the film production of Canadian stories from Canadian themes, with Canadian atmosphere and background."[72] Thunder Bay Films first film, "Spirit of the Wilderness," was advertised as just such an attempt.

The first in what was to be a series of films made to "glorify the Head of the Lakes," "Spirit of the Wilderness" remains an illusive film shrouded in inconsistencies.[73] Scheduled to be released in the summer of 1929, it was supposed to be an "epic of [the]

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[68] Fort William Daily Times-Journal 27 August 1927.
[69] Fort William Daily Times-Journal 27 July 1927.
[70] Fort William Daily Times-Journal 27 July 1927.
[71] The descriptions available for "Spirit of the Wilderness" do suggest section where Native people would have been ideal to use; however, the only film made by the company to exist uses white actors to play native people despite footage apparently filmed at the same time.
[72] Fort William Daily Times-Journal 16 April 1927.
[73] Canadian Moving Picture Digest (29 September 1928): 8.

Thunder Bay region" and a "massive production" that its producers were confident would "rank with the most successful of screen triumphs." [74] From the very beginning the film was promoted and lauded for the scenery it contained.

Newspapers, magazines, and company press releases described the story material, like so many films made during the period, as "Canadian and essentially British in its epical values."[75] The film was touted as a "Canadian-Made Feature" and, after a preview by Hollywood critics in 1927, it was believed that "if The Spirit of the Wilderness consisted only of scenes caught in the bush trails and on the rivers and lakes, without the characters of the play, the film would be a sensation in the cities of the United States."[76] Like the boosters of Port Arthur and Fort William before him, Sargeson Halstead promoted an imagined vision of the Canadian "northland " which consisted of "wildwoods" "herds of buffalo dissolv[ing] into ranches of pedigreed stock, then Indian teepees change into farm buildings and the shack of the pioneer transformed into business stock."[77] All scenes were supposedly from the Lakehead region, and Chaudet was reported to have used Squaw Bay, Kakabeka Falls, Lake of the Woods, and Nipigon to select locations in the late summer of 1927.[78] Shooting was hardly a secret and in one instance, upwards of 3000 people "motored" to Kakabeka Falls ... in anticipation of seeing Thunder Bay Films company 'shoot' the falls."[79]

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[74] Fort William Daily Times-Journal 1 February 1929.
[75] Canadian Moving Picture Digest (19 November 1927): 6.
[76] Canadian Moving Picture Digest (24 December 1927): 17.
[77] Fort William Daily Times-Journal 27 July 1927.
[78] Fort William Daily Times-Journal 27 August 1927.
[79] Unfortunately, in this instance, those hoping to see the company in action were disappointed. The scenes were shot in the morning on the advice of the Kaministiquia power company which had informed the director, Louis Chaudet, that "a full head of water would only be available between 10:30 and 11:30" Fort William Daily Times-Journal 12 September 1927.

Throughout the company's existence, Thunder Bay Films and its supporters were always quick to point out the benefits of producing a film at the Lakehead. For example, the Port Arthur News-Chronicle reported that,

> there is so much difference between these pictures ["Spirit of the Wilderness"] and alleged scenes of Canada taken in California, or any other place outside of Canada, that one wonders how the picture people have so long been successful in passing off the fraudulent stuff.[80]

Halstead himself realised this and decided, "that all the outdoor scenes must be taken in the actual north country,"[81] as, "in no other part of the continent can their duplication be found."[82] In October the company wrapped up its production of "local scenes" after spending a "few weeks" in the area.[83] After a couple of months filming interiors in California reviewers of the footage remarked that the photography of the scenes and "the beauty of the natural Canadian setting is already earning editorial space from representatives of the press."[84]

Canadian Moving Picture Digest announced in its November 1927 issue that with the completion of the film's interiors, Halstead again visited the Lakehead to take a "great number of "shots" necessary for the company's second feature."[85] The title of the "second" film was not given, timelines were not provided, nor was any mention of the company's return made. Little is known about the content of "Spirit of the Wilderness," or if it was ever exhibited. No reviews and no records, including corporate, cast filmographies and local newspaper reports exist, despite an intensive examination of all

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[80] Port Arthur News-Chronicle quoted in Canadian Moving Picture Digest (24 December 1927): 17.
[81] Halstead quoted in Fort William Daily Times-Journal 16 April 1927.
[82] Canadian Moving Picture Digest (24 December 1927): 17 and Fort William Daily Times-Journal and Port Arthur News–Chronicle December 1927 (Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society Clippings Files).
[83] See Canadian Moving Picture Digest (15 October 1927): 7.
[84] Canadian Moving Picture Digest (24 December 1927): 17.
[85] Canadian Moving Picture Digest (19 November 1927): 6.

sources available.[86] The only film known to have been completed and exhibited by Thunder Bay Films was not "Spirit of the Wilderness."

In 1929 Thunder Bay Films Limited released "The Devil Bear" which was heralded by Canadian Film Digest editor Ray Lewis as the "best picture ever made in Canada."[87] Previewed in front of a small audience in the Lafayette theatre in Buffalo, New York on 14 January 1929, it was a scenario adapted from a novel by Sargeson Halstead entitled The Blind Chute. In terms of the film's quality, Lewis was convinced that, while "it [was] not a big picture... it [had] a good story, a fine cast of players, [and] it shows that pictures can be made in Canada which will be entertainment without the necessity of spending one half of a million dollars on them, or even, one half of that sum."[88] Similarly, a Mrs. Joshua R. Smith, also in attendance at the preview, commented that

> it is the best picture yet made in Canada. It has all the earmarks of the finished Hollywood pictures, with beautiful scenic effects which can only be obtained in this country. There is a little love story threaded through the story, but it is subordinated to the thoroughly virile nature of the plot. Above all it is natural, with an experienced cast and director. It is not a spectacle, but is a big picture for Canada.[89]

The theme of "The Devil Bear" "hinged on the search for a lost mine in the north land, and a shipwreck on the great lakes is skilfully employed in developing the plot.[90] As with everything to do with Thunder Bay Films, the title itself is misleading. As one

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[86] The time constraints of this paper allowed only for a sampling to be performed. While the most likely dates were searched, a more thorough search is still necessary. Many of the trade magazines were searched and both print and Internet film guides were thoroughly scoured.

[87] Port Arthur News-Chronicle 5 February 1929 and Canadian Moving Picture Digest (12 January 1929): 5 and 7. *The Devil Bear,* dir. Louis Chaudet, perf. Dorothy Dwan, Carroll Nye, Mitchell Lewis, 64 min., Thunder Bay Films Limited, 1929, 35mm (John E. Allen Fonds, National Archives of Canada).

[88] "Ray Lewis Presents" Canadian Moving Picture Digest (12 January 1929): 7.

[89] Fort William Daily-Times Journal 14 January 1929.

[90] Fort William Daily-Times Journal 8 February1929.

reviewer aptly pointed out, "instead of being a picture in which the devil bear plays the big part, as in "Tarzan" and "Tarzan and the Apes," the devil bear actually has but very little to do in the picture."[91]

Supposedly based on the real life experience of Sargeson Halstead, the plot of the film is essentially about a man named Sifton who has an option on a mine near Nipigon. His dishonest partner tries to double-cross him, fails, yet Sifton forgives him. The partner is then arrested after robbing the Hudson's Bay store in Nipigon. Later, when Sifton, a judge, and their guide go to the mine an explosion, caused by an attempt by Sifton's partner to cover up his guilt, reveals a wealth of gold.

Complicating the film are two subplots. The film actually begins with a mutiny in a vicious storm aboard a ship on Lake Superior carrying a chest of gold. However, the Devil Bear, the captain's gorilla mascot, breaks out of his cell, rescues his master, and gets washed to shore with him. With his master insane and thinking he is still on the ship, the devil bear wanders the "wildwoods" surrounding Nipigon. The second subplot is a love story between Sifton and Werde Brandon, the daughter of a slain missionary. Despite temptation in New York, Sifton stays true to Werde only to discover on his return to Nipigon that she is missing. In a wholly unbelievable turn of events, the Devil Bear rescues Werde and brings her to the cave where the ship's captain is holed up. When the mine explodes exposing the gold, the cave is also revealed. In the ensuing mêlée, the ship's captain gets hit on the head, regains his sanity, and discovers that the judge is his brother. The film ends with the devil bear disappearing into the woods where, apparently, it still lives.

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[91] Fort William Daily-Times Journal 14 January 1929.

