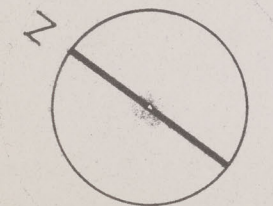


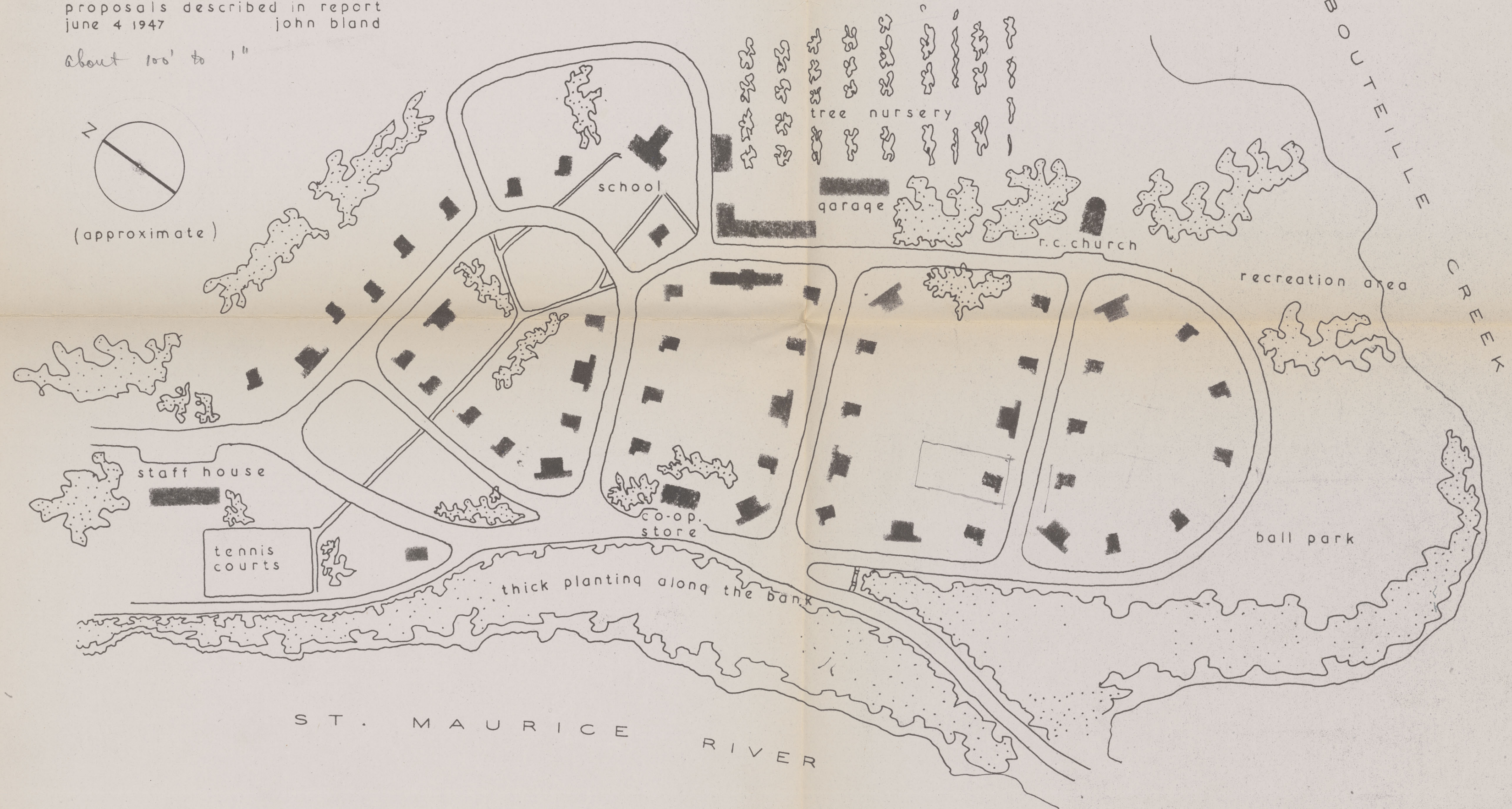
RAPIDE BLANC
proposals described in report
june 4 1947 john bland

about 100' to 1"



(approximate)

farm



BOUTEILLE CREEK

REPORT ON THE VILLAGE OF RAPIDE BLANC.

