

Fig. 1. The location of Whitehorse.

# THE SQUATTERS OF WHITEHORSE: A STUDY OF THE PROBLEMS OF NEW NORTHERN SETTLEMENTS

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## Introduction

THE CANADIAN NORTH, or that part of Canada lying beyond the fifty-fifth parallel, represents a very large land mass with a very small, scattered population mainly concentrated in a number of small settlements. These settlements can be divided into two types, based on the date of their establishment. One type grew up between the end of the last century and the beginning of the Second World War. Associated with this type of settlement was the growth of a number of mining towns, fur trading centres, transportation and service centres. These towns seldom had populations of more than a thousand people in pre-war years. They were usually linked to southern Canada by poor roads and rivers, usable only at certain times of the year. Some settlements were reached by sea and two, Churchill, Man., and Whitehorse, Y.T., had rail links to the *outside*. In the same group were Dawson, Y.T., Aklavik and Hay River, N.W.T., Telegraph Creek, B.C., Vermilion, Alta., Buffalo Narrows, Sask., and Fort Chimo, Que.

The other type of settlement has grown up since the Second World War, in the period of northern development that began about 1950. Practically all these new towns are single enterprise communities, serving as bases for the exploitation of mineral resources. Their populations vary from a few hundred to several thousand. They are linked to the southern part of Canada by all-weather roads and railways. Included in this group are: Tungsten, on the Yukon-N.W.T. boundary, Pine Point, N.W.T., Thompson, Man., and Schefferville, Que.

All indications are that the future development of the Canadian North will proceed in terms of the exploitation of rich deposits of mineral resources or the utilization of hydro-power sites. Gordon Robertson (1961), when Deputy Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources, stated:

"I think it is clear to anyone who makes a serious study of the northern part of this country . . . that the interesting prospects depend on the non-renewable resources: on mining and on oil and gas."

To house the workers in these primary industries, a new network of single enterprise communities with good communication links with southern Canada will have to be superimposed on the existing settlement pattern. This

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settlement pattern will gradually supersede the older pattern that was established before the War. The older settlements will gradually decline or disappear if they cannot be adapted to the needs of new resource developments.

Some older settlements have taken on a number of functions associated with the construction of roads, airports, schools, hospitals, housing and other government projects that have helped to provide the economic and social infrastructure for future northern development. Some towns, in fact, have become very heavily dependent on government expenditure that tends to have only short term benefits, and to attract a population that is basically transient. As Rogers (1965) points out in another northern area:

"The recent past has demonstrated that economic activity engendered by such federal spending is not self-sustaining beyond the specific program or project for which the expenditure is made. In Alaska, construction generates no pump-priming effects as it does elsewhere (all equipment and most materials must be imported) and any decrease in its activity is immediately translated into the social and economic costs associated with unemployment."

