Planning the Trip
SERIOUS PLANNING for the Dubawnt journey began in late fall 1955, when Art Moffatt and I committed to the project and he began the complex process of food and equipment selection and purchasing, something he had done many times for his Albany River trips. Even though the Dubawnt journey would be nearly twice the distance of the Albany River trip and under much more isolated, challenging conditions, meal planning and equipment allocations were familiar chores.

The greater challenge of the Dubawnt project was in the recruitment of experienced, motivated young men, available for the full summer, able to afford the estimated individual expense of $600, and willing to accept nasty bugs, long portages, unpredictable weather, and marathon paddling.

On January 12, Art launched that recruiting effort with a letter to the Dartmouth Outing Club describing the proposed trip and soliciting interest from the Dartmouth community. Shortly thereafter he contacted Peter Franck, Harvard freshman, who had previously canoed the Albany River with Art. Within a week Peter had committed to the project.

By February 4 Art had been informed by his neighbors, Lewis and Virginia Teague, that a young member of their extended family, George Grinnell, soon to be discharged from the U.S. Army, might be available.

Bruce LeFavour and Joe Lanouette attended an illustrated lecture by Art on the Dartmouth campus early in the 1955 academic year. Art described previous canoe trips on the Albany River and at the end of his presentation he announced that he was planning a longer trip, farther north into the Canadian Barrens, and that he needed two more people to complete the party. Bruce recalls, “Joe and I signed up on the spot.”

By early May the party members had been identified and most of the procurement and logistical support established. Art sent a news release to the New York Times announcing “Six Americans to Cross Canadian Barrens By Canoe.”

The following documents exemplify Art’s careful, realistic approach to recruitment and expedition planning.
February 4, 1959

Dear Pete,

I am delighted to hear you'd like to join us this summer on the Dubawnt trip. Although you state in your last letter, I've written to your father to acquaint him with details of the journey, and also to give him some idea of the various risks and uncertainties involved, which I'm afraid I didn't make any too clear in my earlier letter to you.

First (I assume you've looked at a map) the trip is long -- perhaps 800 or 900 miles in all. This means we're going to have to leave as soon as possible -- you probably won't have time to go to California. If we're in Edmonton, Alberta, by June 20 or so, we're still going to have to hustle to get down to Chesterfield Inlet before freezeup, which is often as early as September. If we miss the last schooner, we're stuck until there's enough ice to land a plane at Chesterfield and Churchill.

There are no ports between Athabaska and Baker Lake, just above Chesterfield Inlet. We're going to have to pack enough food for four men for three months in the two canoes -- if you thought we ate badly on the Albany, wait'll you hit the Dubawnt. It'll be good old oatmeal,hardtack, macaroni, and bully beef till it's coming out of our ears.

We do have permission to carry rifles to hunt caribou, but we can hunt only if starvation threatens. And in case of accident, loss of a canoe, or the like, starvation would definitely threaten in a very short time in that country. The herds of caribou are supposed to be numberless on the barrens in summer, but they are not necessarily going to be thick or even present at any given point where we happen to have our postulated disaster.

Fish abound -- trout up to 25 pounds.
So do flies and mosquitoes -- in hordes twenty times
worse than anything we saw on the Albany.

The portages are tough, especially the first half dozen out of Athabasca Lake, just when we still have all our food to pack. Two and three miles long, and through muskeg -- like Speckled Trout, I gather.

Dubawnt Lake, fifty miles across, is frozen all summer long. The ice leaves the west shore open when the wind blows from the west -- otherwise the ice piles up on shore, when the wind is from the east. We will probably have to wait, probably portage some of the way, and in general have very rough going at this point.

Wood, of course, will be absent for more than half the trip, which means that there will be no fires for cooking or warmth except when we can gather enough dry willows or moss -- or if we take the trouble to pack a Primus stove and gas to burn in it.

I guess that covers the difficulties and dangers. New to all of us will be the Chipewyan Indians around Athabasca, the Barren Grounds themselves, the Caribou, the Inland, or Caribou Eskimos, and the very long days -- 20 to 22 hours of sunlight.