Halstead claimed that the six stories he had scripted for the company were based on personal experiences.[92] Considering the plot of "The Devil Bear", and that Halstead was reputed to have been from Eastern Ontario where he had previously worked as a mining engineer, Peter Morris' is apt in his comment that "if this was one of Sargeson Halstead's 'personal experiences," he must certainly have had an interesting life."[93] It was also not unknown for Halstead to tell questionable tales. For example, while working as a mine engineer in Northeastern Ontario he also claimed to have saved a "little white girl" whom he had found wandering in the woods.[94]

At its preview in Buffalo, New York members of the audience commented that "it has all the earmarks of the finished Hollywood pictures, with beautiful scenic effects which can only be obtained in this country [Canada]."[95] Heralded as an "interesting picture," by the time it premiered at the Orpheum in Fort William, the plot mattered little as local newspapers suggested; "keen interest is felt by many Lakehead folk in the production to be given of the "The Devil Bear," a motion picture, the exterior of which were filmed in this district."[96]

On 7 February 1929 "The Devil Bear" premiered against Lon Chaney's "West of Zimbabwe." Playing to capacity houses during its three-day run, local papers attested to the film's enthusiastic reception. The Port Arthur News Chronicle commented that Halstead and Chaudet "left nothing undone in their attempt to give the motion picture

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[92] Morris, 186.
[93] Morris, 186.
[94] This story is found in an interview with Halstead in the Fort William Daily Times-Journal 27 July 1927.
[95] Fort William Daily Times-Journal 14 January 1929.
[96] Fort William Daily-Times Journal 1 February 1929 and Port Arthur News-Chronicle 5 February 1929.

patrons a truly Canadian picture depicting true Canadian scenes of the North Country."[97] The film was considered "one of the best pictures ever shown at the Lakehead, not because a local company produced it, but because it contain[ed] all the elements of entertainment expected... of a good company." The dramatic elements also received favourable comment and their appeal was attributed to the fact that "in no place is the action overworked something that is unusual in pictures today."[98]

Before its premiere, Sargeson Halstead and Louis Chaudet told the local papers that Gaumont British Films in Canada, England, and Europe had released the film. No mention is made of an American release. The Fort William Daily-Times Journal was more reserved in its assessment when it wrote that,

> while there is little doubt of that local interest will be keen it remains of course to be seen whether audiences in other parts of the will react to the film. The author and the director and others who have been identified with the work are highly confident and optimistic.[99]

Regardless of the concern, in 1929 the citizens of the Lakehead saw what they considered to be a film that rivalled the best of Hollywood. "The Devil Bear" did receive favourable national exposure, no small feat for the region's first locally produced feature length film. What especially caught the attention of Ray Lewis, editor of the Canadian Moving Picture Digest, was the relatively cheap cost of the film and the quality obtained. Something, she commented, that would "be most interesting to the financial backers of

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97 Port Arthur News-Chronicle 8 February 1929.
98 Port Arthur News-Chronicle 8 February 1929.
99 Fort William Daily-Times Journal 1 February 1929.

"Carry on Sergeant!" one of the most financial disastrous Canadian productions of all time.[100]

The end of Thunder Bay Films was abrupt as its beginning. It was also just as mysterious. The night before "The Devil Bear" premiered, Halstead and Chaudet held an informal meeting with local investors at the Elks Club and assured them that Thunder Bay Films was the only "Canadian concern with dividends in sight." According to the Fort William Times-Journal, Chaudet "reviewed the situation in Canada and the United States and mentioned the 'uncertainty' of the talkies."[101] More curious was Chaudet and Halstead's response to the question put to them about quota films. Both assured the gathered shareholders, somewhat confusingly, that Thunder Bay Films was well situated as "for every picture produced in British Unions there must be one wholly British taken in the United States." Clearly not answering the question, they further stated that, "this quota would be increased as British productions increased."[102] While the statement about sound can be explained, the comment about the quota, according to Peter Morris, is "patently false since it would undermine the whole purpose of the quota to allow 'matching' US production."[103]

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[100] "Ray Lewis Presents" Canadian Moving Picture Digest 20:37 (12 January 1929): 5. "Carry on Sergeant!" follows a Canadian soldier of the First World War who goes off to fight for the Empire, leaving a wife behind. It chronicles his participation in the Battle of Ypres, his eventual falling in love with a French Barmaid, and his death. It was both the first Canadian feature epic, and the first monumental failure. Appearing in only a few theatres, the film received harsh criticism for its suggestion of the soldier's lack of virtue and pessimistic ending. Ray Lewis may have been a little less than objective. One of the parties involved in the lawsuits against Canadian Imperial Films that forced them out of business was Canadian Moving Picture Digest. For an extensive look at the film, see Peter Roffman, The Story of Carry on Sergeant! (Toronto: Ontario Film Institute Monograph, 1979).

[101] Fort William Daily-Times Journal 6 February 1929. According to Peter Morris, the argument for sound is understandable as few small companies could cope with the costs that transition to sound created.

[102] Port Arthur News-Chronicle 6 February 1929.

[103] Correspondence with Peter Morris, 7 March 2003.

After the first performance, Halstead and Chaudet assured the shareholders that they would return shortly "to make a report on the progress of the second picture."[104] The last anyone heard of the company was an article in the next day's paper reporting that "other feature productions made by Thunder Bay Films Ltd are nearly completed and will, as in this case ["the Devil Bear"] be given their premiere at the head of the Lakes."[105] The "splendid run" of what was advertised as the "first locally owned and controlled feature," was apparently also its last.[106]

Thunder Bay Films remains an enigma. The company and its films are listed in no printed film guide and Chaudet, the cast, and others employed by the company rarely list Thunder Bay Films, "Spirit of the Wilderness," or "The Devil Bear" in their filmographies. Despite Thunder Bay Films' assurance that a studio would be built once the initial film was shot, a search of city permits and land grants between 1926 and 1931 reveals that no such attempt was made.[107] Thunder Bay Films was neither the first, nor the last, to produce films at the Lakehead, but it was the only professional company ever established at either Port Arthur or Fort William. Even with the movement from didactic interest films to the more fictional productions by professional studios, a demand for films depicting life as it was, rather than how it could be imagined, remained popular. Many who aspired to making moving pictures in the late 1920s did so in an insular environment even before the damage caused by the transition to sound in 1927 and the stock market crash of 1929.

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[104] Fort William Daily-Times Journal 6 February 1929.
[105] Fort William Daily-Times Journal 7 February 1929.
[106] Fort William Daily-Times Journal 2 February 1929.
[107] This claim was made a number of times. See, for example, Fort William Daily Times-Journal 16 April 1927 and Canadian Moving Picture Digest (4 June 1927): 13.

Described by film historian Peter Morris as "one of the most curious companies of the period," Thunder Bay Films was not only unique, but the fervour of the region and the embrace of the company by the citizens of Port Arthur and Fort William was rooted in their belief that the potential of the region had finally materialised into something tangible.[108] Just as the British quota law was an opportunity for Canada to develop an indigenous feature film industry, and retain cultural sovereignty of one of the most influential cultural industries, so was Thunder Bay Films an opportunity for the Lakehead to become something more than a region of haulers of water and hewers of wood. However, in reality "The Devil Bear" was nothing more than a fantastical version of those made by Edison and the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thunder Bay Films was just another American run company attempting to exploit the natural scenic beauty of the Canadian landscape.

Clearly the scenery found in "The Devil Bear" and what is known of the scenery in "Spirit of the Wilderness" is used in an imaginative, creative, and exploitive fashion. It is telling that the only criticism levelled at the premiere of "The Devil Bear" was aimed at the OMPB film that was shown just before the Hollywood production. Many were pleased to see familiar faces and place names in the film "The Twin Cities." According the Port Arthur News Chronicle, it was "humor[ous] to the audience, because most of them have been used to subtitles mentioning New York, Chicago, London, England, and Paris and it is rare thing to see the name Montreal, Toronto, or Winnipeg listed in a

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[108] Morris, 185.

picture."[109] However, the awe of having a Hollywood company in their midst, and the idealistic hope of the region becoming "Hollywood North," blinded many to the adverse effect that support for such companies had on the region and the country as a whole.

Despite the failure of Thunder Bay Films Limited, a few individuals, led by Dorothea Mitchell, took inspiration from the attempt by the company to make feature films in the region. Soon after the premiere of "The Devil Bear," local Port Arthur businessman Fred Cooper, knowing something of Mitchell's talents and background, asked her if she would be willing to assist him in making a film. Considering her British upbringing and actions throughout her life, it is not surprising that Mitchell agreed. However, what she intended to create was inspired not by Hollywood, but by her own motivation and pioneering spirit.

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[109] Port Arthur News-Chronicle 8 February 1929.

Chapter 4
The Port Arthur Amateur Cinema Society

The advent of the "Quota Quickies" in Canada and the creation of Thunder Bay Films brought professional commercial production to the Lakehead. However, the hope of many that the region would become "Hollywood North" was dashed with the disappearance of the company in early 1929. While many of the facts relating to Thunder Bay Films remain a mystery, what is known is that the desire by many in the community to take part in this new medium remained strong. The relative prosperity of Port Arthur and Fort William during the 1920s allowed Dorothea Mitchell and a group of friends and colleagues who possessed no experience, no desire for profit, and, ultimately nothing but good intentions, to become the first non-professionals in the history of Canada to make a feature film.

Port Arthur and Fort William in 1929 was not the obvious location for the first amateur, or avant-garde, film made in Canada. The collapse of Thunder Bay Films was only the last in a series of events that ended the region's contact with some of film's most influential figures. In the late 1920s, the documentary filmmaker and one time resident, Robert Flaherty, became an infrequent visitor, James Oliver Curwood's death in 1927 ensured no more visits, and though newer and bigger theatres were built, most, like the Colonial and Orpheum in Fort William and Port Arthur, were now under the control of American parent companies such as Famous Players.[1] The Lakehead, like the rest of Canada during the era of Quota Quickies, was at the mercy of Hollywood, the embodiment of the consolidation of professional filmmaking in North America, and the

[1] Mauro, Thunder Bay: A History (Thunder Bay: Letho Printers, 1981), 309.

