

*Dr. Herbert Werbo*

# A CHRONICLE OF FINNISH SETTLEMENTS

*Sweden*



**IN  
RURAL  
THUNDER  
BAY**

*Formally Port Arthur*

*40810*

*2510 200*

My Best Regards to  
Herbert  
Jack

A CHRONICLE OF FINNISH SETTLEMENTS IN  
RURAL THUNDER BAY

BAY STREET PROJECT No 2

Port Arthur + Fort Williams  
were called Twin Cities (cities)  
They were joined in 1958 and  
now is called Thunder Bay,  
on the shore of Lake Superior

big to the west  
Sponsored by

the THUNDER BAY FINNISH CANADIAN  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

and

the SECRETARY OF STATE DEPT. for  
THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

## KAMINISTQUIA AND POHJOLA

The area of Kaministiquia, where the Matawin River from the west and the Dog River from the north, meet to flow into the Kaministiquia River, had been a popular location to hold summer train excursion picnics since the 1880's, when the railroad track reached the region from Port Arthur and Fort William.

Settlers were also attracted to this accessible and picturesque valley, with its broad winding rivers running through tree covered hills, an area where fish and game were found to be plentiful.

A few families had homes in the Kam Station area early in the 1900's, but Finns did not arrive until after they had established a community in Alppila, several miles east of Kam on the Dawson Trail (about 1907).

As more settlers continued to take up land, new areas were opened up and many homesteaders followed the Dog River northward for several miles, to find suitable land along both sides of the river.

Although the English speaking residents of Kam called the area Dog River, to all Finns in the region, the community was known as "POHJOLA" (North Place).

Among the first Finnish settlers in Pohjola were Matti Riepas and Mr. Saarnio who came in the summer of 1912. Kalle and Antti Lamppainen arrived in the fall of the same year. Then came the Pynttari brothers, Jack Forsell, Erkki Erickson, Matti Matson and Mr. Skaara. These were followed by the Tuominens, Lehto's, Simonson's and Jokiahö's, as well as several others including the Wilen's who has one of the first summer homes along the river before 1920.

Mr. Tuominen opened a store on the Dog River Road about 1920 and later his sons had a machine shop nearby as well. Mr. Tuominen was well known for the role he played for many years as Santa Claus at annual children's Christmas concerts, held at four area schools (he suffered a heart attack in his later years while fulfilling this role).

Before roads and bridges were constructed along the Dog River in the 1920's, all travel north of Kam was done on the river from Tuominens Landing, in the summer by boat and during the winter with horses and sleds on the frozen river.

For many years the river was the only access to the Dog Lake area, that opened up to timber operations soon after a dam was constructed at Dog Lake about 1911. The dam was built to control the flow of water down the Kaministiquia River to Kakabeka Falls, and the powerhouse that supplied electricity to Fort William. All construction material for the dam was hauled by teams of horses up the Dog River during the winter before work started.

In the timber industry, contractors cut large stands of trees in the heavily forested areas, and hauled them by horse teams on icy bush trails to the lake and river shores. With the spring opening of the waterway, the logs were floated down the Dog River to Kam, where they were separated by loggers on the river drive. Ties for the railroad were pulled out, as well as long saw-logs that were to be cut up for lumber at the Kam Sawmill. The remaining pulplogs continued down the Kaministiquia River to pulp and paper mills

at the Lakehead. Among the early timber contractors in the area were Greer, Stirrett, and the Pigeon Timber Company.

For Pohjola residents the main business centre was at Kam, where the Post Office was located in the Kam Trading Co. store, near the railroad. It was managed by Mr. Elliott and later by J. Horrigan. This store burned down in the late 1920's and was later replaced by the International Co-Op branch store built in the early 30's.

Two stationhouses were also part of the community and carried on an active business in early years of the area. One was the Kam Station on the Canadian Pacific Railway and the other was the Dona Station on the Grand Trunk and Pacific Railway (this was later closed down and land along the old right of way was sold to settlers).

A school was built just east of Kam on the Dawson Road, and was frequently used for community meetings and social events. As more families moved into the Pohjola area, it was decided to build a school in that community. The Dog River School was constructed on land belonging to Lampainen's (later owned by the Lehto's) in 1919, and soon became a social and meeting place as well. (The school burned down in 1944 but was replaced by a new one on the same location in 1946).

