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Assignment #4 Ontario's Last Frontier
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Landforms and Mindscapes
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Ontario's Last Frontier

Mrs. Winnifred Hooker carefully gathered the scratchy green moss that blanketed the edge of the boreal forest. With equal care, she stuffed the moss between the logs of her newly built cabin. Her husband, David, had cut these logs from that same forest, and together they had lovingly created their new home. Their tiny log cabin was one of eight buildings that dotted the sparkling shores of Pickle Lake.

This scene from the beginnings of the community of Pickle Lake could have occurred in 1837, but it did not. Winnifred Hooker was chinking her log cabin in September of 1937, one hundred years after the Rebellion of Upper Canada. If southern Ontario is a unique study of the rapid development of a culture over a relatively brief span of years, then Pickle Lake is even more so. In its short 50 years, this area has moved from log cabins to prefabricated modular homes. It has also 'boomed and busted' in three separate cycles, and is reluctantly heading into its fourth.

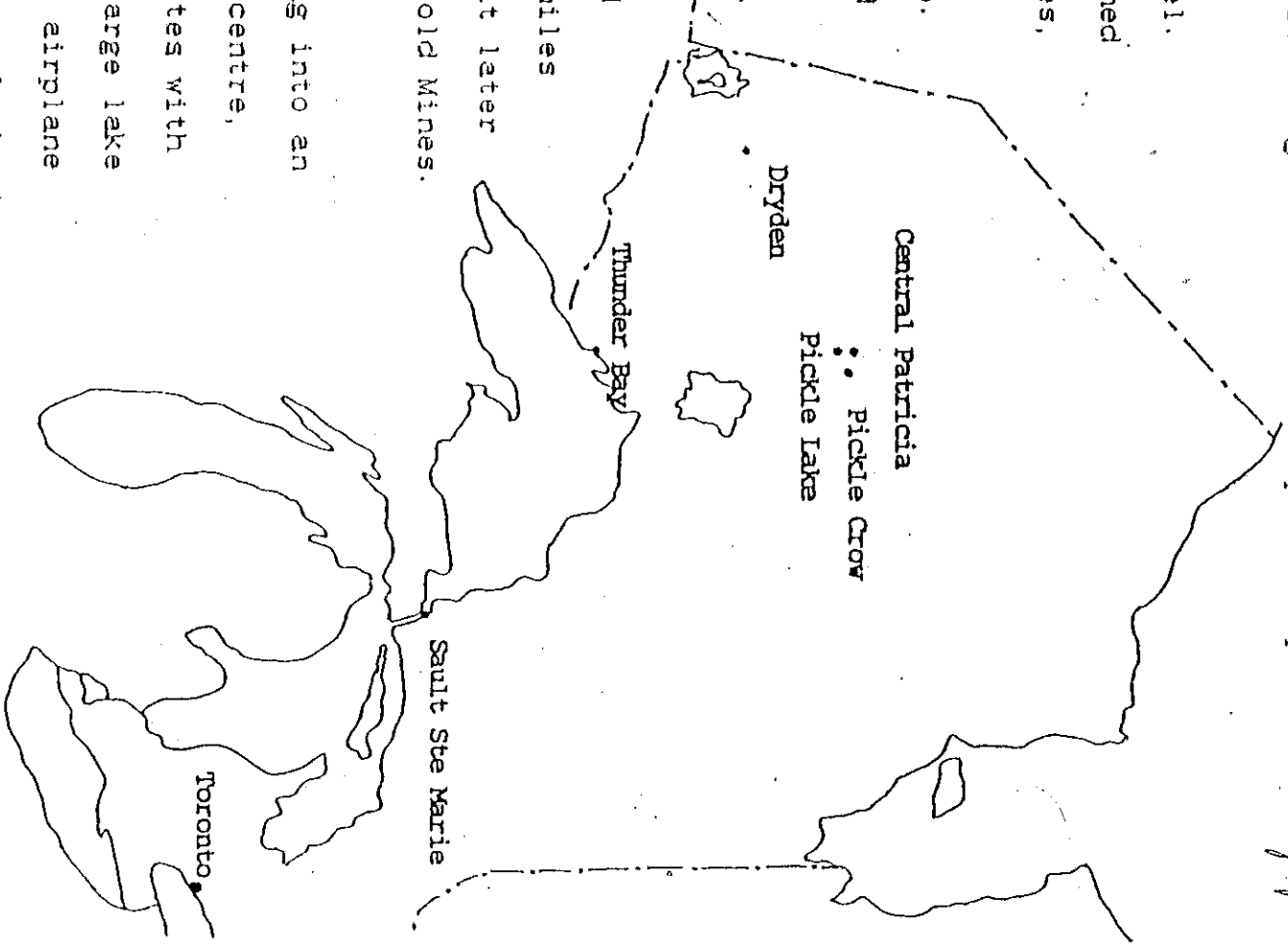
Pickle Lake does not have an archive; the manilla folder marked 'History', at the Town Hall, was empty. Yet when questioned, many of the residents can point to a building or a foundation and recall a story of days gone by. The complete history of Pickle Lake may not be published, but it is recorded. Erected and vacated, shunted and vandalized, the buildings of this area tell their own story. To trace the passages of these buildings is to study the rise and fall of three northern mining communities, and the outside factors that affected them.