June 4, 1947.

John Bland,
McGill University.

REPORT ON THE VILLAGE OF RAPIDE BLANC.

Section I. Background Information.

Purpose and population.
Site.
Position in the region.
Communications.
Possibility of growth.

Section II. The Physical Structure of Rapide Blanc.

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Pattern.
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REPORT ON THE VILLAGE OF RAPIDE BLANC.

Section 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION.

Purpose and Population.

The village consists of houses and institutional buildings for the maintenance and operational staff of the Rapide Blanc hydro electric plant. The plant commenced operation in 1930. Its purpose is partly flood control and in its pond flood waters are impounded and released as needed. It is also an important generating station. Its capacity was increased during the war, and there is room still for a further generator.

Its staff has been estimated to be about fifty men. It is supposed that thirty-eight of these will be married. Possibly twelve additional men will be employed in public services in the village. Thus about fifty family dwellings and a staff house which will house twenty single persons are needed.

It is also proposed to construct a generating plant (known as the Trenché development) down the river, which would be sufficiently close to be maintained and operated by a staff living at Rapide Blanc. In which case houses for possibly 20 additional families will be required.

The population is both French and English speaking, the present proportion being 75% French. This ratio may not be maintained, but it is likely that at least 50% of the population will be French Canadian.

The site.

The village is situated on the east bank of the St. Maurice River a little below and south of the Rapide Blanc dam. The village is on a plateau sloping southward generally 50 to 30 feet above the river. To the north the land is rough with numerous rock outcroppings and large boulders. The Bouteille stream to the south has been dammed up forming a reservoir for the village water supply.

Position in the region.

The surrounding area, in which the usual forest operations take place, is wooded with pine, spruce, poplar, and birch. Within a mile of the village downstream there is a camp operated by the St. Maurice River Boom which is seasonally occupied. Further down there is a sawmill and camp operated by the Compton Lumber Company. It is a temporary establishment. Latuque is the nearest commercial center. It provides banks, shops, and medical services for Rapide Blanc.

Communications. The only regular means of access to the village of Rapide Blanc is by rail and road. The Rapide Blanc station is approximately 23 miles west of Lataque on the northern transcontinental route of the C. N. R. A road goes down from the dam through the village to a bridge over the St. Maurice where it joins the main road from the powerhouse on the west bank of the river. This road leads up out of the valley of the St. Maurice into the valley of the Vermillion River to the C. N. R. railway station. It is ten miles from the bridge over the St. Maurice to the station.

Possibility of growth.

A large increase in the calculated maintenance and operational staff of the plants is not foreseen.

Due principally to awkward communications it is unlikely that any substantial industries will develop in the vicinity of the village. Forest industries are the only likely ones at the present time, and most of these require railway services for the transportation of their products. This is particularly so of the pulp and paper industry.

On the other hand recreation is one of the potentialities of the area. With the development of the Trenché project the village of Rapide Blanc will be in the center of many miles of negotiable waterways leading into fine game country. The extent to which such activities develop can be controlled since the company owns all land in and immediately surrounding the village. If such recreation is considered desirable it might be encouraged by building a larger staff house, or by leasing a site for a club house. The village would not be much affected beyond possibly requiring a larger store.

Section 11. THE PHYSICAL STRUCTURE OF RAPIDE BLANC.

The present village.