"division of labour, formal paradigms of aesthetic standards and conventions, and market control and monopolization through access to national distribution" that was created.[2]

Not all in North America were content with this turn of events. Many of the same historical modalities that were responsible for the first production of films at the Lakehead also converged to create a "discursive space for non-Hollywood production" in Northwestern Ontario.[3] The idea of the "amateur" developed as "a cultural inversion to the development of economic professionalism."[4] For the idealist, amateurism materialised "as a cultural reservoir for the liberal pursuit of ideals of freedom, competition, fluidity among classes, upward mobility, and the inalienable and creative labour-social relations dislodged from the economic by scientism, the division of labour, and the cult of experience."[5] In reality, the participation of amateurs was made possible because of the growing middle-class demand for consumer goods.[6]

At the same time that Thomas Edison was beginning to experiment with moving pictures, the growing middle-class and their demand for consumer goods created an ethical and commercial change throughout North America. According to William Leach, "the cardinal features of this culture were the acquisition and consumption of [material] goods as the means of achieving happiness; the cult of the new; the democratization of

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[2] Patricia Zimmermann, Reel Families: The Social History of Amateur Film (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995), 5.
[3] Zimmermann, 5.
[4] Zimmermann, 7. See also Brian Taves, "Robert Florey and the Hollywood Avant-Garde," p. 94 and Jan-Christopher Horak, "The First American Avant-garde" in Jan-Christopher Horak, ed. Lovers of Cinema: The First American Film Avant-Garde, 1919-1945. (The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995).
[5] Zimmermann, 5.
[6] Zimmermann, 5 and 14.

desire; and the money value as the predominant measure of all value in society."[7] The resulting rampant consumerism encouraged hobbies and a more expansive definition of leisure was created to include pursuits of the arts. [8] For example, one of the earliest manifestations of this phenomenon was photography, one of Dorothea Mitchell's favourite hobbies.[9]

She was not alone at the Lakehead. As in much of Canada and the United States, the growing middle-class in Port Arthur and Fort William resulted in their increasing importance in the cultural activities of the community. The contrast between ethnic and non-ethnic organisations, meeting halls, social clubs, historical societies, and forms of entertainment is indicative of the increasing separation along class lines of the communities of Port Arthur and Fort William. This growing demand for leisure goods at the Lakehead eventually resulted, considering the region's past experiences with the medium, in a dichotomous relationship between amateur and professional filmmaking following the standardisation of cheap 16mm film and equipment in 1923.[10]

Very little scholarship exists on the topic of amateur film. Despite the work of Maya Deren in the1960s and her establishment of a foundation for the serious study of amateur film, no full-length study until recently undertook to analyze the amateur film phenomenon.[11] What has been uncovered by those such as Patricia Zimmermann, is

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[7] William Leach, Land of Desire: Merchants, Power and the Rise of a New American Culture (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 3.
[8] See William Leach, p. 9 and Patricia Zimmermann, "Starting Angles: Amateur Film and the Early Avant-Garde" in Jan-Christopher Horak, ed. Lovers of Cinema: The First American Film Avant-Garde, 1919-1945 (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 140-141.
[9] See Julia Hirsch, Family Photographs: Content, Meaning, and Effect. (New York: Oxford University Press,1981).
[10] Zimmermann, Reel Families: The Social History of Amateur Film, 57.
[11] See, for example, Maya Deren An Anagram of Ideas on Art, From, and Film (Yonkers, N.Y. Alicat Book Shop Press 1946). See also the new anthology Maya Deren and the American Avant-Garde Bill Nichols,

that the amateur film movement was not only a unique experience, but an alternative to professional production "on the fringe of the commercial mainstream."[12] Zimmermann describes amateur film, often considered part of the Avant-garde movement, as "a constant reorganizing of aesthetic, economic, and political formations, not as linear history of particular amateur-film producers, film circles, or films."[13] Similarly, Jan-Christopher Horak writes that amateur film "has always been closely identified with specific filmmakers, audiences, and spaces for reception, even though the critical focus has been on artists."[14] Essentially, the amateur film movement evolved based on the myth that, "every man and every woman was a potential film artist."[15]

Some, such as Robert Flaherty, used the freedom that the advancements in camera technology enabled to create a wholly new type of cinema. Flaherty was the first resident of the Lakehead to participate in film production as an independent, and solely for non-commercial gain. Best known for his films "Nanook of the North" (1922), Moana (1926), and, in collaboration with F.W. Murnau, "Tabu" (1931), he demonstrates that the avant-garde movement in Canada was not relegated to metropolitan centres.[16] Considered to be the father of documentary film, Flaherty was an early opponent of professionalism and the consumerism rampant in the film industry following the advent of the studio system. As expressed by John Grierson, founder of both the documentary

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ed. (Berkeley : University of California Press, 2001). Patricia Zimmermann also discusses Deren to some extent in her introduction to Reel Families: The Social History of Amateur Film.

[12] Patricia Zimmermann, "The Amateur, the Avant-Garde, and Ideologies of Art," Journal of Film and Video 38, no. 3-4 (Summer/Fall 1986).

[13] Zimmermann, Reel Families: The Social History of Amateur Film, xiii.

[14] Jan-Christopher Horak, "Introduction: History in he Gaps" in Lovers of Cinema: The First American Film Avant-Garde, 1919-1945, 4.

[15] Horak, "The First American Film Avant-Garde, 1919-1945," 18.

[16] "Tabu A Story of the South Seas" was Murnau's last film. It was released nine months after his death and is often cited as a companion to Murnau's more famous "Nosferatu."

tradition and the National Film Board of Canada, Flaherty was "the initiator of the naturalist tradition in Canada."[17]

The avant-garde and amateur movement in North America reached notoriety because of Flaherty's connection to the Lakehead. Like Curwood, Flaherty was born in Michigan but came to find his muse in Northwestern Ontario. Bob, as local newspapers referred to him, was the eldest child of a mining engineer. In 1893, following a down turn in mining in that state, Flaherty's father went to work in what one biographer referred to as, "the little known Canadian Northern frontier of Lake of the Woods."[18] It was here, accompanying his father, that Flaherty was first exposed to what would be the inspiration of his life's work.[19]

In Rainy Lake, Flaherty came to love and understand the region. As one biographer commented, "other people might regard Rainy Lake as an outpost of North American civilisation, but to young Bob, as to his father and all the men in the camp with any vision, it was on the edge of a vast landmass, largely unexplored and unexploited."[20] After numerous contracts throughout Northwestern Ontario, Flaherty's father was hired on by the United States Steel Corporation and moved to Port Arthur

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[17] John Grierson, On Documentary, revised and edited by Forsyth Hardy, (London: Faber, 1966), 29. Robert Sklar similarly writes that Flaherty's works, "along with "Sergei Eisenstein's "Battleship Potemkin" (1925), Carl Dreyer's "The Passion of Joan of Arc" (1928), Charlie Chaplin's "The Gold Rush" (1925), and F.W. Murnau's Sunrise (1927) established a place in major exhibition areas for films extending cinematic art." see Robert Sklar, Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of the Movies (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 86-100.

[18] Arthur Calder-Marshall, Innocent Eye: The Life of Robert J. Flaherty (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970), 17.

[19] Information in Calder-Marshall, 18 was derived from radio interviews Flaherty gave to BBC in London on 14 June 1949 and 24 July 1949.

[20] Calder-Marshall, 18.

where other family members had migrated before.[21] Using Port Arthur as his base of operations, Robert Flaherty journeyed throughout the Canadian Northwest, each step chronicled by his ever-present cameras whose images he shared with the local citizens long before the mainstream media got wind of his accomplishments.[22] According to Peter Morris, Flaherty's "special sensitivity... and deep respect for the unpredictability of nature and for man's physical and spiritual relationship with the world around him," was also attributable to the time he spent in the North."[23]

Despite the opinion of those who criticize Flaherty for his reconstruction of scenes, his filmmaking was informed by his belief that both the synthetic filmmaking in movies such as "Metropolis" and "Caligari," and the "patching and retouching to secure film effects, was not," as he described in a 1927 interview with Mina Brownstein of Amateur Movie Makers, "the wisest or most sensitive use of the camera." This opinion was largely based on the conviction that "to say that life is not like the nightmares and distortions which the Germans have brought to us is not to get my point exactly."[24] Flaherty firmly believed that money should not be spent on scenery or props, but on

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[21] One of these relations was James Flaherty who was responsible for establishing the Queen's Hotel and was a member of the first town council. See "Robert Flaherty Pioneered Films," Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal, July 31, 1984.

[22] See, for example, "Explorer Returning" Port Arthur Morning Herald 20 March 1911, "Mr. Flaherty is to Make a Long Trip" Port Arthur Daily News 26 July 1915 and " 'Lost Islands' Found Off Shore of Ungava By Port Arthur Man," Port Arthur Daily News 27 March 27 1915.

[23] Morris, 196-197.