*This is a family history
folder, interesting work*

During the 1920's and '30's, the age of the airplane opened formerly inaccessible parts of northern Ontario. Through aerial exploration, high grade visible gold was found in quartz deposits in the Crow River area, north of the 51st Parallel. In 1928, John Hammel formed the Pickle Crow Gold Mines, receiving a charter from the government of Ontario. This finding precipitated a gold rush. During the winter of 1928-1929, over 225 claims were staked; two brothers, Murdoch and Alex Mosher, walked 110 miles to stake the property that later became Central Patricia Gold Mines.

I like the description of the copy of the "Pickles"

Just to the south, Pickle Lake was developing into an important transportation centre, linking these new mine sites with the outside world. The large lake provided a runway for the airplane traffic originating in Sioux Lookout. A complicated system of lakes and portages connected Pickle Lake to Hudson, 180 Kilometres south on the CNR rail. An overland route, operational only in the winter, linked Pickle to Savant Lake. First,



Pickles on map!

horse-drawn sleds, and later, steam tractor trains, began the laborious task of hauling equipment for the mines.

Anticipating the influx of population, the Ontario Department of Lands & Forests opened Pickle Lake's first fire base on an island across from the future town site in 1929. In 1932, Claude Hooker obtained two mining claims (#2213) on the east shore. A fur trader and entrepreneur, Claude had been the manager of the Hudson's Bay Post in Osnaburgh House, an Indian reserve 30 kilometres south of Pickle Lake. He opened Pickle Lake's first general store and fur trading post in 1934, getting his supplies from the Osnaburgh Bay Post.

The national Depression did not affect these tiny boom towns. By the late 1930's the gold mines were swinging into full production, and the town of Pickle Lake mirrored the prosperity of the area. In 1936, Claude Hooker built a log hotel with beverage room. He added a taxi service to shuttle the miners between Pickle Lake and their camps. In 1937, the Imperial Bank of Canada temporarily added its log facility before moving to new quarters in Central Pat, and Haverluck & Koval opened its sawmill, bunkhouse, cookery and office anticipating a building boom. By 1939, Pickle Lake boasted a bakery and 3 more restaurants (with matching taxi stands and bootlegging operations). Haverluck & Koval added a garage, and relocated the sawmill headquarters to larger facilities. William Kasney opened a soft drink bottling plant. There was a one-cell log jail, with living quarters for the community's first O.P.P., Officer Bonnycastle. Meanwhile, just up the road, patrons could get a steam bath and a shot of whiskey for .50 each at Elsie Korpula's or be entertained by 'Muskeg Myrr' at the local house of ill repute.

*See some's history -
What a name!
C. J. Clark Harker too*

In 1938, Claude Hooker also added a dance hall. Dances would imply the presence of many women in the community, not as obvious a conclusion as it may seem. After a visit to the two mine sites just four years earlier, Rose (Grandma) Koval noted the presence of only eight other women besides herself. Yet, by 1938, well attended dances were held every Saturday night, indicating an influx of women into the area.