During these early years settlers of Pohjola and Kam had friendly associations with native Indian Families from the Dog Lake Band, who would paddle down the river in large canoes, selling fresh moose and caribou meat. They would also participate in occasional sports events held in Pohjola, such as canoe races with the young men in the community.

Perhaps the centre of greatest vitality in the district for many years was the socialist "POHJOLA HALL" (or Dog River Hall). It was constructed by a number of Finns who were politically left wing and came to the Kam area after the 1920's. Most of them resided in Pohjola and being a socially active group, felt the need for a community hall. A building committee was organized and the hall was completed in the early 1930's, replacing the school as a social and political centre. Finns would come to events from all the surrounding communities.

Apparently a site opposite the Dona Station at Kam had first been intended as the location for the building. Four acres of land had been purchased and timbers were brought in for footings, but these were never used (the land was later sold to Fred Dormas). For some reason the location was changed and it was decided to erect the hall about four miles up the Dog River Road, in the community of Pohjola.

During the 1930's, when economic conditions were harsh and ideologies promising hope for the future were in the air, political activity was especially vigorous. At one point, female members of the hall embarked on a project to adopt a child orphaned in the Spanish Civil War.

Non-political activities were also pursued with considerable enthusiasm, all dances were well attended, musicians and theatrical groups performed on a regular basis. Also the Pohjola Athletic Club (Kam Tigers), hosted many sports events and its members participated in others sponsored by Finnish Organizations all over the Thunder Bay region.

The hall continued to be a popular centre of activity for many years, but financial support dwindled when ideologies changed and other interests were taken up by former supporters. Several families moved to the city during the war years (1940's), for better work opportunities. The hall stood unused for a number of years, then was used as a private residence for a short time, but then burned down in the 1950's.

Life in Pohjola was similar to that found in other Finnish rural communities north of Port Arthur where land was not generally suited for large farms, as the area was very hilly and consisted mainly of clay and gravel. The farms were able to support only enough for the farmers own needs – needs that could be satisfied by a few cows, chickens and a vegetable field.

To get any cash, the men cut timber from their own woodlots to sell, as well as outside jobs working for large timber contractors and on the railway gangs or road and bridge construction in the area. This last source of employment was particularly common during the 1920's, when a number of roads were built into the region. Later dairying became a paying enterprise, when milk was brought to the Co-Op Dairy in Port Arthur.

Fires were always feared and one of the larger ones broke out along the old Grand Trunk Railway route about 1923, where a number of settlers had established homesteads. Although fires caused considerable damage wherever they struck, families generally replaced or repaired buildings as quickly as possible.

During years of heavy snowfall, the spring thaw brought extremely high water levels to Dog Lake, resulting in flood conditions to low valley land along the Dog River. Some homes and saunas located near the river were flooded to a depth of several feet. Occasionally small buildings and docks that were not well secured were seen to float down the river, later to be retrieved by new owners, miles downstream.

There were times when bears were troublesome in the area, boldly wandering along roads, scrounging around farmyards and even looking into windows, a frightening experience for anyone nearby. This generally occurred when berry crops were poor and there was a shortage of natural food in the bush. Jack Hautala was known to have had an unpleasant encounter with a bear, but was able to kill it with an axe that was at hand.

Several families in Kam and Pohjola were not Finnish, but took a neighbourly interest, and often participated in activities with the Finns. One who was highly respected for his work in the community, was Richard Falshaw, who was one of the early settlers. He was the local historian and wrote articles for the Times Journal and News Chronicle about the area, as well as operating a Government Weather Station from his home near the Dog River. Another person fondly remembered, was Mrs. Doyle, who was a midwife and assisted in numerous childbirth deliveries.

Pohjola reached its zenith as a socially active community in the 1930's, when the hall was the main centre of events, and began to decline in the 40's (during the war), when many moved to the cities for employment opportunities, and young men joined the armed forces. However Kam still had considerable activity as a business centre with stores, the Post Office and C.P.R. Station.

Only a few people still remain on land settled by their families over 50 years ago, but still retain a strong community spirit. In recent years many new families have moved into the area, and though most commute daily to work in the city, they participate in community organizations and activities.