[24] Flaherty quoted in Amateur Movie Makers 2:5 (May 1927): 7. See Calder-Marshall, Innocent Eye: The Life of Robert J. Flaherty for a description of Flaherty's reconstruction of scenes as well as Corlliss who explains that Flaherty found what he was looking for only in his later films which, he contends, were "spin-offs" of "Nanook" and "The Land". For an undisguised attack on the Flaherty tradition see Paul Rotha's Robert Flaherty: A Biography edited by Jay Ruby (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983).

financing the time to work on projects and for the purchase of equipment and film "which should be excellent but as portable as possible."[25]

Although later in his career Robert Flaherty was hired by Paramount, he was never totally at peace with Hollywood executives.[26] By the 1930s he was making documentary films "to bring the Empire alive," in England as part of John Grierson's Empire Marketing Board Film Unit.[27] Throughout his life Flaherty remained convinced that, "nature gave [filmmakers] a setting [of] luxurious green and riotous color, the like of which could be found in no Hollywood studio."[28] For him, "the journey was at least as important as reaching the destination."[29] According the Richard Leacock, camera man and associate producer on Flaherty's last film "Louisiana Story", Flaherty thought that "film making was a relatively simple process and that he could do it all by himself with the help of local people."[30]

Despite attributing his success to a remote frontier in the Canadian hinterland, Robert Flaherty's life at the Lakehead has received scant attention. In the many books written about his life, Port Arthur is generalised to include much of Northern Canada. Nothing of the previews held in the Prince Arthur Hotel of "Nanook" and "Moana" before they graced the screens of New York are discussed, and most authors have failed to understand the importance he placed on the region despite Flaherty's explicit continued

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[25] Richard Leacock, "In Defense of the Flaherty Position" unpublished paper (27 April 1990), Paris France, 3.
[26] Most studies about Flaherty's career discuss the disappointment Paramount had with "Moana" and the constant conflict in vision between studios and Flaherty methods and products.
[27] Arthur Knight, The Liveliest Art: A Panoramic History pf the Movies (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 210 and 248-249.
[28] Amateur Movie Makers 2:5 (May 1927): 8.
[29] Richard Corliss, "Robert Flaherty: The Man in the Iron Myth" Film Comment (November 1973): 39.
[30] Leacock, 3.

connection to the community after he moved away.[31] For the residents of the Lakehead, Flaherty's influence was not forgotten and, in fact, he had the greatest influence on the view of filmmaking in a community that by 1929 had been an active participant in every type of film production attempted in Canada.

For many of the admirers of Flaherty, the idea to produce films rose out of familiarity with moving pictures through exhibition and an initial exposure to photography and its trade magazines where amateur filmmaking was first introduced.[32] Although Flaherty was "an amateur of the best sense of the term," he was unique in his success coming from Canada, and working independently.[33] Most amateur filmmakers in the 1920s were located in the United States and belonged to amateur cinema societies. According to noted film scholar Lewis Jacobs, generally they were composed of painters, dancers, illustrators and others in distinguishable "artistic" pursuits.[34] Others were collectives made up of college students and like-minded individuals, one of whom happened to own a camera.

It was not until the formation of the Amateur Cinema League (ACL) in 1926 that these scattered groups throughout North America were given a voice and concrete organisational structure.[35] Established in New York by inventor Hiram Percy Maxim, the Amateur Cinema League (ACL) was one of the most prominent non-commercial

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[31] See Robert J. Flaherty, "How I Filmed 'Nanook of the North'," World's Work, (October 1922): 632-640., For information on "Moana" and "Louisiana Story" and the previews of the films in Port Arthur see Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society "Flaherty File." Although Flaherty had moved away by 1922, his sister, with whom he was very close, and other members of his family continued to live in Port Arthur. Flaherty spent vacation time in the city and often did post-production work as evident in the collection of stills possessed by the Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society that do not exist elsewhere.
[32] Zimmermann, Reel Families: The Social History of Amateur Film, xiii and 17.
[33] Mina Brownstein, "Filming With Flaherty," Amateur Movie Makers 2:5 (May 1927): 7.
[34] Arthur L. Gale, "Amateur Clubs" Amateur Movie Makers 3:2 (February 1928): 100.
[35] Horak, "The First American Film Avant-Garde, 1919-1945," 19.

associations of moving picture amateurs. The ACL believed that, "instead of amateur cinematography being merely a means of individual amusement, we have in it a means of communicating a new form of knowledge to our fellow beings, -- be where they may upon the earth's surface."[36] Individual members were encouraged to seek out like-minded individuals and form autonomous co-operative groups, the impetus for which must come from amateurs:

> Local groups, unaided, have built up a majority of clubs. The Amateur Cinema League does not claim credit. Nor does the League wish to hamper this free pioneering spirit by attempting to create local Amateur Cinema League chapters or to set up formal relations with these different groups. Our aim is simply that of service.[37]

Each member of the ACL was entitled to consultation services, access to processing laboratories and the advice, through its magazine Amateur Movie Makers, of experts in the field. The magazine acted as a means through which member societies could keep up with each other and learn of the latest advancements in the field, providing information on a monthly basis on the latest news, events, and technical advice. [38] Articles encouraged amateur filmmakers not just to mimic Hollywood or commercial moving pictures, but, through examples, demonstrate that they to could create something that often rivalled and challenged traditional cinematic thoughts and ideas.[39] Flaherty himself, one of the over 30,000 members by 1927, in one interview "lifted an

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[36] "Amateur Cinema League: A Close-up" Amateur Movie Makers 2:2 (January 1927): 7.
[37] Amateur Movie Makers 2:10 (October 1927): 35.
[38] Patricia Zimmermann argues that the ACL also acted as a conduit by which professional companies, in league with or they themselves equipment makers, establish a pattern through which amateurs, through reading magazines, extolled the virtue of independent production all the while striving for professional perfection. See Reel Families.
[39] Horak, "The First American Film Avant-Garde," 19.

old copy of Amateur Movie Maker and remarked solemnly that it was the only movie magazine he cared to look at."[40]

The Amateur Cinema League was important to the development of amateur film in Canada. Blocked by the vertical integration of the film industry, many in Canada turned to the ACL as an outlet through which their work could be exhibited. From its creation, the ACL organized a lending library, as Arthur Gale wrote, "to provide an adequate distribution of amateur photoplays, secure a dependable event for club programs and, as well, encourage new groups to undertake amateur productions."[41] Officially, the Amateur Cinema League brought the amateur film movement to Canada in June 1929 with the organisation of the Regina Amateur Cinema Club.[42] Established with 20 members, the Regina group had a laboratory and studio facility at their disposal. W.H. Bird was elected president, Archie Murray Vice President, P.M.F. Bird, Secretary-Treasurer, Frank Holmes ad Leslie Baines, cameramen. Their first production was in the works in June 1929, but, in conjunction with the local newspaper, they had only so far arranged for a series of weekly articles on amateur films.[43]

Although the Regina Club records indicate it was the first in Canada, a few months earlier, Dorothea Mitchell and Fred Cooper met to discuss the possibility of making their own film and launched an amateur film club in Port Arthur, Ontario. The Lakehead was not spared from the increasing North American demand for consumer

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[40] Flaherty quoted in Mina Brownstein, "Filming With Flaherty," Amateur Movie Makers 2:5 (May 1927): 7-8. "Cranking Your Own," National Board of Review Magazine 2:6 (June 1927): 3 quoted in Horak, "The First American Film Avant-Garde," 19.
[41] Arthur Gale to Marion Gleason, 10 December 1927, Gleason File, George Eastman House quoted in Horak "The First American Film Avant-Garde," 25.
[42] Amateur Movie Makers 3:6 (June 1929): 373.
[43] Amateur Movie Makers 3:6 (June 1929): 372.

goods, and Fred Cooper, owner of Port Arthur and Fort William's largest bakery and a city councillor, and Dorothea Mitchell, a prosperous middle-class woman of British education, were essentially the target audience of those marketing amateur film equipment. An avid fan of both photography and moving pictures, Cooper frequently exhibited free movies every Tuesday and Wednesday night in the windows of his bake shops decorated, according to Brent Scollie, "to resemble an English cottage lawn."[44] When in the spring of 1928 he decided to take his family on a trip to England, it was only natural that he would purchase a 16mm camera to preserve the trip.[45]

Fred Cooper did not originally think of making films to be shown in public. However, when he and his family returned, the pictures he had taken aroused a great deal of interest for patriotic and nationalistic reasons. A variety of local clubs and charities requested the use of the films for fundraising purposes but, because of their personal and private nature, Cooper was not inclined to show them. He did, however, begin to wonder if plays could be adapted, filmed, and used to help those charities he had not wanted to disappoint.[46]

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[44] An advertisement for the free movies can be found in the Fort William Daily Times-Journal 13 December 1927, 6 and the reference to the buildings exterior in Frederick Brent Scollie, Thunder Bay: Mayor & Councillors, 1873-1945 (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, 2002), 70 states that Cooper's May Street branch did not opening until 1930.

[45] Photography magazines such as American Photography, advised readers throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s that "the vacationist who does nothing but loaf and sleep and dance and play bridge has only a week or two of vacation, but the one who records all of these phases of the two weeks with his cine-camera takes home a generous slice of vacation to spread over the dull crust of routine throughout the year." (Herbert C. McKay "The Cine Amateur" American Photography (June 1932): 348 quoted in Reel Families: The Social History of Amateur Film, 73).

[46] Vivienne Chadwick, "Laddie Stole the Show" Victoria Daily Colonist 27 January 1963, 4 and Fort William Daily Times-Journal, 1 March 1963. The request from these groups was not unusual. In the late 1920s, travel films were one of the most popular and enduring types of film produced. This translated into much interest by amateurs to make them, and charitable organisations to show them. This interest was also fed by an increasing number of articles in amateur movie magazines extolling the virtues of this type of film and giving advice on how to make them properly. For example, the June 1927 issue of Amateur Movie Makers "vigorously urged travelers to avoid stereotyping foreign countries by filming 'natives' under

Although he had the means to become involved in amateur filmmaking, Cooper lacked the creative and artistic talent necessary for producing films. For this he turned to his friend and then accountant, Dorothea Mitchell, for help. Like Cooper, Mitchell was an avid photographer who had also been exposed to trade magazines and journals for photography and, as the century progressed, filmmaking.[47] She was also a natural choice to help Cooper as, he later recalled, she possessed "unusual ability and wide talents."[48]

In addition to being well known locally for her photography skills, Dorothea Mitchell had distinguished herself culturally as a frequent writer for the Port Arthur News-Chronicle, and with her involvement in the local theatre movement. Active in all aspects of social life at the Lakehead, Mitchell was also well acquainted with the activities of Robert Flaherty and both, being two of the city's most notable figures, no doubt occasionally chatted at the odd social event or at church.[49] In addition, Mitchell, like so many other residents of the region, kept informed about both Flaherty's exploits and those of Thunder Bay Films through the frequent newspapers articles that appeared in the local papers. [50]

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the vague supposition of that they were more 'picturesque' than 'architecture.'"[46] However, the character of many of these films was essentially upper-class.[46] While there is no doubt that Cooper did not have exotic footage of an African hunting trip, there was public interest in his films.