There are 20 permanent brick houses in the village, of which 14 are detached and 6 are semi detached. One house has a small annex containing a post office. A maintenance building, filter house and pumphouse are also permanent.

Temporary buildings which were used during the original construction still exist although they are being gradually removed as permanent houses are built. Fifteen of these temporary buildings are at present accommodating 19 families. Other buildings which were originally construction camp bunk houses serve as community hall, school, church, cooperative store, and curling club. The staff house is also temporary, as well as the garage building and carpentry shop. There is a combined bunk house and cook house which is still occupied by construction workers.

Four semi detached houses are at present being completed and 6 semi detached and 6 single houses are under construction. The new houses will be wood baloon frame finished with asbestos shingles.

In Rapide Blanc there are two patterns of development. One is the plan of the former construction camp of which many buildings still remain. The other is the plan of the future village which is being outlined by permanent buildings.

Pattern of Construction Camp.

The arrangement of the construction camp can still be seen. It may be interesting to point out how its plan indicates an inevitable use of the site of the village. The old staff cottages occupy desirable sites as far up the hill side as conveniently possible. The office building and one cottage occupy a site of singular prominence. The staff house is a little apart from the others but also has a fine site while the bunk houses are grouped closely together on a relatively level part. As the construction buildings have become available for other purposes their uses have become more fortuitous so that the present plan of old and new together appears haphazard. However if these temporary camp buildings are shortly removed their present odd uses will not establish habit or character adversely effecting the ultimate village.

In particular, the prominent site occupied by the bunk house and cook house which was formerly the office should be reserved for an important function without being prejudiced by its present use.

Pattern of permanent village.

The layout that is being followed for the permanent village of Rapide Blanc will result in a natural and convenient pattern. I consider that Mr. Svenson, the resident civil engineer, has ably arranged the water and drainage services. The houses are set well apart and on roads which will have the least traffic. The grades are easy and the intersections are simple.

It may be necessary to think of an additional sewage outfall in developing the most southerly part of the village. The distance to the river is not very considerable and the sites that would be made available would be extremely pleasant. The land here, though well above the river, is too low to drain into the present system. The layout might be a crescent joining the ends of Bouteille street to St. Maurice Boulevard with houses on the inside facing south.

Natural areas. All towns become divided into areas which are used for different purposes. They may be residential, commercial, industrial or they may have a recreational function. Physical features of the land, convenience, and the habits of the people determine the eventual usages of the land. Families group themselves where they feel most comfortable and stores flourish where they are most accessible regardless of original intention or plan. In Rapide Blanc, young as it is, such areas have begun to appear.

1. The new brick houses mark a desirable residential area, in which the houses on the northern fringe standing on the highest ground with southern exposure and excellent view are the best. Here the highest paid employees will probably live. The bunk house, the cooperative store, and the church are out of place here. Their position in the construction camp was probably sound, but they do not fit into the pattern of the new village, on their present sites.
2. First street and Second street will form a second residential area. The difference between it and the original group of brick buildings may be small in fact, but because the houses will be different in appearance it will seem a separate area. It is likely to have less social prestige.
3. The area at present occupied by the lumber stock piles which was formerly a construction camp ball ground is a possible third resident area. If the town grows enough to use this section for houses, it would be well to lay it out in such a way as to accommodate a fairly large recreation ground. The ground is suitably level for baseball. Following the development of the Trenché project a recreation area for swimming and boating might also be appropriate. The Bouteille Creek will then be enlarged and connected with the main river, and may become a popular place to swim and to moor boats.
4. The "Farm", the maintenance buildings, and the tree nursery form a natural group. The garage which is in another part of the village belongs to this group in my opinion, as it is concerned with village maintenance and service.

Specific buildings.