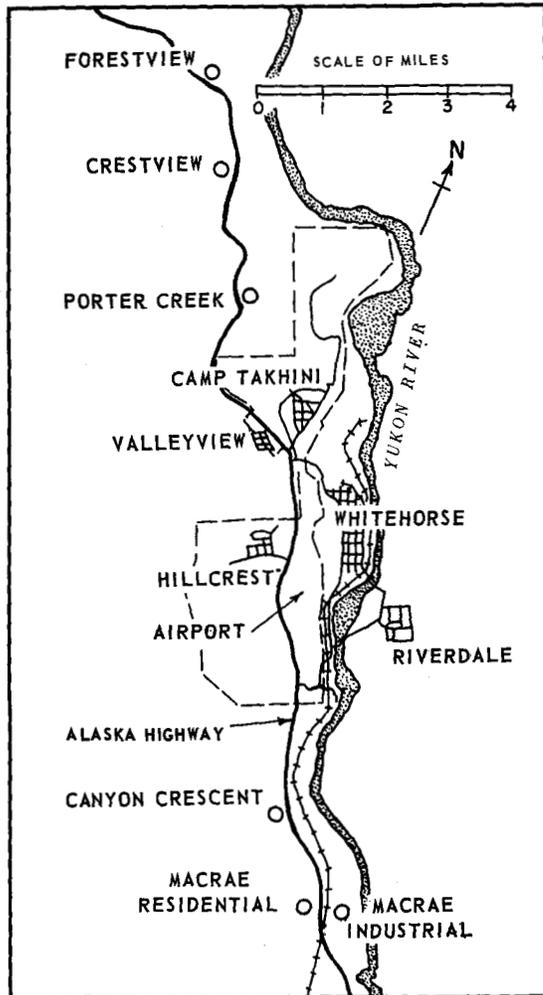
The new northern towns have developed specifically to serve the needs of the mine or smelter. The old northern towns tend to have less specific functions and to be used as general service centres for the surrounding regions. The city of Whitehorse, capital of the Yukon Territory, is an example of a northern settlement that was established at the end of the last century as a transportation centre, and is now adjusting to new demands. It has a mixture of general and specific functions, reflected in its combination of squatter cabins and government offices. The problems associated with the squatter population in Whitehorse illustrate many of the problems of both old and new settlement types in northern Canada. This paper will describe some aspects of the settlement process in and around Whitehorse, with particular emphasis on the social and economic problems of the squatters.

#### **Whitehorse—the settlement and the squatter areas**

Whitehorse is a very scattered community that can best be described as an urban complex made up of a number of self-contained units. The original site of the town was on the east bank of the Yukon River, where a small settlement arose in 1897-98. There the goods carried around Miles Canyon and the Whitehorse Rapids were transferred to the river steamers that took them to Dawson, the centre of gold mining activity in the Klondike and the focus of the largest concentration of population in the Territory. When the White Pass and Yukon railway from Skagway reached the head of navigation in 1900, it ended on the west bank of the river where a large flat provided ample room for the establishment of marshalling yards, quays and houses. Here, today, the road network of the Yukon Territory and northern British Columbia, which was expanded and improved in the 1950's, meets the railway that links Whitehorse with the tidewater port of Skagway 111 miles away. The once thriving river traffic has completely disappeared.

Through Whitehorse (Fig. 1) is channelled the output of the two major mines in the area: silver-lead-zinc concentrates from the Keno Hill area and

Fig. 2. The Whitehorse Complex.



asbestos from the Cassiar mine in northern British Columbia. Transportation, tourism and government activities provide the economic base of the city.

The river flat still contains the core of the residential, commercial, and industrial areas. Houses, schools, hotels, marshalling yards, warehouses, service installations, churches, are crowded together in an unplanned agglomeration; two trailer camps and an Indian village are also located here.

West of the lower townsite, along the Alaska Highway, lie three residential areas (Fig. 2): Takhini, a large former Army Camp whose houses are now occupied by government employees; Valleyview, a residential area for Department of Transport employees, and Hillcrest, a Royal Canadian Air Force residential area.

One industrial and five residential housing areas are located north and south of the city. Across the Yukon River is a new residential subdivision, Riverdale; of the 185 housing units here, 75 were federally owned in 1965.