[47] When exactly film magazines were first sold at the Lakehead is unknown. However, it was discovered in a house under renovation in the spring of 2003 that the molding for a few tons of cement blocks were made of Photoplay, Moving Picture World, and Moving Picture Magazine articles from 1917 to 1929.

[48] Lon Patterson, Nov. 3, 1970 "Silver Mountain Today Proves Shock" See also Vivienne Chadwick, "They Made an Amateur Movie and Laddie Stole the Show," Victoria Daily Colonist 27 January 1963.

[49] Dorothea Mitchell, like Robert Flaherty, belonged to St. James Anglican Church. In addition, Flaherty's sister lived only a few blocks away and considering the size of Port Arthur at the time and the social status within the community of the Flaherty's and Mitchell, it can be assumed they knew each other.

[50] Although there is no evidence that the Port Arthur Amateur Cinema Society was directly influenced by Thunder Bay Films, Peter Morris suggests that it would not be surprising. Peter Morris to Elinor Barr, Correspondence 21 October 1981 (Collection of Elinor Barr).

Mitchell's first decision was to approach Major Harold Harcourt to help with any projects the amateur club would undertake. Reputed to have been a technical advisor for army films while living in California, Harcourt was the only individual Mitchell knew who had actual filmmaking experience.[51] Initially using Mitchell's business office in the Whalen Building as the Society's meeting place, Mitchell, Cooper, and Harcourt began to organize the formation of the Amateur Film Society of Thunder Bay (later renamed the Port Arthur Amateur Cinema Society).[52]

By the middle of February 1929, Dorothea Mitchell brought forth to Cooper and Harcourt a plan of action which they quickly accepted. Mitchell had decided that a script would be selected first and then other individuals would be invited to join the Society based on their suitability for the parts.[53] Right away a problem arose as not one of them had ever written a film script before. Mitchell, whom of the three was the only experienced writer, took the initiative and proceeded to search for a suitable scenario in film magazines such as Amateur Movie Makers. Eventually ordering a book of photoplays from California, to her dismay "any [published] movie scripts intended for amateur production were altogether too brief for fundraising purposes."[54] Believing that people would be very interested, Copper suggested that Mitchell, because she was something of a local legend, write a story based on her life as a lady lumberjack.

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[51] Harcourt was an alias. His name at birth and while in the Canadian army was Alexander Gordon Robinson (National Archives of Canada RG 150 1992-93/166 Box 83716). See Dorothea Mitchell's notes for "A Race for Ties (Its Inception)," recorded for the Canadian Film Institute, November 1963, 1 (Personal Papers of Dorothea Mitchell, Collection of Elinor Barr) and Fred Cooper quoted in Adelaide Taylor, "Amateur Movie Made at Lakehead Screened Again," Fort William Daily Times-Journal 1 March 1963.
[52] The first film made by the group credits the Amateur Film Society of Thunder Bay as producer in the opening credits. However, the ACL magazine Amateur Movie Makers calls them the Port Arthur Amateur Cinema Society, a name reflected on the Society's remaining letterhead and in all interviews with Mitchell, and Cooper.
[53] Henderson's Directory for Port Arthur, 1930.
[54] Dorothea Mitchell's notes for "A Race for Ties (Its Inception)," 1.

In one week, Dorothea Mitchell penned a script based on a timber deal that had gone bad while she was running her sawmill at Silver Mountain. Instead of sprucing up the plot with clichés and narrative devices, Mitchell, taking very little literary license, drew upon the many individuals she had met and events in her life to fill out the story. [55] The script was woven around a timber deal where a small independent business owner is hoodwinked by big business, a situation she herself went through. In the story Mitchell portrayed big business in an unfavourable light, as well as its attempts to absorb smaller companies. Essentially the film, as one would-be critic noted, "illustrated the octopus-like tendency of big business to engulf and destroy [the] small operator."[56]

With the script finished, Dorothea Mitchell was next prevailed upon to pick the cast as, she reminisced, "I had written the story, and knew the theatrical talent available."[57] She did not have to look far as the cast was made up of local citizens of Port Arthur and Fort William, most of whom were associated with Cooper's Bakery. All possessed some experience either as part of annual Kiwanis shows or, like Mitchell, through their involvement in local theatre groups. As he owned the camera, she selected Cooper as the cinematographer and Harold Harcourt, the director. Mitchell, reluctantly, took the part of "Aunt Sarah" as no one could be found to play the role.

The official formation of the Port Arthur Amateur Cinema Society did not occur until after the cast and supporting talent had been approached and chosen by Mitchell. In preparation for the first meeting on the 1 March 1929, all selected members were

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[55] Fort William Daily Times-Journal, 1 March 1963.
[56] Victoria Daily Colonist 27 January 1965, 5.
[57] Dorothea Mitchell's notes for "A Race for Ties (Its Inception)," 2.

required to pay a membership fee of $1 a month to cover expenses.[58] William Gibson was elected to be the Society's first president and Mitchell was to act officially as secretary and treasurer. Unofficially, she played a central role in all aspects of production and post-production when filming commenced on Sunday 3 March 1929.

Dorothea Mitchell's role took on an importance unrivalled in today's productions. As Mitchell remarked "the unavoidable lapse of time between taking of in- and –outdoor sequences, it was necessary to keep written tab of costume detail – particularly men's hats and ties!"[59] The shooting of the film was not without its problems. The short time in which the filming had to be completed, complicated by the encroaching spring and late beginning of production, created a surfeit of situations that needed to be turned to advantage as the cost of film allowed for no retakes of scenes.

The weather proved to be the biggest problem. As shooting did not commence until March there was concern about how long the snow would last. Rushing to complete the exteriors, Mitchell commented that they were "completed on the 3rd Sunday (March 17th) – and none too soon, as snow had to be shovelled onto the bare spots.[60] In addition, as all involved were business people with many community responsibilities, the "filming had to be done either on Sundays or at night."[61] Frequently Mitchell just told the actors what to do as the camera was rolling. Despite the conditions,

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[58] Dorothea Mitchell's notes for "A Race for Ties (Its Inception)," 2.
[59] Dorothea Mitchell's notes for "A Race for Ties (Its Inception)," 2.
[60] "The Mitchell story continued" Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal nd. (Dorothea Mitchell File Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society).
[61] Mitchell quoted in "A Race for Ties Featured in Gala Night to Remember" Port Arthur News-Chronicle 2 November 1970.

everyone involved felt that they "had great fun doing it even though the schedule was hard at times."[62]

Located as far as 20 miles away from Port Arthur, many of the "sets" were chosen by Dorothea Mitchell because of her familiarity with the region's rural areas. She was also an ideal choice to approach individuals to ask permission to use property as her frequent trips to Port Arthur while still at Silver Mountain and her involvement in the community since retiring to Port Arthur in 1919 had made her well known and liked. In many instances using an exterior was a matter of simply going up to the house, knocking, and asking permission as few rural houses had phones at the time.[63] Mitchell also convinced the Port Arthur News Chronicle to run a special front page headlining "500,000 TIES REQUIRED FOR RAILWAY WORK" to be used in the film.[64]

While many of the Society had had theatrical experience, not all did. Mitchell's script called for the leading man to be someone who could "portray a very rugged outdoor type of individual."[65] Bill Gibson was chosen because he looked the part, but unfortunately, it was not until an important scene calling for him, "to jump into a car and drive madly out in to the country for 20 miles" that it was discovered he did not know how to drive.[66] This situation, like many, was overcome through determination and

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[62] "A Race for Ties Featured In Gala Night to Remember" Port Arthur News-Chronicle 2 November 1970.
[63] Dorothea Mitchell's notes for "A Race for Ties (Its Inception),", 3. See also "The Mitchell story continued" Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal date unknown. (Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, Dorothea Mitchell File). Mitchell in her 1963 interview for the Canadian Film Institute recollected on one such occasion: "In one instance I'd known the family for years, the two small boys always calling me Auntie Mitchell. They first resolutely refused, on account of my black wig, to believe it was I. Later, after attending the matinee at the Theatre, I became "Aunt Sarah" – and so remained to this day [1963], not only to them but their joint aggregate of nine youngsters" (p. 3).
[64] See the film and Vivienne Chadwick, "They Made an Amateur Movie and Laddie Stole the Show."
[65] Vivienne Chadwick, "They Made an Amateur Movie and Laddie Stole the Show."
[66] "Lady Lumberjack" The Daily Colonist 3 March 1968.

ingenuity. In the case of the car, Gibson sat in the driver's seat and pretended to drive, while the actual driver crouched on the floor and operated the pedals.[67]

Despite these and many more obstacles that needed to be overcome, Mitchell, acting as the Society's press secretary, reported to the Amateur Cinema League that,

> the exteriors, or course, were the most fun... we were greatly rushed but nobody complained of standing in the wet snow for hours or skipping a mid-day meal, because we were afraid that the light would fail before the day's work was done. Sometimes it was necessary to shovel snow to bare spots on the road and sometimes cars had to be pushed out of snow drifts. We often melted snow to make coffee for the hungry bunch a mile from home. [68]

The exteriors were all the more remarkable as Fred Cooper filmed them without the use of a tripod. Mitchell herself credited Cooper for his skill and steadiness by acknowledging that, "a great measure of its [A Race for Ties] success was undoubtedly due to our cameraman." However, Mitchell, ever the perfectionist, also adds that "he sometimes lost part of a particularly humorous scene, because he himself was laughing."[69]

With the completion of the exteriors, Dorothea Mitchell, assisted by Copper and Harcourt, began the task of clipping and organizing the shots into egg-boxes, in order to plan for the interior scenes. For the interiors, it was decided that a "large box-type camera, with tripod" was needed as Cooper's portable would be inadequate. As most of the interiors were scripted to take place in a rustic northern cabin, Chris Dunbar, the same man Mitchell had approached to design and make the title cards, created a faux

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[67] It was also discovered that Toivo had never ridden a horse. When trying to mount a borrowed steed, the animal "turned and re-entered the barn – literally wiping everything off his back!" Incidentally, I was unaware until we started shooting, that his man had never ridden a horse in his life. (Dorothea Mitchell quoted in "The Mitchell story continues" Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal nd. Dorothea Mitchell File, Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society Archives).