1. The new site for the school and community hall is accessible, away from traffic and it has a level children's playground. I consider it suitable.
2. The cooperative store and post office should have a central position where they will be most accessible to all parts of the village. In my opinion they should occupy the site now used by the temporary garage. This is a more central position than they have at present, particularly considering the direction in which the town is growing. If it is considered desirable to accommodate a barber, shoe repair, or clothes pressing concession, a small addition might be made on the store building.
3. The building at present housing the post office might be used as a doctor's house. It is in the first residential area of the village and would be suitable for a prominent man in the community. The post office annex could reasonably be used for a surgery.
4. The garage has been mentioned; I believe it should be placed near the maintenance building.
5. The staff house I believe should occupy the site of the temporary bunk and cook house, which is certainly one of the finest sites in the village, and should be used by an important building.
6. The cure would like the Roman Catholic Church to be a little apart from the village and certainly not in a prominent central site. Somewhere on Bouteille street would be suitable. At the head of First street or Second street would be satisfactory architecturally. The church need not be large; the plan and appointments could be very simple. The cure has suggested field stone as a material. In my opinion that would be excellent.

Section 111.

PROVISIONS FOR SOCIAL GROWTH AND GOOD MORALE
IN RAPIDE BLANC.

There are a number of questions that pertain more to morale than to convenience or utility, which should be considered in a town planning report. It goes without saying that the good spirit of a community is the proper aim of town planning. This may be made possible through an efficient physical layout. It is difficult to plan a good spirit into existence, but certain provisions may be made which will contribute to its growth.

The leading personalities in a community play a large part in deciding the quality of its spirit. In my short visit to Rapide Blanc, I can only have received a superficial impression of this aspect of life in the village. Realizing the limited nature of my observations, I would still like to mention the work of three men, who are undoubtedly leaders in the community.

Mr. Woods, the superintendent, has gathered a good team and is leading it with ability and resourcefulness.

The Abbe Normandin, the cure, in addition to his ministry, has organized a workshop for children in his cabin. It is well equipped with carpentry power tools and the children are free to go there whenever they wish.

Mr. Carl Williams is an employee of the company, whose enthusiasm for sports and group projects has resulted in the development of a ski hill with a built up ski run and chalet. His interest in swimming has led to the establishment of a safe bathing area with changing rooms, dock, and spring boards.

I understand that the children's workshop, the ski hill project and the swimming facilities were citizen undertakings. Their planning and construction are as important from the standpoint of recreation as the opportunities which they provide.

I am sure that any proposals that these men may have in the future would merit consideration and assistance in the interest of good morale.

Recreation.

It has been necessary to use part of the construction camp baseball ground for lumber stock piles so that it can not be used for games. It may be that baseball is not as popular as formerly as there are fewer men in the village now. However a ball ground, even if only used occassionally, would be a source of good fun and entertainment for the village at small cost. If the stock piles are in the only effecient position, perhaps a clearing could be made further south where the land is fairly level. I believe that a ball ground in the centre of the village near the school would be too small and unsuitably placed, and the other possible site on a rough plateau just beyond the cure's cabin is also too small and too remote.

A skating rink might be combined with tennis courts and occupy a place where the staff house now stands. Here it would be sheltered from the winds and exposed to the sun, besides being easily accessible.

With the development of the Trenche pond up to the southern border of the village perhaps boats would be more conveniently moored below the village than above as at present. If this were the case, it would be useful to plan a landing area and possibly a swimming place in some protected cove.

Churches.

I have heard that there is a likelihood that the Roman Catholic congregation may be required to use the community hall, as their present building is unsafe. The cure reports that there are 36 families having 125 members who take part in his services as well as the people who come occasionally from the station and the lumber camp. The services occur more often than on Sundays and sometimes twice daily. The equipment required is quite specialized. I believe that a combined Protestant-Catholic use of the community hall would lead to troubles that would far outweigh the economy in not providing a church. In my opinion a site for a Roman Catholic Church should be reserved and the church built as soon as it is possible.

When there is a demand a church or chapel should also be constructed for the English speaking population. I suggest that a good position would be on the park possibly where the present community hall stands.

