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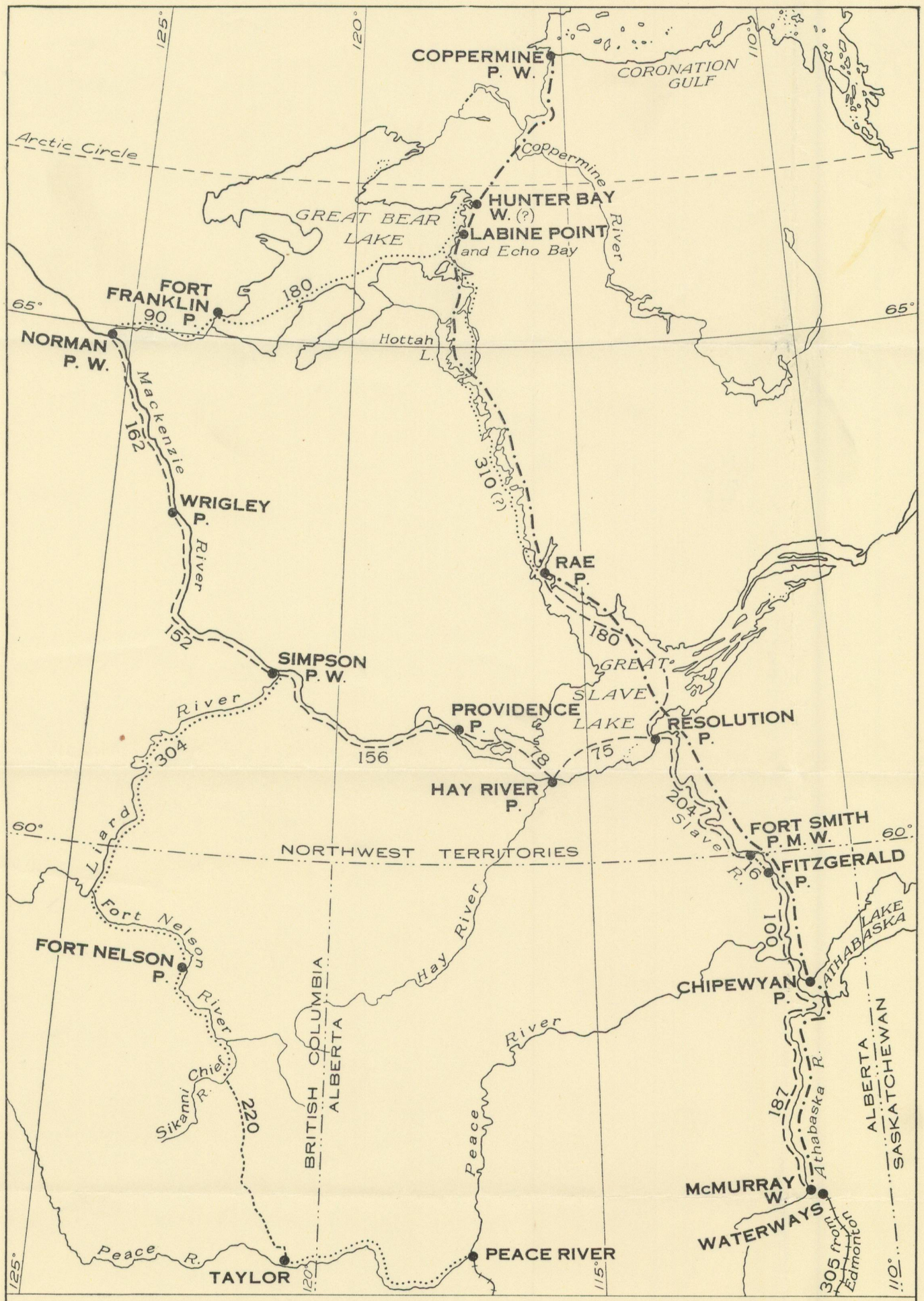

ROUTES TO

GREAT BEAR LAKE AND NORMAN

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Scale of Miles

100 50 0 100 200

—·—·— Main aircraft route
— — — Summer steamer route
..... Boat, scow, or canoe route
------- Portage
+++++++ Railway
P. Trading post
M. Mining recording office
W. Wireless or telegraph
152 Approximate distance in miles between points

Geological Survey,
Department of Mines, Canada, 1932.