[68] "A Race with Thaw" Amateur Movie Makers 3:9 (September 1929): 607-608.

[69] Dorothea Mitchell's notes for "A Race for Ties (Its Inception)," 2-3.

rustic log cabin painted on canvas. The set was constructed in the studio of the same local photographer from which the PAACS purchased their supplies.[70]

The interiors, it appears, were filmed without incident and once completed, Mitchell, this time accompanied by Fred Lovejoy, went back to the egg-boxes, cut the interiors scenes, and began the arduous task of "splicing them to form a complete narrative."[71] The editing was tricky as the type of projector being used tended to ignite the film on fire if left in one spot too long.[72] For the title cards, a sub-committee was established which Mitchell again headed this time assisted by Chris Dunbar. The artwork and text was sent away for processing by the Kodak Company in Toronto.[73]

While the title cards were being processed the Port Arthur Amateur Cinema Society held a preview of the footage for the cast. At this meeting the last unresolved issue was discussed which was what to name the film. Mitchell had tentatively entitled her script "The Girl and the Timber Lost," but after consulting all the members of the Society, it was decided to drop this name and, at the suggestion of a cast member, use instead "A Race For Ties."[74] After splicing in the processed title cards the final product,

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[70] Dorothea Mitchell's notes for "A Race for Ties (Its Inception)," 4.
[71] Dorothea Mitchell's notes for "A Race for Ties (Its Inception)," 2.
[72] Program Insert for "A Night to Remember" 3 November 1970 (Personal Papers of Dorothea Mitchell, Collection of Elinor Barr).
[73] A typed manuscript generated as a brief biography of Fred Cooper (Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society 973.1501) indicates that it was Kodak and not the ACL who did the laboratory work. 400 feet of footage was ruined by Kodak. Like Cooper's interviews it is at odds with Mitchell's account. It describes Cooper taking a loss on the film, and exaggerated his role.
[74] Dorothea Mitchell's notes for "A Race for Ties (Its Inception)," 5.The cast member in question was Eddie Cooke, who played the young boy on crutches. In the region's most notable scoop, the Port Arthur News Chronicle, reported that while, "the title of the picture will not be decided upon till the end of the week... among the suggestions made, "The Race for Ties," has been most favourably viewed." Source: First Showing of Amateur Film is Very Encouraging" Port Arthur News-Chronicle c. 1 May 1929 (Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society , #973.1501).

1600 feet in length and running just over 45 minutes long, was sent to Toronto to be passed by the Ontario Board of Censors.[75]

On 28 May 1929 "A Race for Ties" was previewed in the drawing room of the Prince Arthur Hotel. A gala affair, the elite of both Fort William and Port Arthur attended and were enthusiastic in their reaction to the film. [76] The Port Arthur News-Chronicle reported that George McComber, having been enlisted by Mitchell as business manager because of his prior experience managing theatres, "called on several in the audience to express their opinions with a view to helping the society."[77] One ambitious local journalist and would-be film critic, described the film as involving "society in a race with the weather," referring back to the Society's tight shooting schedule. [78] The mayor of Port Arthur, on behalf of the city, expressed his appreciation and, the president of the Chamber of Commerce commented, in the spirit of boosterism, that, "I think your organisation has done wonderfully well and should be of value advertising the city."[79] Dorothea Mitchell and the rest of the society were even successful in getting approval from both Rev. D. R. Patterson and Rev. P.C. Reed. Both men "not in the habit of going to motion picture shows" expressed their enjoyment of the film and wished the society "success in future endeavours."[80]

Some of those involved locally in the motion picture industry also thought highly of the film. A.K. Graburn, manager of the Colonial Theatre, the Lyceum's main

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[75]Ontario Board of Censors Chairman's correspondence, Archives of Ontario RG 56-1-1.
[76] Dorothea Mitchell quoted in "The Mitchell story continues" Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal nd. (Dorothea Mitchell File, Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society).
[77] "Movie Made By Home Talent Admires By Many At Preview" Port Arthur News Chronicle 29 May 1929.
[78] "Movie Made By Home Talent Admires By Many At Preview" Port Arthur News Chronicle 29 May 1929.
[79] "Movie Made By Home Talent Admires By Many At Preview" Port Arthur News Chronicle 29 May 1929.
[80] "Movie Made By Home Talent Admires By Many At Preview" Port Arthur News Chronicle 29 May 1929.

competitor, commented that "the continuity and photography of the picture was exceedingly good and I want to congratulate everyone connected with it. I must say it will provide pretty tough opposition for the Colonial."[81] Mitchell especially appreciated the opinion of the manager of the Paramount Theatre who suggested the Society's "effort was definitely ahead of many of the early professional productions, and that it was, at times, consistent and the continuity excellent."[82]

With these rave reviews, it was not surprising that two days later hundreds gathered outside the Lyceum hours before the public premiere of "A Race for Ties." On 31 May 1929, just three months after the initial meeting of the PAACS, their first film played to a packed house. Between 400 and 500 patrons were turned away, prompting for the film to be exhibited for two more days.[83] "A Race For Ties" was accompanied by a 400 ft. 16mm newsreel, also made by the Port Arthur Amateur Cinema Society, and vaudeville skits by actors from "A Race for Ties" Martha Lake (Marion Atwood) and Wally McComber (The Goof). Audiences were reportedly very pleased by what they saw and looked forward to the group's next production.[84] During the three days of public performances the film also received international recognition by the Amateur Cinema

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[81] "Movie Made By Home Talent Admires By Many At Preview" Port Arthur News Chronicle 29 May 1929.
[82] Dorothea Mitchell's notes for "A Race for Ties (Its Inception)," 6.
[83] "Huge Crowds Gather to See The New Film" Port Arthur News-Chronicle 1 June 1929.
[84] Cooper, described as "the one man film crew," used the same camera to capture the fictional world of the PAACS films he also used to provide a unique look at what exactly Port Arthur looked like in the late 1920s. The newsreel shows the tug *James Whalen* breaking the ice in Port Arthur's Harbour, the opening of the Municipal Golf Links course in Port Arthur on May 18th, a local road race, the recent visit of the Governor-General and Lady Willingdon and, received with much applause, footage of the Allan Cup Champion hockey team, the first hockey team in Canadian history to win the Allan Cup three out of four years. Oddly, the newsreel was reported by Mitchell in 1963 to have been stolen (see Chadwick, "They Made and Amateur Movie and the Dog Stole the Show"), only for an incomplete version to have been donated to the Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society. The missing contents of the newsreel have been gleaned from the assorted news papers articles in 1929 and a typed description on PAACS letterhead found in Mitchell's personal papers. For a description of the road race, see "Road Race Film Pleases Crowds" Fort William Daily Times-Journal 1 June 1929.

League. Later in 1930 this same publication also recognised the film as the first "Amateur photoplay in Canada."[85]

Largely because of the efforts of Dorothea Mitchell, "A Race for Ties" was also shown in the surrounding townships. Mitchell ventured into the surrounding countryside with the film with the hope of collecting money to help worthwhile causes in the rural districts of Northwestern Ontario. All proceeds from each of these exhibitions were donated to various charities in the region with Mitchell often paying for any expenses incurred. For example, after its Port Arthur premiere, "A Race for Ties" was next shown in September 1929 at the Kakabeka Falls Community Town Hall. All proceeds went to fund the Outpost Hospital.[86]

Mitchell was aware of the faults present in "A Race for Ties." Later in life she was openly critical about the plot being "over-prolonged" and, conversely, sections of the film in which cuts were too quick or the introduction of characters necessary.[87] Yet buoyed by the success of "A Race for Ties" and determined to improve upon their first effort, The Port Arthur Amateur Cinema Society immediately decided to make another film. Half the length and less ambitious than "A Race for Ties", the second film was based on

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[85] "Race with Thaw" Amateur Movie Makers 3:9 (September 1929) and Arthur L. Gale "Finishing Third Film" Amateur Movie Makers 4:5 (May 1930): 285. "A Race for Ties" is recognised by film historians as the first amateur feature length film in Canadian history. See, for example, Peter Morris in Embattled Shadows, 186-187 and a letter to Elinor Barr from Peter Morris, 21 October 1981 (Collection of Elinor Barr).