Appearance.

The pleasant appearance of a town can induce pride, and satisfaction in its citizens, and may have a part in producing a good spirit in the community. For this reason it is mentioned in this section.

Trees.

Although Rapide Blanc has a magnificent site in a vigorous, northern landscape, it seemed to me to be bleak at first sight, particularly from across the river. I realize that the firebreak clearance is necessary and that it tends to reduce the occurrence of flies, but it seems a harsh treatment of the landscape. If some trees were allowed to stand in the clearance and in the village it would be more satisfying from the point of view of landscape.

Mr. Futter, the gardener, appears to have had success with some lawn grass and tree planting, and I am sure he is gathering the sort of skill that will make possible a comprehensive scheme for landscaping the village. Mr. Futter has a small tree nursery back of the Curling Club which I believe he should be encouraged to enlarge, and also to build up a supply of good soil.

I am doubtful about the suitability of elm and maple which are foreign to the country, and believe that the greatest success will be had with pine, cedar, spruce, and birch. As these trees do not root well individually, I think they should be planted in large clumps. If some in exposed places blow down, others will stand, and such natural selection in any event will be more pleasant than a geometrical setting out of individual trees.

I noticed a few lilac trees which looked strong and healthy. Possibly experiments could be made to find hardy flowering varieties which could be planted in large numbers. They grow quickly, and their bloom might make the village unusual and produce both pleasure and pride in its citizens. It might be profitable to employ an expert landscape gardener to consult with Mr. Futter from time to time in order to make the most of the opportunities of the site.

Building materials.

The area of the first permanent houses which were built in brick is likely to be the most desirable residential section. I suggest that any new houses in this area be completed in brick for the sake of appearance or at least carefully designed to conform with the present houses. In the new residential section where asbestos siding is used, it will be advisable to maintain this material for all houses in the group. The trim of these houses should all be of the same colour. I consider that an effort to differentiate a number of similar houses by different colored woodwork is aesthetically unsatisfactory.

....10.

The use of local materials wherever possible would be rewarding. In this respect rough stone and logs might be considered for some of the buildings. The ski chalet is noteworthy; other recreational buildings might be similarly constructed.

The stone banks between the horizontal lawns about the houses are effective.



Dapide Blanc from the Ski Hill looking south



Ski Hill looking down to the Maurice
The bridge can be seen left centre and
on the far shore the construction road.



Depide Blanc Power House
foreground shows part of the
north fire break.



Compton Lumber Co. Camp



Compton Lumber Co. Camp.

SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE.

December 31, 1947.

Mr. J. S. Svenson,
Rapide Blanc,
P. Q.

Dear Mr. Svenson:

Thank you for your letter of December 23 and for your good wishes for Christmas and the New Year. May I offer you and your wife my best wishes, too, for a successful and happy New Year.

I am glad to hear that you are carrying on with the extension of the town and I hope you will have luck in securing a suitable site for the church and garage. I hope I may have another opportunity of going up to Rapide Blanc and having a chat with you and seeing how the work is progressing. I would greatly like to see it in the wintertime and to meet Carl Williams who, you may remember, was away when I was there this spring.

Please give my best wishes to the cure if you happen to run across him and also to Mr. Woods.

Yours sincerely,

John Bland.

JB/JS

Rapide Blane, Que. Dec. 23^d 1947.

• Professor John Bland.

Montreal.

Dear Professor Bland:-

Thanks very much for your recent letter. I am sorry, I could not see you in Montreal - but I hope better luck next time. I feel very much at a loss here with nobody, who I can talk over my work with. However, I am now working on the plan for extension of the Town. Mr. Morse with Mr. May & Mr. Shirling was up here a few weeks ago and on his questions, I referred him to you for your sound advice, which I somehow seem to correspond with my own, especially I like to put the future Church where it belongs and the Garage where that belongs. I am moving over here - to the East side - in the Spring and hope I will have the honour to see you and maybe your family in my new house.