### Some early Kaministiquia and Dog River (Pohjola) teachers

Kaministiquia (S.S. No. 2 Ware & Dawson Rd.)  
Miss Withenshaw  
Miss Sherlock  
Miss Troy  
Miss Forbes  
Miss Summers  
Mr. Robert Saunders

Miss Johns  
Miss Carter  
Mr. Henry Antoniak  
Mr. Art Somppi  
Mr. Peter Coughlin  
Charlotte Green  
Mrs. Crombie

Pohjola (S.S. No. 4, Ware & Forbes)  
Miss L. Kivipelto  
Miss Gustafson  
Miss G. Thornbury  
Miss M. McIntyre

Mr. G. Sykes  
Miss A. Shaver  
Miss E. Ulvila  
Mr. G. Visi

### Kaministiquia and Pohjola interviews

Mr. H. Tuominen  
R.R. No. 1  
Kaministiquia, Ont. By - C. Budner

Mrs. Lehto  
R.R. No. 2  
Kaministiquia, Ont. By - L. Tolvanen  
C. Kouhi

Mr. E. Silen  
630 John St.  
Thunder Bay, Ont. By - L. Tolvanen

Mrs. Melnychuck  
326 Fitzgerald St.  
Thunder Bay, Ont. By - L. Tolvanen

Mr. T. Siren  
42 Velva Ave.  
Thunder Bay, Ont. By - L. Tolvanen

Mr. V. Herneshuhta  
R.R. No. 1  
Kaministiquia, Ont. By - L. Tolvanen

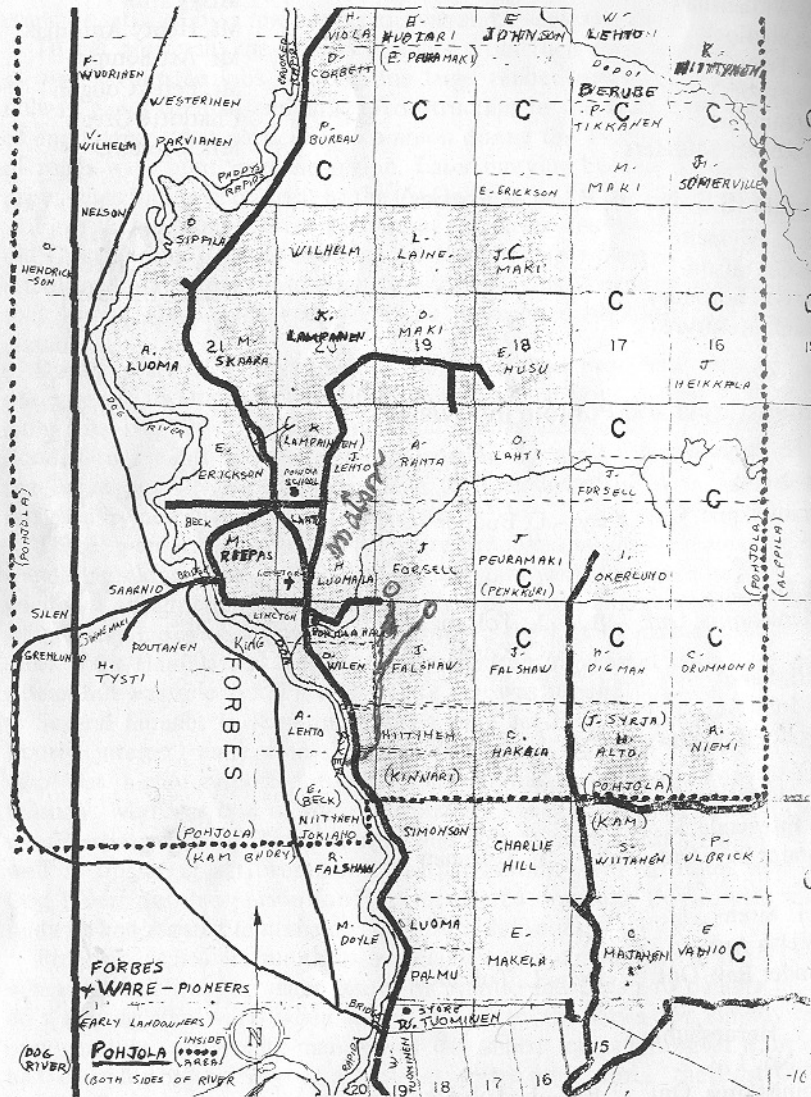
*used here in 1912 from Powell*

Other sources of information

Writings of Kaministiquia and area Finnish settlers - (Kaministiquia ja ympäristön Suomalaisen Asutuksen historia), by Matti Herneshuhta in "Siirtokansan Kalenteri" (1955 - p. 47), with permission of his son Virma Herneshuhta.