The mining companies of Central Pat and Pickle Crow deliberately set out to attract families, and welcomed the addition of miner's wives to their communities. From the very beginning, Central Patricia Gold Mines determined to create a model town, with recreational facilities and the necessary services that made up a good community. In the late '30's, the mine company constructed a hospital, complete with maternity ward and nurses residence. Dr. Connell was the first resident doctor; when he retired in the early '40's, his son Martin took over the practice. Dental services were provided by Sioux Lookout's Dr. Jeffery and Dr. Moore; they visited for a week or two every few months. There was a company general store, a butcher shop and Yum's Laundry at the edge of the Crow River. The community hall contained two sheets of curling ice, two lanes of bowling, pool tables, pingpong, a library, and a lunch counter that stayed open until midnight. The big auditorium showed two movies a week and held dances on weekends. In 1938, Father R. Charland and Bro. Martin built the Roman Catholic Church, and about the same time, an Anglican church was constructed. In 1939, the Patricia Hotel was built by local postmaster Ernie Wilson. It contained the Imperial Bank of Canada and the barber shop in the basement. The little log post office later

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moved its services to the new Pat Hotel facilities. S.S. no. 2
Connell was the public school in Central Patricia, teaching grades 1
to 8.

By 1941, in addition to the large bunkhouses and log cabins, 90
white asbestos-sided homes were arranged on a neat gridwork of
streets. There were two main house plans: "flat tops" congregated in
the centre of town; "1-1/2 stories" dotted the river road. Lumber had
been shipped from the south especially for these buildings, and they
came complete with hardwood floors and concrete foundations. A
complicated network of boxed, above-ground pipes brought running water
to the homes. Since fire presented a serious threat to an isolated
bush community, the Central Patricia Gold Mine intentionally poured
its arsenic laden mine tailings into five areas surrounding Central
Pat. Encircling the town site, these patches of bright red soil
effectively created a fire break. *Was about 1941, if I may to inquire?*

In 1944, the area's first air strip, jointly sponsored by the two
mining companies, was constructed. Previous to this, all aircraft had
flown off Pickle Lake. As a result, for a period of two or three
weeks during break-up or freeze-up, the Pickle Lake area was
completely isolated from the outside world. Area stores planned ahead
for this interruption, stocking up on all the essentials. Fortunately,
no serious emergencies had ever occurred during these times before the
air strip was completed.

A post-war influx of mine labour resulted in the expansion of the
service sector in Pickle Lake. In 1944, Konrad Koval purchased the
new Pickle Lake Hotel, Hooker's store and taxi stand from Claude
Hooker, as well as the original mine claims to the town site. In

1946, he sold the store to the Hudson's Bay Company, and a Bay manager's house, plan B12, was added to the town site. That same year, Dave and Horace Hooker started an airways, a general store and a commercial fishing operation. In 1950, Albert and Rita Brazeau opened Albert's Cafe, a rooming house that could accommodate up to 22 men, serving its meals cookery style at a long, dining room table. Albert had hoped for a full basement under his cafe, but post-war cement shortages resulted in a simple foundation. Still, it was quite a modern building, with its 'battleship brown' linoleum floors and sheetrock walls.

After yielding 670,000 ounces of gold and silver worth nearly \$23 million, Central Patricia ended operations in 1951. Yet, as Central Patricia Gold Mines sold its assets, the community of Pickle Crow, just 6 miles away, was shifting its operations into high gear.

Production had started in 1935, and by the end of the '30's, Pickle Crow had many of the same facilities as Central Patricia. There was a hospital, rec hall, Catholic church and the company store. The butcher cut hair at his house for \$1.00 per head. The Pickle Crow Hotel was built in 1939 by John Oliver. He died shortly after, and the mine obtained ownership. The Imperial Bank of Canada moved from a log cabin to the basement of the new mine office, and alternated days of operation with Central Patricia. In 1951, it moved permanently to Pickle Crow.