If you want to read up on any of this in your spare time I would suggest Tyrrell’s "Across the Sub-Arctic of Canada", the story of the only other party to make the trip; Barley Hewett’s "People of the Deer"; Volume V of the Report on the 5th Thule Expedition; also Volumes VI and VII. All should be available in your library down there, read them with map at hand.

Finally, as to costs: it is likely that we will run into unexpected expenses, but to start with I feel that $600 ought to cover the trip from Toronto to Winnipeg. As I said earlier in my other letter, we’re each chipping in that amount, and if there is any left when we get back to Winnipeg, we’ll divide it equally. If not, we may each need to chip in a little more.

The trip is not one of my regular Hudson Bay Trips, and each of us will be travelling at his own risk. As the oldest and most experienced, I’ll do the organizing and make the decisions, Skip will be 2nd in Command.

We’re going to have two brand new 18 foot Chestnuts for canoes, possibly new tents, and I’ll supply the packsacks, cooking gear, and so on.
If you continue on with the 150 Pound crew you should be in top shape for the trip — and you'll stay that way through the summer, paddling and portaging.

It will probably be a week or so before I hear from your father, but as soon as I do I'll let you know, and in the meanwhile you can be thinking it all over once again, reading up on it if you have the time.

I hope you still like the idea as much now that you know more about what we'll face, and I look forward to seeing it all settled that you will be with us.

Incidentally, the fourth member of the party may by a lad named Grinnell, about 22, left Harvard after his Freshman year for the Marines, and is getting out this May. His grandfather founded the Audubon Society, I believe. That would make the trip a sort of Harvard-Dartmouth Expedition, but this is not definite.

As far as coming up here goes, you are welcome anytime, but unless you have a lot of questions, things have not yet settled enough to make a visit worthwhile.

When the whole thing is settled, re passenger and so on, I'd like to get everybody together up here for an organizational meeting — say in March or early April.

I can't recall now whether I told you that I've been down your way fairly often with my folks this winter — Waltham Women's Club, General Electric Plant in Lynn, Brooks Club of New Bedford, White Fund Course in Lawrence, and so on. So your question about the noon pitchour business is answered in a word — good.

All the best, then —

P.S. Have you a more precise address than the one on the envelope? This letter? If so, show it along.
April 29, 1955

Dear Pete,

This is to give an account of our expenses per man this summer, and to let you see how much more money you will need for personal and miscellaneous expenses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fare, White River Jet., Vt. - Toronto</td>
<td>$25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; Toronto-Prince Albert, Sask.</td>
<td>$50.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>$8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plane Fare, Prince Albert - Stony Raps</td>
<td>$59.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meals from WJL - Stony Raps (approx)</td>
<td>$25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2 share one canoe</td>
<td>$8.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food on trip per man</td>
<td>$100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total spent reaching Beker Lake</td>
<td>$365.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fare - Churchill - Winnipeg</td>
<td>$39.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fare - Winnipeg - Toronto</td>
<td>$44.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berth - Churchill - Winnipeg</td>
<td>$8.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berth - Winnipeg - Toronto</td>
<td>$58.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meals - Churchill-Toronto (approx)</td>
<td>$25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fare - Hanover - Toronto</td>
<td>$25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freight on canoes - Edmonton - Stony Raps</td>
<td>$15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plus Hanover-Beker Lake</td>
<td>$365.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$590.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You will note that the plane fare from Beker Lake to Churchill is not included. This will be at least $50 and may be $100. In any case, the $500 per man will be entirely used up before we get home.

In your case, you will also have to get up here from Cambridge, and back there again in the fall. I want...
to point out that we have figured very close to the line, and that a few days of unexpected delay between trains or planes, etc, with attendant hotel and food bills, would put a severe strain on our finances.

Also, there is no provision for a Geiger counter, for personal gear, or personal expenses — tobacco, candy, movies, parkas, or what have you.