Wishing you and yours A very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

I remain,

Yours very truly,
John S. Swenson.

SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE.

October 14, 1947.

Mr. John Svenson,
The Shawinigan Water and Power Company,
Rapide Blanc,
P. Q.

Dear Mr. Svenson:

I am sorry I was not able to get in touch with you when you were in Montreal a week ago. It was very nice of you to call me on the telephone and I would have liked to have had a chat with you. I remember with great pleasure my visit to Rapide Blanc and I would be interested in knowing how your work is progressing.

With best wishes to your wife and yourself,

Yours sincerely,

John Bland,

JB/JS

SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE. June 12, 1947.

Mr. John Morse,
Vice President,
Shawinigan Water and Power Company,
P. O. Box 6072,
Montreal, P. Q.

Dear Mr. Morse:

I enclose my account for the report
upon Rapide Blanc.

Yours sincerely,

John Bland,
Director of the School.

Encl.
JB/JS

to:

Shawinigan Water and Power Company,
P. O. Box 6072,
Montreal, P. Q.

for:

Professional services concerning the layout of the Village of Rapide Blanc, P. Q. Visiting the site and preparing a report.....	\$300.0
Traveling expenses.....	<u>25.0</u>
Total.....	<u>\$327</u>

from:

John Bland.

JB/JS

School of Architecture,
McGill University,
Montreal 2, P. Q.
June 6, 1947.

Mr. John Morse, Vice-President,
The Shawinigan Water and Power Company,
Power Building,
Craig Street, West,
Montreal 2, P. Q.

Dear Mr. Morse:

I enclose my report on the village of Rapide Blanc. The first section sums up my orientation. I have set down in it some of the information I have obtained from conversations with officers of your company. In the other sections there are specific proposals and a sketch indicating my suggestions for siting further buildings.

I enclose a duplicate report which you might send to Mr. Woods if you think it might be useful for him.

I greatly enjoyed the visit and was sorry that Mr. Stirling was unable to leave Shawinigan at the time.

Yours sincerely,

John Bland.

Encl.
JB/JS

May 17, 1947.

Mr. L. B. Stirling,
Superintendent - Generating Division,
The Shawinigan Water and Power Company,
Shawinigan Falls,
P. Q.

Dear Mr. Stirling:

Thank you for your letter of May 16, 1947,
informing me of the arrangement to visit Rapide
Blanc next week. I shall be at the C. N. R.
Central Station at 8:40 a. m. standard time on
Wednesday, May 21, unless I hear from you that
the plan is changed.

Yours sincerely,

John Bland.

JB/JS

The Shawinigan Water & Power Co.

EXECUTIVE OFFICES
POWER BUILDING
MONTREAL

Shawinigan Falls, Que.
16 May 47

Professor John Bland,
Director of the School of Architecture,
McGill University,
Montreal, Que.

Dear Sir:

Further to our conversation of Wednesday, I have arranged for us to go to Rapide Blanc on Wednesday, May 21st. As the highway to La Tuque is in very bad condition, it will be necessary to travel by train, and we will leave Montreal at 8:40 A.M. standard time by C.N.R. from Central Station, reaching Fitzpatrick at 3:55 P.M. Our speeder will meet us at Fitzpatrick and take us to Rapide Blanc, twenty miles further up the line.

I will probably be returning to Shawinigan on Thursday, but we will be glad to have you stay as long as you wish. The returning train leaves Rapide Blanc at 1:14 A.M. standard time every day, reaching Montreal at 8:55 A.M.

It is possible that Mr. Way will be coming to Rapide Blanc with us; in which case, we will probably drive to Shawinigan Falls, catching the same train there at 12:01 P.M. If we do this, we will let you know of the change in plan early next week.