Homes were scattered along one long road, and connected with driveways and paths. They were created a little more haphazardly than the carefully planned structures at Central Pat. A system of pipes brought cold water to the homes in summer, but this generally froze in

*I like
the
house
part*

the winter, and water had to be carried from a hydrant in front of the company store. Many of the earliest miners built their own homes out of logs, or dynamite crates. After the war, the influx of European refugees outnumbered the available accommodations. Many of these men slept in holes dug into the ground back in the bush, their heads covered with crates. The other miners referred to these men as 'rabbits'. *This is fact, I'm sure, just strange, no?*

In 1952, while most of the former employees of the Central Patricia Gold Mine were leaving the area, many of the buildings they had lived and played in were moving as well. A few of the homes and buildings were moved to Pickle Crow. The Pat Rec hall was torn down; its lumber was used to rebuild the cookery which had been destroyed by fire. The Anglican church was carefully lifted to a height of four feet, set on logs, and skidded to its new site. It took one month to raise and level the building, and one day to drag it to its new location. Newlywed couples bid for and moved many of the "1-1/2 stories" to new locations in Pickle Lake. As yet, no road connected these northern communities to the outside world. To haul lumber from the south was still a complicated business; to relocate buildings was a relatively easy venture. *Another note - south side reference.*

The Department of Indian Affairs purchased most of the "flat tops"; native employees of the Pickle Crow mine were moved into these houses which were still standing in Central Pat. Little by little, the roofs of the unoccupied houses began to tilt, then fall in, as the Indians dismantled the interior walls for firewood. The once picturesque hamlet now had empty lots and collapsing buildings, yet a small community remained firmly entrenched in the old town site.

The late '50's and early '60's were a prosperous time for Pickle Crow. The best house in town rented for \$30.00 per month, and the company store sold its supplies at wholesale. In 1956, Ontario's northermost highway, # 599, was extended to link Pickle Lake with Savant Lake. It was still too far north to receive radio or television signals; community life centred around sports and the Rec Hall. Pickle Lake adapted to the closing of Central Pat's mine.

Dorothy Vincent closed her rooming house & poker parlor, and 'Muskeg Myrt' bid a fond farewell, but transport trucks and air service to northern reserves took on new importance. *The Triumph of "Muskeg Myrt"?*

After 1952, the Central Pat children, as well as the students from Pickle Lake, were bussed to Pickle Crow for school. A dispute arose as to who should pay for the bus services. and in September 1953 a two-room school, S.S. no. 1 Pickle Lake, was opened in a house moved over from Central Patricia. The next year, Dorothy Vincent's former establishment was converted into a one-room school house, complete with teacher's accommodation upstairs. By 1963, the three communities had formed a school township, and a decision was made to replace all of the old one-room school buildings. A private school, 160 kilometers north, received the old buildings from Central Pat and Pickle Lake and in 1965 a modern new elementary school was opened in Central Patricia, the most central location to serve the three towns.

One year later, the mine in Pickle Crow poured its last bar of gold. By 1971, the Canadian census recorded the population of Pickle Crow as 1, the mine gate keeper. Once again, buildings would follow the exodus out of town, but this time new legislation meant that the town site would have to be leveled. Some of the Pickle Crow