I would suggest, therefore, that after completing all your purchases for equipment, and after obtaining your ticket from Cambridge to Hanover (White River Junction), you still have at least $200 in cash with you, for use in any emergency or for possible personal expenditures. More than this, if possible, would be good insurance.

Traveler’s Cheques would be the best way to carry such funds. If you buy them in Toronto, between trains; you would have them in easily negotiable Canadian funds.

The canoes have been shipped and are paid for. In addition, a deposit of $150 has been sent to the RNC toward our supplies at Stony Rapids.

You have already contributed $300 toward our bulk funds, and the rest, another $300, will be welcome at any time. I will have to convert this bulk fund into Canadian dollars here before we leave, so the sooner we get this done the better.

As soon as I have all the loose ends of information on trains, planes, etc., I’ll let you know final costs of the plane from Baker Lake to Churchill, and our definite time schedule of departure.

All the best,
NEWS RELEASE

From: A. E. Moffatt
Norwich, Vermont
Tel. Norwich 787-MI

SIX AMERICANS TO CROSS CANADIAN BARRREN GROUNDS BY CANOE

Former Long Island man will lead party of college men over 900 mile route untraveled since 1893.

New York, May 12--

An American canoeist is in town today completing plans for his trip this summer across the Northwest Territories of Canada, the last and biggest wilderness area on continental North America.

He is Arthur R. Moffatt, 35 years old, of Norwich, Vermont, who was born in Syosset, L.I., and spent the first twenty years of his life in this area. In 1927, while still living in Syosset, he made his first long canoe trip, starting out alone in an 18 foot canoe from Sioux Lookout, Ontario, and paddling northeast 700 miles along the Albany River to James Bay, the southern part of Hudson Bay.

His goal this summer is once again Hudson Bay, but he plans to begin his trip at Stony Rapids, on Lake Athabaska in northern Saskatchewan, and travel north via the Duvawnt River to Chesterfield Inlet on Hudson Bay, two hundred miles south of the Arctic Circle.

This route was first traveled by Dr. J. B. Tyrrell, of the Canadian Geological Survey, who with his brother and six Indians surveyed the route in 1893. Since that time, no other white men

This news release is from Art Moffatt detailing the expedition. Courtesy Creigh Moffatt.
have made the trip, which lies for the most part in completely uninhabited country.

Dr. Tyrrell, who is now 94 years old and lives in Toronto, Ontario, has written Mr. Moffatt to wish him the best of luck and to inform him that he will be travelling on a bad river, in very inhospitable country, and that unless plenty of supplies are carried, starvation will threaten from very early in the trip.

Since this will be his seventh canoe trip to Hudson Bay, Mr. Moffatt feels equal to the task. And he feels that the men he has chosen to accompany him are the right kind to have along—two of them have already been with him on previous trips.

Three of the students with Mr. Moffatt are from Dartmouth College. They are Fred Pessl, Jr., class of '25, from Grosse Pointe Woods, Michigan, who has made two trips to Hudson Bay; Edward Lancoutte, class of '57 from Sao Paulo, Brazil; and Bruce LeFavour, class of '57, from Amsterdam, New York.

One man is from Harvard, class of '58. He is Peter Frumkin, from San Mateo, California, a veteran of one trip to Hudson Bay with Mr. Moffatt.

The last member of the trip is George Grinnell, 57 East 80th Street, New York City, a grand-nephew of George Bird Grinnell, famous explorer, anthropologist, and author.

The hazards and difficulties of a trip down the Dubawnt River are many. The 50 mile expanse of Dubawnt Lake, about halfway to Chesterfield Inlet, was almost completely frozen over when reached by the Tyrrell party in mid-August of 1893, and it will probably be frozen this summer. There are many dangerous rapids
in the river, and long portages around the worst of them. Most of the route lies out on the barren tundra, where there will be no wood for fires. And finally, the problem of how to carry enough food for six men for three months is acute--for although the Canadian Government is permitting the party to carry rifles, these may not be used unless starvation threatens.

