



"THE NEW YORKERS"

by Wilda Ward

(Long time resident of Bisset & Manigotagan areas)

In the spring of 1928 a young newly married couple from New York decided to head out for Alaska, travelling by canoe. By late fall they had reached Lake Winnipeg. The lake was starting to freeze over, so they headed in to a safe haven of the nearest community, Manigotagan. Here they found shelter in a log cabin, on a point on the river.

Manigotagan residents were quite intrigued by them. Not only were they considered exotic creatures, coming from a place most people had only heard of, but they were also incredibly inexperienced in bush lore. So they needed a lot of help from the friendly locals to survive the harsh winter.

Once the ice broke up in the spring they headed off, but the people of Manigotagan never forgot these visitors from another world, and wondered if they had ever managed to reach Alaska. They were always referred to as The New Yorkers, and stories about them were passed down from one generation to the next.

FAST FORWARD 50 YEARS.

One summer day in 1978, I dropped in to Bostrom's store in Manigotagan for some groceries.

Diane Bostrom called out to me. "There's a couple of people here who are asking about your point. They say they stayed there one winter years ago."

It was The New Yorkers! - no longer young, but still hale and hearty.

I took them home to our cottage, and they told us of their adventures.

After leaving Manigotagan they headed up Lake Winnipeg in their canoe, eventually reaching Alaska in the late fall of 1929. I don't know how they did it. There's an awful lot of paddling and portaging between Manigotagan and Alaska.

They told us they had loved Alaska so much they had settled down there and raised a family. Now, 50 years later, they decided to retrace their epic journey for sentimental reasons.

We were able to show them where their cabin had once stood, now the site of my rock garden. I gave them a few rusty nails which I had found when digging up the garden, as a keepsake of their stay there. These nails were all that was left of the old cabin.

They were quite amused to learn that they were known locally as The New Yorkers. They promised to keep in touch, but this was the last we ever saw or heard of them. But the memories of their stay in Manigotagan still remain. *