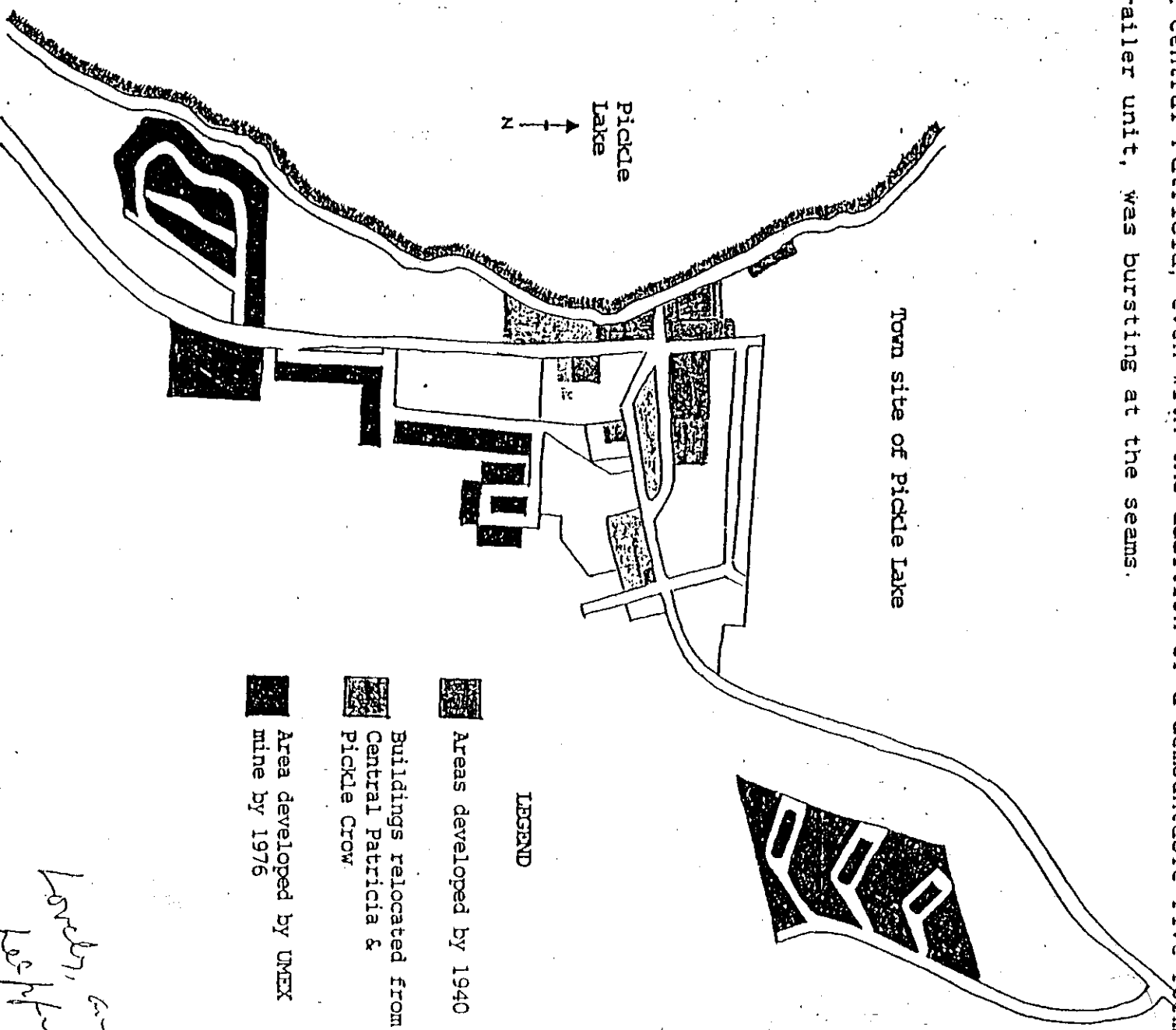
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buildings, many originally from Central Pat, now found their way to Pickle Lake. The rebuilt cookery was moved to the lakeshore to serve as Pickle Lake's Hooker Air headquarters. The hospital became Koval Transport's office, and a bunkhouse was set up as a warehouse. Other bunkhouses were set up as apartment buildings in Central Pat. The Rec hall and Hotel were torn down and hauled off to Red Lake, and many houses were purchased by the town of Ignace. Finally, the Ministry of Natural Resources organized the burning of the remaining company buildings. Only the Mine manager's house and the Catholic church survived, but they eventually fell victim to vandalism; rumor had it that there was gold in the manager's quartz fireplace.

The population of Central Patricia-Pickle Lake leveled out to a cozy 284. However, in the early '70's new homes started rolling back into town. This time, it was a copper mining company, Umex Thierry, that initiated the new development. Although some of the first house trailers were set up in Central Pat, Pickle Lake was chosen as the site of the future mining boom town. This caused a general uproar among the residents of Central Pat who believed that their town should have received the redevelopment. However, bunkhouses opened, more trailers moved up, and construction began on the modern subdivision that was to overlook shimmering Pickle Lake. Water and sewage treatment facilities were created, and by 1976, population had soared to 713.

Like the Central Patricia Gold Mines company before it, Umex declared its intent to build a model community. Plans were made to dismantle its '100 Man Camp', the bunkhouse facilities, in favour of encouraging the employment of family men. Two sheets of curling ice

were moved indoors, and the community received the standard two lanes of bowling, attached to the new community hall. Meetings were held, and plans for a Rec hall and hospital were drawn up, though not implemented. By 1980, population had swelled to 1,029, and the school at Central Patricia, even with the addition of a demountable five-room trailer unit, was bursting at the seams.