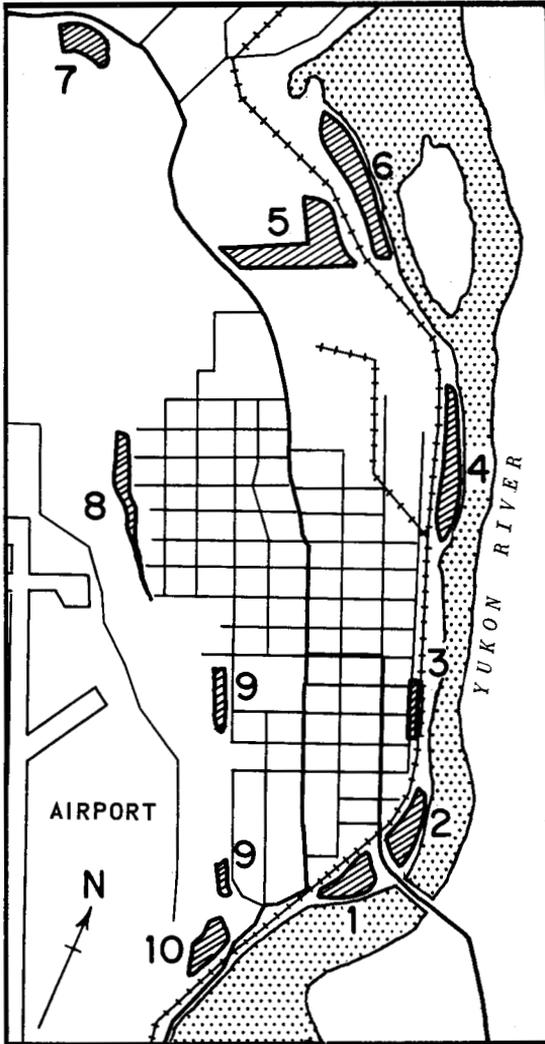
Around the margins of the lower townsite live the squatters of Whitehorse (Fig. 3). The writer first became interested in the squatters in the fall of 1960, when he was sent to Whitehorse to gather factual information on them to aid in their relocation (Lotz 1961). Continued interest in the squatter situation has been maintained during frequent subsequent visits. At the time of the first visit the squatters appeared to occupy a world of their own. Little was known about them, despite the existence of a squatter "problem" since 1942. As a group, these people are fascinating. As a symptom of a northern development problem they reveal the difference between the old type of northern community — and outlook — and the new type that has come into existence in the last ten years.

A squatter is defined, for the purposes of this paper, as "a settler having no legal title to the land occupied by him, or a person renting a dwelling whose owner does not have legal title to the land on which the dwelling stands". In Whitehorse, the term squatter has derogatory overtones. Squatters, according to local informants, were either "single men shackled up with Indian women" or "families earning big wages and not paying their fair share of running the town". To the settled rate- and tax-paying residents of Whitehorse, squatters appeared as an undesirable element in the city's population, a group who lived in unplanned areas, in substandard houses without proper services or facilities, and who contributed nothing to the running of the town or the Territory. Interpersonal relationships between squatters and non-squatters, however, did not appear to be affected by the stereotyping of the whole group, and were usually friendly.

During the boom period when the Alaska Highway was being constructed, squatting was common in the lower townsite itself. Six or seven shacks were located on one 50 x 100 ft. lot, and squatter dwellings occupied alleys and street allowances. The first squatters noted as such were a group of Indian and Metis who, in June 1942, moved on to land owned by a large company. Over the years all squatters were evicted and by 1960 all except one (whose house burnt down in 1961) had moved out of the subdivided part of the townsite. In effect, they were driven to its margins on to low-lying parts of the river flat, to areas lying under the unstable Whitehorse Airport Bluff, and to swampy, uncleared land outside the city limits. They moved, or were moved, to land that is usually considered unsuitable for building, owned either by the Crown or by a large private company.

Each squatter area had distinctive features that marked it physically, socially, and even economically as a neighbourhood. In effect the squatter areas formed a series of small discontinuous settlements peripheral to the main townsite. The inhabitants of each small settlement tended to work together for common ends such as resisting eviction, repairing roads and building recreational facilities for children. They also tended to have little knowledge of the inhabitants and conditions of other squatter areas.

Primarily the squatter areas are residential; they contained only 7 small commercial enterprises in 1960. In all, 366 buildings were counted in the 10 squatter areas. Of this number, 310 were dwellings, and 272 of these were



**Fig. 3. Lower Whitehorse showing the squatter areas.**

1. Whiskey Flats (S)
2. Whiskey Flats (N)
3. First Ave.
4. Moccasin Flats
5. Sleepy Hollow (W)
6. Sleepy Hollow (E)
7. Two Mile Hill
8. W. of 8th Ave.
9. W. of 6th Ave.
10. Wye Area

occupied. They represented a wide variety of housing types (Table 1) and their condition was generally poor. Of 272 squatter dwellings listed in a survey carried out in 1961, 100 were classified as good, and 172 as unfit for habitation; of 753 buildings in the lower townsite, 276 were classified as in good condition, 381 as fair and 78 as poor. (Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 1963).