Newspaper clippings on Kaministiquia History and local events, written by Mr. Richard Falshaw (Kam. Historian and news reporter) with permission of his daughter, Mrs. Olive Olynny and son Mr. William Falshaw.

*Matson (Chi) was our neighbour*



*Old road to Forcell  
Falshaw*





The boys were much younger

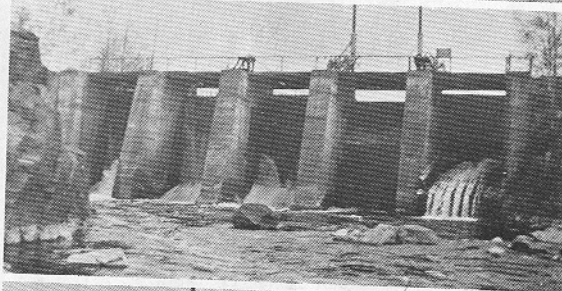


I know  
all the people

Tuominen family (Kaministiquia) c. 1940. L to R, Taisto, Sanelma (Babe, Mrs. Erickson), Heimo, Mrs. Tuominen, Mr. W. Tuominen, Kaiho.  
(photo Heimo Tuominen)

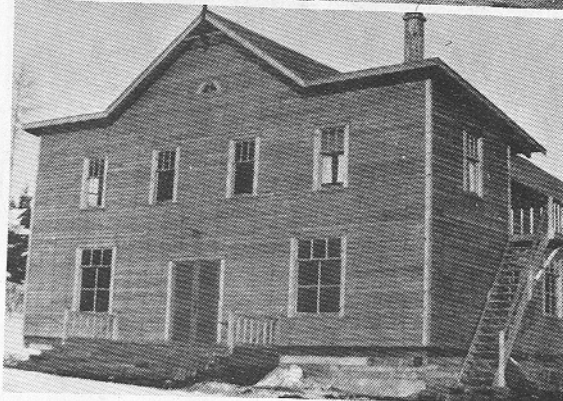


~~in boats~~  
boats  
Boating on Dog River at Wilen summer home, 1920. L to r (first boat) Gunnard Wilen, Mr. & Mrs. Korkola, Mr. & Mrs. Hakli, Mrs. Aina Wilen, Raakel Wilen, Mr. Otto Wilen. (2nd boat) Mr. & Mrs. Nelson, - -, Mrs. Parviainen, Parviainen child Mr. Parviainen.  
(photo Mrs. V. Teräs)



Here I went  
swimming!

81-a-3  
Old Dog Lake Dam, built 1911.  
(photo Lehto)



This is our  
club. Built  
on our land  
in 1932-33

Pohjola (Dog River) Hall, built 1933.  
(photo Mrs. V. Teräs)

I have never  
seen this building



Mrs. J. Lehto and Mrs. Sullivan, Pohjola, demonstrate pioneer washing machine. (photo Lehto)



*Jim + I went to this school.*  
Old Pohjola (Dog River) School, S.S. No. 4 Ware & Forbes built approx. 1919, burned around 1944. (photo Mrs. Violet Teräs)



Grand Trunk Pacific depot, Dona, Ont. (Kaministiquia) (photo T. Delvecchio)

*Excuse my writing  
I'm almost blind*

paper used to go hunting deer with him

# GREAT JACKPINE STANDS Picnics at Kam park Were Popular Ever

**KAMINISTQUIA (Special)**  
The history of this community in the past 50 years, the name being a settlement meaning "Silver of Many Months." It was founded by the village of Kam, which was the name of the settlement. There were a few houses there. There were a few houses there. There were a few houses there.

**GREAT JACKPINE STANDS**  
After the CPR was built, the great jackpine stands of the area were cut down. The great jackpine stands of the area were cut down. The great jackpine stands of the area were cut down.