Pickle Lake
N

Town site of Pickle Lake

LEGEND

- Areas developed by 1940
- Buildings relocated from Central Patricia & Pickle Crow
- Area developed by UMEX mine by 1976

Locals, central Patricia

In 1978, the government began to suggest that arsenic present in the fire break tailings in Central Patricia was posing a health hazard to the residents. Originally designed to protect the community, now these tailings seemed to be destroying what was left. While no tests proved conclusive, the government believed that the wells had been spoiled, and that inhaling the red dust was dangerous. A Provincial Cabinet directive was issued, restraining residential development of Central Patricia, and refusing title to property. While not forced, residents were strongly encouraged to move to Pickle Lake. In a relocation program, residents were offered small grants to demolish or move their houses and trailers to property outside Central Pat.

In May 1980, ten school board trailers were moved from Central Patricia to Koval's subdivision, and construction began on a large new school in Pickle Lake. The new facility opened in March 1981.

Suddenly, copper prices fell on the world market, and with very little warning, the overextended UMEX mine shut down in April 1982. Once again, the area was vacated; population plummeted to less than 400 by 1984. *Putting the 1500 trailers in a dump, but the workers & administrators.*

Over 40 mobile homes disappeared, leaving crumbling fences and broken-down porches. The model homes of Lakeview Crescent were boarded up, and 46 apartment units emptied. The permanent residents of Pickle Lake watched as vandals destroyed, and nature desperately tried to reclaim the hillside taken from her. School classrooms became storage rooms, and 400 people were told to flush more often to maintain a sewage treatment plant intended for 1500.

Rumors are the mainstay of vacated mining towns, but rumors turned to reality last summer as bunk houses were erected and 42 shiny new trailers rumbled into town to occupy the old UMEX trailer park.

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New York*

*"Born + but + fixles
on how returning from
W. A. Arrows"*

This time the contender is Placer Dome Gold Mines. The population is growing again, and the town is beginning to react to the changes. For Pickle Lake, the mere things change, the more they stay the same. The boards have come off of most of the windows, and the library has started opening one extra evening per week. Last fall, the outdoor skating rink was covered; it has been dubbed The Pickle Dome. This spring, a rebuilt Pickle Lake Hotel opened its new beverage room. There are whispers about a possible bank, and two hairdressers put up advertisements at the post office. Although ladies still travel to Sioux Lookout to have their babies, visits from the southern dentist are becoming more frequent.

Where's the northern dentist? (Just kidding)

Most of the old-time residents are skeptical about any benefits the new mine may bring. Changes to the status of their community necessitated by the Umex mine's development introduced all sorts of new rules and regulations; building codes and government red tape are generally considered an intrusion from the south by these northern residents. They have also had to deal with the consequences of expansion before: increased taxes, boarded up buildings, abruptly ended friendships. *Writing a book this last consequence and its history? In summer 1972*

The people of Central Pat are still smarting from the relocation attempt; not one took advantage of the government's offered assistance, and the empty public school is a constant reminder. The kindest opinion is that the government fabricated the arsenic scare to combine all of the area's residents into a single serviceable area, and to enlist their support in paying for the services now left behind by the previous mining company. In response, the residents of Central Pat formed a Home Owner's Association, and are determined to fight for

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the right to own and continue their community.

In many ways, the buildings of Pickle lake reflect the nature of the people in the community. Eager new mine employees roll in and out with their collapsible bunkhouses and modern mobile homes. Mine companies own the subdivision; they deliberately keep some units empty in case rumors turn to gold. The airlines, the clinic, the police and the school board are constant services in the community; their homes are permanent but employees come and go.

In Central Patricia, a determined group of residents cherish their freedom and independence, surrounded by the empty ruins of someone else's dream. Like the few remaining weatherbeaten buildings, these people have withstood outside forces and still cling to their foundations. Next door, a handful of families, some second and third generation citizens of Pickle Lake, live and work in buildings that have changed and adapted to stay useful and important to their community. Like premature wrinkles, the cycles of movement have etched their effect on these buildings; the pattern of 'boom and bust' has taken its toll on their occupants as well. Yet, there is a spirit of adventure that connects these people to Pickle Lake's log cabin beginnings, a mere 50 years ago. There is also a quality of resilience that prepares them for the future in Ontario's last frontier.