[86] This is indicated by a notation in Mitchell's hand writing at the bottom of the News Reel's description on PAACS letterhead (Personal Papers of Dorothea Mitchell, Collection of Elinor Barr). In fact, it is from these performances, and Mitchell's continued use of the film for charity until a few years before her death, that most of the information on "A Race for Ties" and those individuals involved in the Port Arthur Amateur Cinema Society has been gleaned from. Each of these performances was often accompanied by a number of newspaper articles and interviews. Some of the richest of these are from the showings made in Victoria after Mitchell retired to there.

[87] Dorothea Mitchell's notes for "A Race for Ties (Its Inception)," 5. The most notable is the sudden appearance of the "Goof." Mitchell comments that although in the scenario "Aunt Sarah, in planning to make this trip to Barlow's had told the young people she hoped the Goof would show her the short cut," in the film "there is no sub-title stating this."

a story adapted by Mitchell entitled "SleepInn Beauty."[88] It appears that in scripting the scenario, Mitchell kept in mind the suggestion of one critic of "A Race for Ties" that "in future pictures you endeavor to get a little more summer into the picture and a little less of the snow and winter that is the impression of this part of the country in the minds of many who have never seen our summers."[89] Adapting a story she had already written, Dorothea Mitchell wrote a comedy about a bathing beauty contest that goes awry.

In comparison to "A Race for Ties," relatively little is known about the film. It was filmed over two days North of Port Arthur near Mitchell's cottage at Surprise Lake. Wally McComber (the "Goof" of "A Race for Ties") played the leading man and Maye Flatt, the leading lady. Fred Cooper shared the photography duties with Lloyd Small and took a minor acting role.[90] In addition, over sixty extras were bussed in from Port Arthur to take part.[91] No record exists of the film being exhibited publicly, but considering Mitchell's efforts with "A Race for Ties," it was most certainly shown.

In the spring of 1930, the Port Arthur Amateur Cinema Society underwent minor restructuring. Although Mitchell, Cooper, and Harcourt maintained their positions, H.C. Elliot replaced William Gibson as president. Deciding to expand, the Society also rented office space in the Whalen building and invested in new equipment such as arc lights and a bigger camera in preparation to make a much more complex film.

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[88] Until the beginning of the research for this thesis, "Sleep Inn Beauty" was not know to have existed. Thanks to the efforts of the National Archives of Canada, the film has recently been preserved and transferred to a new 35mm negative.

[89] "Movie Made By Home Talent Admires By Many At Preview" Port Arthur News Chronicle 29 May 1929.

[90] See the brief biography of Fred Cooper in the "Race for Ties Scrapbook" (Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, # 973.1501).

[91] Interestingly, the in addition to the incomplete newsreel still known to exist, addition footage shows the bus and the sixty extras. See Dorothea Mitchell's notes for "A Race for Ties (Its Inception)," 6 and Amateur Movie Makers 4:5 (May 1930): 285.

This new project, it was decided, would be a crime story, a genre popular in Hollywood at the time. Following the successful formula established with "A Race for Ties," and "SleepInn Beauty," after penning the script Mitchell once again elected to fill the cast with new members "enrolled to suit the characters."[92] For this film, she selected Harold Gross as the leading man, a member of the Allan Cup winning "Bear Cats" featured in Cooper's newsreel that had preceded the first showing of "A Race for Ties." Margaret Arthur was approached to play the leading lady, while Wally McComber was once again prevailed upon, this time to play a homeless "snitch."

"The Fatal Flower" is a story about a young woman and a young man whose budding romance occurs just as a rash of bank heists plagues Northwestern Ontario. The young woman's father, who happens to the be the chief of police, and a young detective are tipped off by a snitch that the man the Chief's daughter has been seen with is up to no good. Dorothea Mitchell's reputation, as with the two other films, paved the way for the group to have access to much needed locations. She convinced one of the local bank managers to allow the group to shoot the robbery scene at the Imperial Bank of Canada. Additional scenes were shot at Boulevard Lake and the customs building, which was used as the Police Station in the film.

In May of 1930, Amateur Movie Makers reported that "The Fatal Flower" was nearing completion and would run between 1600 and 2000 feet.[93] Likewise, according to Mitchell "everything went well until photography was completed."[94] However, needing only to complete the title cards, "The Fatal Flower" was never finished. The combined

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[92] Dorothea Mitchell's notes for "A Race for Ties (Its Inception)," 7.
[93] Arthur L. Gale "Finishing Third Film" Amateur Movie Makers (May 1930): 285.
[94] Dorothea Mitchell's notes for "A Race for Ties (Its Inception)," 6.

effects of the depression, the transfer of leading man Gross to Winnipeg, and the growing lack of interest on the part of the society's members doomed the production.[95] This lack in interest was only heightened by the appearance of the first talkie, "Close Harmony" at the Orpheum on 30 September 1929 and the equipping of most local theatres with sound equipment by 1930.[96] Financially, Fred Cooper's insistence on "more elaborate equipment, such as large box-camera, fade-outs, and Arc lights," also had left the Society in financial trouble. Dorothea Mitchell arranged for the bank debt to be paid and purchased the remaining assets of the Port Arthur Amateur Cinema Society in 1930.[97]

Although Cooper may have been the catalyst, there is no doubt that the inspiration, driving force and general success of the Port Arthur Amateur Cinema Society was the direct result of Dorothea Mitchell's participation. Forty years after its premiere, "A Race for Ties" had not lost its lustre or ability to capture both the attention and enthusiasm of the Lakehead. With guests arriving in vintage cars, dressed in period dress "A Night to Remember" was held at the Odeon Court Theatre in 1970 in honour of senior citizens where "A Race for Ties" was once more shown to the public.

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[95] "Fred G. Cooper" bio by unknown author (Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, # 973.1501).

[96] Port Arthur News-Chronicle and Fort William Daily Times-Journal 1 October 1929. See also Joseph M. Mauro, Thunder Bay, The Golden Gateway of the Northwest: A History (Thunder Bay: Lehto Publishing Ltd. 1981), 309. Survey's of Canadian Moving Picture Digest and Moving Picture World revealed the theatres of Port Arthur and Fort William were included on promotional ads for Victor sound equipment about 1930.

[97] Dorothea Mitchell's notes for "A Race for Ties (Its Inception)," 6-7.Throughout his life Cooper repeatedly claimed to have paid off the group's debt, and most believed him. However, this was heatedly disputed by Mitchell. In a letter to Peter Morris dated 26 July 1965, she denies Cooper's claim that he personally paid for the production. As secretary and treasurer of the PAACS during its existence, Mitchell still had the records. It appears that " A Race for Ties" made $850 dollars in its three showings locally (admission was $0.50). After paying the Society's rent, the amusement tax, orchestra, stagehands, film, and screen, the group, in fact, still had $220 dollars after expenses. Cooper's figure, Mitchell claims, resulted from his insistence on new and more lavish equipment for their more ambitious third production. See also "Fred G. Cooper" bio by unknown author (Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, # 973.1501).

Appropriately, the honoured guests of the evening were screenwriter and star Dorothea Mitchell, then 94 and Fred Cooper, cinematographer. Tribute was also paid to those involved who had long since passed away. Acknowledging the standing ovations following the screening, Mitchell expressed to the crowd that "there is nowhere else I enjoy being more than in Thunder Bay," and, still disbelieving of the film's importance to the community and country, "I still really don't know why all the fuss is being made about this, but I love all the attention."[98]

[98] "A Large Crowd Attends Night to Remember" Port Arthur News-Chronicle 3 November 1970.

Hollywood North?

The demise of the Port Arthur Amateur Cinema Society in 1930 signalled the end of the Lakehead's most prolific period of film production. Between 1911 and 1931 the twin cities of Port Arthur and Fort William had enjoyed a romance with film unlike at any other time in its history. During this period filmmakers at the Lakehead managed to make a wide variety of historically important films. Many regions in Canada with far fewer films have claimed the illustrious title of "Hollywood North" as they have imagined themselves to have created what others have failed to accomplish: a distinct centre of Canadian production. The history of film production at the Lakehead provides a unique look into the history of film in Canada, but it cannot be considered Hollywood North.

The very term "Hollywood North" suggests an emulation, if not an acceptance, of something not Canadian, nor truly reflective of the individuals and organisations that produced films in and about the Lakehead. Aside from the failed attempt by Thunder Bay Films to import an American product to the area, the filmmaking that occurred in Port Arthur and Fort William reflected the social and cultural development of the region. The films produced by James Whalen and the Ontario Motion Picture Bureau provide a rare glimpse into how local residents and the provincial government viewed the potential of both Port Arthur and Fort William. The Port Arthur Amateur Cinema Society is indicative of one group's reaction against professionalism and the neglected role rural Canada plays in the history of Canadian film. Even the activities of Thunder Bay Films Limited, the only company to have made "quota quickies" outside of British Columbia, provides a glimpse into how others viewed the more remote regions of the country and the roots of Canada's "feature" less film industry.

In terms of both its geography and its participation in the history of Canadian film, the Lakehead was a small urban oasis in an otherwise murky wilderness. Despite the best efforts of the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau and provincial agencies throughout the country, few Canadian films made it into the predominately American controlled theatres during the late 1910s and 1920s. The "quota quickies," coupled with the disastrous flop of films such as "Carry on Sergeant," managed to hinder the development of a Canadian industry. By the 1930s, most actual filmmaking occurred through companies such as Associated Screen News, dedicated to producing promotional films. The hiring of John Grierson by the Canadian government in 1936 and the establishment of the National Film Board of Canada in 1939 further marginalized the industry by entrenching the documentary as the genre of choice in Canada.