Yours truly,



L. B. Stirling
Superintendent - Generating Division

LBS/FD
CC: Mr. W.R.Way

The Shawinigan Water & Power Co.

EXECUTIVE OFFICES
POWER BUILDING
MONTREAL

Shawinigan Falls, Que.

25 March 47

Professor John Bland,
Director of the School of Architecture,
McGill University,
Montreal, Que.

Dear Sir:

I am forwarding to you today,
under separate cover, two prints of our drawing
showing the layout and contours of Rapide Blanc
Village.

I understand that you will communi-
cate with Mr. Way sometime after Easter with
regard to our visit to Rapide Blanc, and I will
make arrangements for this trip when I have heard
from Mr. Way.

Yours truly,



L. B. Stirling
Superintendent - Generating Division

LBS/FD

SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

March 24, 1947.

Mr. John Morse,
Vice-President,
The Shawinigan Water and
Power Company,
Power Building,
Craig Street West,
Montreal, P. Q.

Dear Mr. Morse:

Thank you for your letter of March 21st.

I shall get in touch with Mr. Way so that definite plans may be made for my proposed visit to the Rapide Blanc site.

Yours sincerely,

John Bland
Director of the School

JB:mg

The Shawinigan Water & Power Co.

*Address all communications to
P. O. Box 6072*

Power Building Craig St. West.

*Montreal, 1
Canada*

March 21st, 1947.

Professor John Bland,
Director of the School of Architecture,
McGill University,
MONTREAL.

Dear Professor Bland:-

Acknowledging receipt of your letter of March 19th, wish to advise that what we require at the present time is fairly well in accord with that outlined in the first paragraph of your letter. As you know, we are more or less committed to a particular plan of development, and we thought it advisable to have the whole matter reviewed to see if any major changes in the master plan should be advocated, and to have our attention drawn to any modifications in the present plan which might be advisable.

Your fees of \$50.00 a day and necessary travelling expenses are acceptable. For the work we have in mind at the present time, which will require a visit to the site and the preparation of a report, the total commitment which we are prepared to make is not to exceed \$500.00.

If, after having examined your report, it is felt that further advice from you is required in the future, we will arrange to discuss the matter with you and consider an additional proposal.

As far as the present understanding is concerned, therefore, it is noted that you will be available after Easter, and I would suggest that you contact Mr. Way so that definite plans may be made in regard to your proposed visit to the Rapide Blanc site.

Yours very truly,

John Morse
J. Morse
Vice-President

JM:DAF.

THE SHAWINIGAN WATER & POWER COMPANY

PURCHASING DEPARTMENT

POWER BUILDING



MONTREAL, CANADA
P.O. Box 6072

Mrs. MCGILL UNIVERSITY,
SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE,
MONTREAL, QUE.

EH

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SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

March 19, 1947.

Mr. John Morse,
Vice-President,
Shawinigan Water and Power Company,
MONTREAL, P. Q.

Dear Mr. Morse:

I have had a short talk with Mr. Way and Mr. Starling regarding the development of the town site at Rapide Blanc and I believe I understand the nature of the problem and the part I might play in advising upon the siting of new houses and other permanent buildings and suggesting ways in which a further 20 houses might be added to the town site as well as offering other suggestions pertaining to appearance and convenience. I contemplate that this would require a visit to the site and possibly a couple of days spent there examining the possibilities that might occur to me and later perhaps two days spent upon drawing up a report.

I feel the most satisfactory way of obtaining a pleasant and efficient development is to meet the problems in detail as they arise rather than by means of a master plan which may prove inflexible. Consequently I would suggest a report upon the immediate proposals and an outline for future development which would be reviewed by further visits and reports as circumstances may change in the future.

My fees for this work are \$50.00 a day and necessary travelling expenses. I shall be available after Easter. I expect to be associated during the summer with a colleague at the University, H. J. Spence-Sales.

Yours sincerely,

John Bland
Director of the School

JB:mg