

Roy Barker was a carpenter employed by the MacLeod-Cockshutt gold mine in Geraldton and his friend Bill Dawd was a bush foreman working for a timber company. They solved the problem of transportation into the area by enlisting the services of another Geraldton man, Jack Forster, the operator of a car sales agency who owned a light plane which he used for recreational purposes. The three formed a partnership agreement which they have never had occasion to regret. On their first trip in, on a Sunday morning, they flew directly to the spot labelled "Sulphides" on Thomson's geological map. They examined the ground, took a number of samples and were back in Geraldton by mid-afternoon.

It was a strange quirk of fate that this ground, in which so little interest had been shown previously, should have attracted another team of prospectors during the brief absence of Dawd, Barker and Forster. Thus it was when the three returned to Lake Manitouwadge on June 22nd to stake their claims they were dismayed to find that the very ground they were interested in had been staked by F. Bergkvist and S. Pretulac on behalf of Lun-Echo Gold Mines. It was fortunate for the Geraldton trio that this company's interest was in nickel, and when samples taken from the showings failed to show any, the claims were not recorded.

Naturally the three men had kept their own counsel about the discovery, and now they were equally silent about the disappointment of finding that their rights to the ground had been pre-empted. Their patience was rewarded when a check made in the office of the Port Arthur mining recorder showed that the claims had not been recorded during the 30 days allowed by statute.

This time there was no hesitation. They returned to Manitouwadge,

staked their claims and recorded them immediately.

Now the prospecting team had rights to land which they believed contained valuable minerals — but no mineral is worth anything until it is brought to the surface and marketed. That calls for a full-scale mining operation which in turn calls for expenditure of great sums of money, possibly millions of dollars, before the first dollar is returned.

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that the three men experienced some difficulty in enlisting capital to develop their find. They tried to interest seven different mining companies. Only one showed any interest, eventually sending in an engineer to make an examination. There is no doubt that some of the other exploration and mining companies which were approached have since regretted their decision not to examine the ground.

However in July, only a few weeks after the finders had established their right to the property, an engineer, W. S. Hargraft, made an examination. Although the showing at the time was not very impressive, Mr. Hargraft decided it was sufficiently interesting to merit some diamond-drilling. Upon his recommendation it was taken up on a partnership basis by his principals, General Engineering Company Limited, H. C. McCloskey (who subsequently turned over his interest to Howey Consolidated Gold Mines Limited) and H. W. Knight and Associates. After a few holes had been put down the deposit began to assume importance.

Each of the three prospectors eventually received a considerable cash payment and a royalty on every ton of ore mined from the four discovery claims. Mr. Barker, who died early in 1970, left his mark as one of Canada's most successful prospectors.

A diamond-drilling program car-

ried out during the next two months of 1953 indicated that this was a copper-zinc-silver orebody of considerable size. Geco Mines Limited was incorporated to develop it.

Further drilling indicated a deposit of such importance that, when the results became known, one of the biggest staking rushes in the history of Canadian mining started and was continued for several months. While it lasted, more than 10,000 claims were staked in a solid band 80 miles long and from five to 20 miles in width.

It was fitting that the town of Geraldton, whose existence was based primarily upon its gold mines, should be the springboard for most of these expeditions to open up a completely new mining area. Certainly Geraldton — and most other exploration centres in Canada — had never seen anything like the feverish activity of those days. As a daily routine some 15 aircraft were busy from dawn to dusk running a shuttle service between Geraldton and Lake Manitouwadge, 65 miles southeast by direct airline.

Scores of other prospectors drove by truck from Stevens or Caramat 20 miles south into the camps of the Marathon Paper Company and hiked on from there to seek their fortunes.

Since most of this activity was confined to the winter months — a winter in which the temperature sometimes dropped to 47 degrees below zero — it involved considerable hardship. In most cases real prospecting (the visual examination of rock and the assessment of its values) was impossible and the activity consisted almost entirely of "tying on" to claims which had already been staked.

"The thing to do", one frost-bitten old prospector advised, "is to keep on hiking until you find a stretch of country with no snow-shoe prints. Then you know it hasn't been staked. So you turn south and



*A broad swath through heavy timber was cut to make way for the Ontario Hydro line to the Geco mine.*

keep going until you find somebody else's number one or number four post. Then you're set to begin staking."

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that in the spring, when the four-foot-thick overburden of snow evaporated, so, too, did the hopes of most of the men who had braved the elements in search of fortune.

However, there were several discoveries on ground adjacent to the Geco property. The most promising of these were on claims held by Willroy Mines Limited, a company named after the two original discoverers, William Dawd and Roy Barker. Here, diamond-drilling indicated three widely spaced orebodies. Underground development of one of these was started in October 1956, and a mill with a capacity to handle 1,000 tons daily began production July 25th, 1957, several weeks ahead of the Geco mill.

The Manitouwadge camp was now established as a producing mining area.

The rugged terrain offered a formidable challenge in the early stages of mine development. Since the area was completely isolated from the outside world, every nail, every foot of finished lumber had to be flown in at great cost or, in the dead of winter, hauled by tractor over the snow-covered hills.

The Department of Mines acted speedily to remedy this situation by driving an access road into Manitouwadge to connect with Highway 17 to the south. Traffic was pouring over this road before the end of 1954. Canada's two major railways, the Canadian National and the Canadian Pacific, also saw an opportunity for service and profit in the developing mining camp. Both constructed branch lines, the C.P.R. from the south and the C.N.R. from the north, so the silence of the bush was soon shattered by the whistle of laden ore trains.

While shafts were being sunk and surface buildings were rising on the mine sites, a whole new town

was coming into being on the land bordering on Manitouwadge Lake. This was to be a mining camp unlike any other in Canada. It is not often that an opportunity presents itself to carve out of the verdant wilderness a model community complete with broad streets, parks, shops, schools, churches, comfortable homes, and recreational opportunities for its residents.

The Ontario government seized the chance offered by Manitouwadge. The Cabinet Committee on Townsites accepted responsibility for organizing the community-to-be and events moved quickly as planners and surveyors moved in to begin the work of laying out and organizing a completely planned townsite with all the facilities required for modern living.

The result of this advance work at the drawing board shows up today in the model town of Manitouwadge. It is a thoroughly pleasant town built to the most up-to-date standards. In the planning, provi-



*The access road into Manitouwadge from the south was bulldozed through the bush in quick time after the decision was taken to establish mining operations.*