Film production at the Lakehead was not the only thing to collapse after 1930. Due to Port Arthur and Fort William's dependency on primary industry, the twin cities did not fare well during the Great Depression. Everything from lumber to manufacturing to transport suffered, according to Thorold J. Tronrud, "badly or worse from the Depression than most Canadian cities." By 1931 unemployment hovered around 28 percent and remained so until recovery began in 1938.[1] The Lakehead changed from a transhipment point for goods, to one for people as thousands streamed through the city going both East and West looking for work. It was not until the outbreak of war in 1939 that the situation had improved enough for investors and residents to even begin to think about forming anything comparable to the Port Arthur Amateur Cinema Society.

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[1] Thorold J. Tronrud, "Building the Industrial City" in Thorold J. Tronrud and A. Ernest Epp, eds. Thunder Bay: From Rivalry to Unity (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, 1995), 113-114,

However, by then, as Patricia Jasen and Margaret Frenette suggest, "a great many cultural activities were put on hold for the duration [of the conflict]."[2]

One life that was not put on hold either before or after the depression was Dorothea Mitchell's. She was described in 1930 by the Chamber of Commerce of Port Arthur as "a woman of splendid reputation in the community... [who] identified herself with some of the best community interests during her residence in Port Arthur."[3] Despite being 53, after a brief visit to California following the death of her sister and mother, the Lady Lumberjack was persuaded to become the first Secretary-Treasurer of the new General Hospital in Port Arthur. While there she designed and developed a new system of accounting that was so successful that the Board of Governors decided "now that everything was running smoothly, they could get someone at a lower salary."[4]

Disappointed but undaunted, between 1931 and 1934 Dorothea Mitchell owned and operated a series of successful general insurance and real estate agencies. In 1936 she sold what was then the "Mitchell Agency" and, for the third time since 1921, decided to retire. After taking another trip to California, which she disliked, Mitchell spent the winter of 1936-37 on the West Coast.[5] Upon her return in the spring she continued to dedicate her time by volunteering for a variety of charitable organisations such as St. John's Anglican Church and, always an ardent supporter of the British Empire, was a prominent member of the Daughters of the Empire.

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[2] Patricia Jasen and Margaret Frenette, "Community through Culture" in Thunder Bay: From Rivalry to Unity, 154.

[3] Letter of reference from the Chamber of Commerce, Port Arthur Ontario for Dorothea Mitchell, 16 April 1930 (Personal Papers of Dorothea Mitchell, Collection of Elinor Barr).

[4] Dorothea Mitchell, "After Silver Mountain" – written signed recollection, nd., 1 (Personal Papers of Dorothea Mitchell, Collection of Elinor Barr).

[5] "Miss Mitchell Sells Real Estate Agency" Port Arthur News-Chronicle 24 September 1936.

Naturally, with the onset of the Second World War in 1939, Dorothea Mitchell responded to the call to take up arms for King and country. Enlisting in the Red Cross Society's transport corps, she fully intended to go overseas following her training. However, following the successful completion of her training she was put in charge of training young recruits as she was informed that at the age of 63, she was "too old for overseas service."[6]

Instead, realising that she was hardly past her prime, the Government of Canada put Mitchell in charge of the office of Voluntary Registration of Canadian women. Overseeing an area that covered the Kenora, Rainy River, Thunder Bay, and Algoma districts, in 1940 she was also charged with running registration and the investigation of preferred homes in Port Arthur and Fort William for the British Child Guests section of the Children's Aid Society of Port Arthur and Fort William.[7] In 1941,Mitchell became secretary to the Dependent's Advisory Board for the Thunder Region and remained there until, grudgingly on the advice of her doctor, she left the Lakehead to retire to the West Coast of Canada.

As with all her previous retirements, it was not long after she settled into her new lodging in Victoria that Dorothea Mitchell, now age 64, began to distinguish herself in the cultural milieu of British Columbia. She once again became involved in amateur filmmaking by joining the Victoria Amateur Movie Club, and also decided to expand her literary talents by joining the Victoria Branch of the Canadian Author's Association (CAA). Not inclined to being idle, she acted as secretary of the Victoria Branch of the

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[6] Dorothea Mitchell, "After Silver Mountain" – written signed recollection, nd., 2 (Personal Papers of Dorothea Mitchell, Collection of Elinor Barr). See also Patricia Pelky's brief reminiscence of Mitchell in her letter to editor, Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal 12 November 1998.

[7] Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal 12 November 1998.

CAA for most of the 1960s. In 1972 the Canadian Author's association awarded her an honorary lifetime membership for contributions to the Victoria branch and her publication, at the age of 92, of her first book Lady Lumberjack.[8] In 1971, Dorothea Mitchell completed the manuscript of her second book examining her life in India, but, unfortunately, it was destroyed shortly after her death at the age of 99 in 1976.

Dorothea Mitchell best summed up her life when she commented that, "as long as you travel you find adventure... especially if you are a Scot."[9] Throughout her life Mitchell chalked up her accomplishments as things that just had to be done. For example, when asked if she had faced very much adversity in her ownership of a sawmill in what was a male-dominated profession, she simply replied, "obstacles to women's progress were almost non-existent when she built up her own timber business."[10] True, she did "enter a man's world and made it her own, while at the same time not relinquishing by one jot her feminine status," but her strength was much deeper than her ability to not "become one whit mannish."[11] Instead, Mitchell attributed much of her success to luck and determination. Never one to forget her roots, Dorothea kept a memento hanging in the doorway of her Victoria home until her death; a "piece of crimson silk with gold thread, given to her, she said, by the Nyzan of Hyderabad, next to it, on the wall, was a photograph of the bungalow [her home in Silver Mountain]."[12]

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[8] Published by Mitchell Press of Vancouver (no relation) Lady Lumberjack was an autobiographical look at Mitchell's life while living at Silver Mountain between 1909 and 1921.

[9] Mitchell quoted in Marcy Brown "You Find Adventure in Travel" Victoria Daily Colonist 9 December 1971

[10] Ibid.

[11] Margaret Belford, "Lady Lumberjack: Dorothea Mitchell Entered a Man's World and Made it her Own," Victoria Daily Colonist 3 March 1968.

[12] Vivienne Chadwick, "Mills, Magnets, Measles," The Victoria Daily Colonist 19 August 1962.

Reflecting on her days of making films in Port Arthur and long before realising she was the first independent woman filmmaker in Canadian history, Dorothea Mitchell commented in 1963 that, "looking back, I realise what colossal nerve we – a small group of complete amateurs – showed in attempting such a task."[13] The work of Mitchell and all the filmmakers at the Lakehead during the early part of the twentieth-century are an important part of the social and cultural history of Canada. Yet of all the productions made in and about the Lakehead, "A Race for Ties" and the work of Dorothea Mitchell is the most remarkable. According to Peter Morris

> the only other comparable effort by non-professionals are a feature-length documentary, "Gold is Where you Find It" produced in 1937 in Flin Flon... and Talbot of Canada" produced and directed in 1938 by Melburn Turner with members of the London Little Theatre.[14]

The twin cities of Port Arthur and Fort William, in terms of variety of production, historical importance, and sheer participation in all the major aspects of the early history of film in Canada, were on the cutting edge of one of the most influential mediums of the twentieth-century. This turn of events was all the more remarkable considering that after 30 years of exposure to commercially driven film exhibition and production, one the most prolific epochs of film production in the early twentieth-century in Canada resulted not from filmmakers bemoaning the lack of government funding, quotas, or distribution, but by those who, "did it just for fun."[15]

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[13] Dorothea Mitchell's notes for "A Race for Ties (Its Inception)," 2.

[14] Peter Morris, Embattled Shadows: A History of Canadian Cinema, 1895-1939 (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978), 187.

[15] Dorothea Mitchell made this comment in numerous interviews and in her personal papers. Fred Cooper also made such as statement in Lon Patterson, "Silver Mountain Proves Shock" Port Arthur News-Chronicle 3 November 1970.

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A Captain's Courage, dir. Louis Chaudet, prod. by Ben Wilson Productions, perf. Richard Holt, Eddie Earl, Jack Henderson, Al Ferguson, Lafe McKee, and Dorothy Dwan, Rayart Pictures, 1926.

A Great Lakes Romance, 9m 25s., prod. Ontario Motion Picture Bureau, sponsor: Department of Trade and Commerce, 1918, 28mm.

A Race For Ties, Port Arthur Amateur Cinema Society. dir. Harold Harcourt. Scenario: Dorothea Mitchell, photography: Fred Cooper, 1929, 16mm.

A Visit From Pharaoh, 4m 16s., prod. Ontario Motion Picture Bureau, 1924, 28mm.

Building a Modern Grain Industry, 9m., prod. Filmcraft for the Ontario Motion Picture Bureau, 1923, 28mm.

En Voyage, 9m., prod. Ontario Motion Picture Bureau, 1922, 28mm.

In the Tentacles of the North, 50m., dir. Louis Chaudet, prod. Sylvian Films, 1926,16mm.

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The Devil Bear, dir. Louis Chaudet, prod, Thunder Bay Films Limited, perf. Dorothy Dwan, Carroll Nye, Mitchell Lewis, 64min., Thunder Bay Films Limited, 1929, 35mm.

The Fatal Flower, Port Arthur Amateur Cinema Society. dir. Harold Harcourt. Scenario: Dorothea Mitchell, photography: Fred Cooper, 1930, 16mm.

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