**KAMINISTQUIA Official Now - Kaminstiquia 1931**  
The name of the community was changed from Kaminstiquia to Kaminstiquia. The name of the community was changed from Kaminstiquia to Kaminstiquia.

**More Than One Way To Spell Kaminstiquia, So It Seems**  
The name of the community has been spelled in many different ways. The name of the community has been spelled in many different ways.

## BRIDGE OVER KAMINISTQUIA DECLARED OPEN

**Fine Agricultural Township With Shorter Route to Port Arthur**  
**CEREMONIES ON SATURDAY**  
**P. H. Keeler Cuts the Tape - Some History of Dawson Road - Old Times There**

An event of national importance took place here Saturday afternoon when the new bridge over the Kaminstiquia river was declared open. The bridge was built by the Dawson Road and Port Arthur Railway Co. and is the longest bridge of its kind in the province.

## NEW BRIDGE OVER KAM COMPLETED

**Opens Up Big Area For Settlement - New School Arrangements - Other News**  
The new bridge over the Kaminstiquia river has been completed and is now open to traffic. The bridge is a great boon to the settlement and will greatly increase the number of people who can live there.

**HOLD SPORTS AT KAMINISTQUIA**  
Program Follows Opening of New Bridge  
The opening of the new bridge has been celebrated with a series of sports and games. The sports were held on the new bridge and were a great success.

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## KAMINISTQUIA

**Finnish-Born "Santa" Had A Time-English Persisted**  
A Finnish-born man who has lived in Kaminstiquia for many years has been called "Santa" because of his kind and generous nature. He has a great love for his community and has done much to help it.

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Jick is the same as Richard

This essay, written by Matti Herneshuhta, was originally published in *Siertokansan Kalenteri* No. 40 (1957), and has been translated for use in Project Bay Street by Leena Tolvanen.

## SUNSHINE, ONTARIO

The entire settled area touched on by this survey can be included under the name "Sunshine", although it is made up of separately named regions: Rowan, Sunshine, Finmark and Shabaqua. They are situated near Port Arthur on the western side of Kaministiquia in Ontario, and are included in the Dawson Road township at about the 16th mile. A portion of Finmark, however, flows over into Forbes Township.

Forbes begins at Kaministiquia on the western shore of the Kam River, cuts across Ware Township and continues from Mud Lake to Kaministiquia. This, as well as the eastern side of the Kam River, is formed along the old historical Dawson Road into two concessions: A on the south side of the road and B concession on the north side. However, the northern extension of the township, which is the subject of this survey, is connected to two additional concession plots: concessions 1 & 2, which cover the entire Shabaqua area to its edge.

The inhabitants of the Rowan and Sunshine extensions are almost all Finnish. At the beginning of their history, these areas grew along the two sides of Dawson Road, forming a line about eight miles long. It begins near the Kam River and ends near the border of Finmark. At its eastern end the first farm is that of Vaino Aho, on the opposite side of the road is a residence originally built by Werner Kivipelto but presently being leased. It ends in the west at the farm of Urho Aho, an old woodsman.

Through Rowan & Sunshine run three railways as well as the Mattawa River, which flows south west for about a mile and a half towards the centre of Sunshine. In this southern area one of the railways crosses over with the river into Horne Township, where they turn westward and run parallel, the railway following the river towards Lake Shebandowan, at this point the river ends, but the railway continues via Fort Francis to Winnipeg. At one time this was the Canadian Northern Railroad, but at the beginning of this century it became the Canadian National Railroad. On its northern side runs the Canadian Pacific Railway, which turns north west at the same place, and from there continues its journey to Winnipeg and the Pacific shore. The third road is the old Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, which also joined the Canadian National Railway about 30 years ago. It originally followed the Mattawa River, but its new owner turned it at Rowan so that it would cross the Mattawa river to form a double track with the southern Government Road as far as Fort William. The bridge over the Mattawa River was also built with a double lane in 1925. A new station, named Conmee Junction, was constructed at the junction of the roads. Thus the station at Rowan was no longer used, but "Rowan Kontri" remained in the vocabulary of the people. The old railway on the northern side of the Mattawa River was demolished, as was the long railway bridge over the Kam River. This railway turns west at Conmee Junction towards the mid-point of Sunshine, then travels north west to Sioux

