CAMP BORDEN PLAINS* SIMCOE COUNTY, ONTARIO

BY ARTHUR HERBERT RICHARDSON
Ontario Forestry Branch

AS one approaches the village of Angus, Ontario, from the east, and especially if the approach is by the Sunnidale road, two distinct drops in elevation will be noticed. From the first of these a splendid view of the country to the west is obtained. It will be seen that Angus and the surrounding country, which in former days was known simply as the "Plains," occupies the lowest part of a section of the old geological Lake Algonquin. In fact, the elevation of this part of Simcoe County is 100 feet lower than that at Barrie and only 30 feet higher than Georgian Bay, which is fifteen miles to the north.

The plains country is a large saucer-like area, flattened at the north, about ten miles long and seven miles wide and extends in a general south-westerly direction from the villages of Brentwood and Utopia west to Glencairn and south to Everett. It occupies parts of three townships, namely, Tosorontio, Essa and Sunnidale, and includes, approximately, 50,000 acres of light soil varying from blow sand on the higher parts to sandy loam along the river bottoms.

In early days this part of Simcoe County supported magnificent stands of white and red pine, and it was partly to exploit this area that the railway was built from Toronto to Collingwood in 1853 and 1855. In fact, the line was built through this district before it was extended to Barrie and points north.

The centre of this early lumbering activity was the village of Angus. For this reason it is of special interest to foresters because it tells the oft repeated story of the need for sustained yield in order to maintain forest industries and to make communities permanent. Angus, however, suffered as many other lumbering towns have suffered in the province. From a very small hamlet it grew to be a thriving lumbering centre with 17 mills and a population, including the mill settlements, of about 3,000 people; but after the lumber had disappeared it soon sank again to a very small hamlet and almost disappeared.

During the war about 25 square miles of these plains were bought by the Federal Government and used as a military training ground. This section is intersected by the Pine and the Mad Rivers, which have cut deep

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Map of a section of Simcoe County, Ontario, showing Camp Borden Plains, Angus Village, Midhurst Nursery and the Hendrie Forest.

valleys through the sand. The south portion of Camp Borden, which is separated from the north by the Pine River and the Bella Josh Creek, is a broad expanse of grassland with very little woodland whatever and it is here that the camp proper, with its cement roads and buildings, is situated, and a large part of which is still being used as an air base and flying field. The northern portion of the property contains more woodland, consisting of young poplar, with areas here and there of open grown red pine and about 3,000 acres of barren land suitable for planting.

In 1925, with the permission of the Department of Militia and Defence, the Ontario Forestry Branch commenced reforestation work on these plains and planted 230,000 trees. To date, about 3,000,000 have been set out, leaving only small areas of this northern tract still unforested. In 1931, a fire-tower was erected and in bad fire seasons the area is patrolled by employees of the Forestry Branch; in addition, a lookout station has recently been built on top of the water tower at the Angus Seed Extracting plant in order that fires may be accurately located by intersection.

During the winter of 1932-33 a large camp for unemployed men was established at Camp Borden by the Department of National Defence, and the Ontario Forestry Branch is using some of this labor in its forestry work. To date these men have planted approximately 400,000 trees and, during the summer and winter, have been utilized in an extensive scheme of improvement work. In order to connect the sections lying north and south of the Mad River, a wooden bridge was built and a mile and a half of road has been improved by grading and ditching. Four miles of fire guards, 40 feet wide, have been cleared and about 5 acres of woodland have been improved by thinning.

For some time now the Ontario Forestry Branch has been negotiating with the Department of Militia and Defence for the complete control of this tract, which, when it is taken over by the Provincial Government, will be incorporated in its system of county forests.