Publication No. 2301

TRAVEL TO GREAT BEAR LAKE

Information obtained from officers of the Geological Survey, Department of Mines; Department of the Interior, and others; compiled by D. F. Kidd.

WEATHER CONDITIONS

At Great Bear lake in ordinary seasons ice leaves the river mouths early in June, is clear of small bays, June 20-July 1, and the main body of the lake can be navigated by July 15-30. One year it was clear on July 5. Night frosts commence August 15-25. Summer weather changed to low clouds, snow and rain in the latter part of August, in 1931. Ice begins to form on bays September 15-30, and boat travel on main lake ends about September 30.

On the Mackenzie river system the ice leaves Great Slave lake June 1-25, but the Athabaska and Slave rivers open some time before. Mackenzie river between Simpson and Norman is also clear about one month before Great Slave lake is passable. Liard river and tributaries break up before the Mackenzie. Great Bear river usually opens later than the Mackenzie at Norman; it is said to be passable for powered craft at the end of May, but ice from the lake may make it dangerous until early in July. Ice cliffs are a hazard. There is much variation from season to season. Expert travellers might perhaps travel earlier or later than indicated.

ACCESS BY AIR

Break-up and freeze-up at railhead and Great Bear lake control access. Aircraft on skis can usually operate from Waterways from December till early in April. On Great Bear lake they can operate on floats from about the end of June till early in September. The lake cannot be reached by aircraft by the usual route from early in April till July and from early in September till December. Darkness at Great Bear lake hampers winter flying. As far as known Canadian Airways, Edmonton, and Spence-McDonough, Ltd., Edmonton, are prepared to carry passengers and freight.

ACCESS BY WATER

MAIN MACKENZIE ROUTE. Mackenzie River Transport, Beaver House, Edmonton, operate steamer services from Waterways to Norman and Aklavik, and there are other services on this route. There are two sections, the "Upper River", from Waterways to Fitzgerald, and the "Lower River", from Fort Smith to Norman and Aklavik. Between Fitzgerald and Fort Smith is a 16-mile motor road past rapids. In 1931 services were operated to Rae and Fort Nelson. There was no regular service on Great Bear lake, but A. W. Boland, Fort Franklin, handled traffic with a motor scow and motorboat. Rooms and board can be obtained at Waterways, McMurray, Fitzgerald, Fort Smith, Resolution, Simpson and perhaps other places.

LIARD ROUTE. This route is from Dawson Creek, on the Peace River branch of Northern Alberta Railways, overland through Fort St. John or Taylor to Sikanni Chief river at Conroy creek, a distance of 215 miles; thence by canoe or small boats down the Sikanni Chief, Fort Nelson, Liard and Mackenzie rivers to Norman. A winter road to Conroy creek exists but arrangements must be made for caching feed along the route and building boats. Outfits should cross by sleigh before March 15. Pack horses can use the route in summer. There are no bad rapids. Norman can be reached several weeks earlier than by Great Slave lake, but this advantage may be slight owing to ice on Great Bear lake. Further information can be had from the Fort St. John Board of Trade.

CANOE ROUTE FROM RAE. This route was travelled south from Great Bear lake up Camsell river and down Marian river in 1930 by A. C. Cumming, of the Department of the Interior. There are 44 portages, and 16 rapids that were run. Seven of the portages are one-quarter to three-quarters of a mile long.

OUTFITS

Parties entering the region should not depend on getting supplies of any kind at Great Bear lake. Natives or dogs are probably not procurable at the lake. The trading posts carry limited supplies but probably cannot meet large unusual demands. In March temperatures of 50° below zero and stormy weather are probable. Wood is present in most of the area. The summer weather is cool, calm and clear, with occasional severe storms, but heavier clothing than that used in Ontario is required. Small sectional and special types of canoes can be taken in by air. Larger canoes could probably be delivered by boat at Hunter bay by August 1. Fish are plentiful. Geological reports and maps and geographical maps are, or will shortly be obtainable from the Geological Survey of Canada, Department of Mines; Topographical Survey, Department of the Interior; and Geographical Section, Department of National Defence.

Geological Survey, Canada
Commission Géologique du Canada
Ottawa, Canada K1A 0E8

FOR REFERENCE

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