Reaching Hudson Bay will not solve all problems for the party. The nearest railroad is at Churchill, Manitoba, 400 miles to the south. To reach this point by canoe before freeze-up is out of the question, and since all boats will have left Chesterfield Inlet before the party gets there in early September, the only alternative is to fly out. But thin ice forms in Chesterfield Inlet in mid-September, and this would prevent planes equipped with pontoons from landing. The party might have to wait until ice has formed that is thick enough to support planes equipped with skis.

As head of the expedition, Mr. Moffatt has these objectives in mind:

1. To reach Hudson Bay at Chesterfield Inlet.
2. To produce a color film of the trip, showing the northward progression from Indians and trees to barren tundra and Eskimos.
3. To make notes on the Archaeology and ornithology of the region.
4. To gather material for a book.

Behind him at his 150 year old farmhouse in Vermont, Mr. Moffatt will leave his wife Carol, also a former Long Islander, who accompanied him on a trip to Hudson Bay in 1948; his daughters
Creigh, 4 years old, and Deborah, 2 years old.

The party is privately financed, and except for camera equipment, only the simplest camping and travelling gear will be taken along.

"Although we can't hunt," Moffatt says, "we will be travelling much as the Indians used to—paddling all the way. It will be a hard trip in many ways. The lack of wood for fires, the flies and mosquitoes, the weather—Tyrrell reported snow storms in late August—will make things uncomfortable, to say the least."

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Hudson Bay Trips
Arthur R. Moffatt, Director
Norwich, Vermont

May 23, 1955

Mr. Thomas G. Franck
320 California Street
San Francisco 4, California

Dear Mr. Franck:

It is now definite that we will be leaving here on June 16 for the Northwest Territories, reaching Stony Rapids on Athabasca Lake on Monday, June 20. Our canoes will arrive at that point on June 24, by which time we should have all our supplies bought and packed.

A few details have been changed: Skip Pessl will travel with us from Toronto, leaving George Grinnell, the member of the party in the army, to catch us by plane and to check with us should anything be missing at Stony Rapids.

We have had to give up the idea of taking a radio transmitting and receiving set north. The Canadian Government has permitted us many things, but this is not to be one of them. They will not license us to take the equipment, even though they recognize the increase in safety such a set would give our party. I have tried several avenues of approach in connection with this radio, and none have proved fruitful.

Finally, I have recently sent Peter the letter a copy of which I enclose. Today I have at last heard from the airline "Arctic Wings", Churchill, Manitoba, which informs me that we will be able to radio for a plane when we reach Hudson Bay, and that the cost for the plane trip out will be a little under $1200 if we use a DC-3, which can carry all our equipment, or $900 if we use a float-equipped Norseman, which might necessitate our leaving part of the gear behind.

$200 per mile.

I received this information with mixed feelings, since it assures the men who must get back to college a way home on time, but the cost of the plane trip is much higher than I anticipated. We have to pay for the plane both going and coming.

As you will note from the account in my letter to Peter,
all our basic expenses save this plane trip from Baker Lake to Churchill are nicely covered by the $600. In accordance with your suggestion in a recent letter, I think you should know that Peter’s expenses are apparently going to run closer to $800 than to $600, and that he should have about that amount at his disposal.

There is still the possibility that we may find some other means of reaching Churchill inexpensively and on time, by boat or by plane (I have been informed that a large scale military installation is being put in at Chesterfield Inlet) and that once on the spot we can arrange such transport. But it will not do to count on it.

Therefore, if you feel that the amount required is not out of the question, I hope you will see that Peter is adequately financed.

If you do feel it is too much money, I would not blame you asking Peter to give up the trip, even at this late date. It was my optimistic belief that we could get out via schooner (which may yet turn out to be true) that caused the problem.

Should Peter be allowed to continue with his plans, he will come up here about June 14 for the check on his equipment by me, stay with us a day or two, and we will start together from White River Junction.

My best regards to you and Mrs. Franck.

Sincerely,

Arthur R. Moffatt