In the townsite, all housing is connected to the sewer and water system. Each house must conform to certain standards, and no lot has more than one house on it. In the squatter areas, no houses are connected to the sewer and water system and debris is dumped there; no building standards apply and houses are scattered at random; power and telegraph lines have been strung throughout the areas.

**Table 1: Squatter Dwelling Types**

Locality	Total Dwellings	Log Houses	Log Cabins	Other Cabins	Shacks	Trailers	Quonsets	Multiple Dwellings
1. Whiskey Flats (S)	51	15	1	24	8	1	2	0
2. Whiskey Flats (N)	56	22	3	15	9	2	4	1
3. First Ave.	8	3	0	5	0	0	0	0
4. Moccasin Flats	51	20	5	13	7	2	2	2
5. Sleepy Hollow (W)	22	11	1	5	3	2	0	0
6. Sleepy Hollow (E)	56	36	2	7	6	3	1	1
7. Two Mile Hill	6	4	0	1	1	0	0	0
8. W. of 8th Ave.	18	8	0	5	1	3	0	1
9. W. of 6th Ave.	13	9	0	4	0	0	0	0
10. Wye Area	27	21	1	1	0	2	2	0
11. Elsewhere	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
<i>Total</i>	310	149	13	81	35	16	11	5
<i>Approx. Percentage</i>		48.1	4.2	26.1	11.3	5.2	3.2	1.6

*Dwelling:* Building used for human occupancy.

*House:* Reasonably structurally sound dwelling, with two or more rooms.

*Cabin:* A reasonably structurally sound dwelling, smaller than a house, usually with fewer than two rooms.

*Shack:* A substandard, poorly constructed, badly maintained dwelling, usually with only one room.

Note: When referring to dwellings this term *substandard* denotes inadequate space for the number of occupants, the absence of suitable sanitary facilities, and of services, and a poor construction or condition of the fabric of the building.

Because their growth was unplanned, the impression was given that the squatters areas covered a great deal of land. The overall building density, however, was only 8 per acre, compared to 7 per acre in the townsite and 3.5 to 4 in Takhini, Hillcrest, and Riverdale. The most crowded part of Whiskey Flats had a density of about 26 buildings to the acre.

Home ownership gave some indication of the permanence of the squatter population. Although some of the dwellings were of little value, no fewer than 69.3 per cent were owned by their occupants. In the Wye area and Sleepy Hollow there was a large number of home owners. But only 59 out of 100 householders on Whiskey Flats owned their own homes, indicating a much more transient population there.

#### Numbers of squatters and some social characteristics

Until the writer's survey, no reliable estimate of the number of squatters in lower Whitehorse was available. In the course of the survey, 287 households were listed, comprising 864 individuals, an average of three persons per household.

In July, 1951, the decennial census of the Territory enumerated 2,594 people within the city boundaries on the lower townsite; this number included squatters. Five years later, the lower townsite population numbered 2,570 people, excluding squatters. Two squatter areas were enumerated separately: Whiskey Flats (North and South), and Moccasin Flats. The population of the former was given as 342, of the latter as 772. In 1956, therefore, the squatters made up about one third of the population of the lower townsite. The 1961 census did not enumerate the squatter population separately.

The population for the area within the city boundaries, which now took in Riverdale as well as the lower townsite, totalled 5,031. All the indications were that, based on the writer's squatter census of 1960, and assuming no decrease in the squatter population between 1960 and 1961, the squatter population made up a significant portion of the total population of the city. A decline in population in Moccasin Flats from 772 in 1956 to 109 in 1960 was accounted for by a clearance programme undertaken by the company that owned the land. Some of those displaced from Moccasin Flats settled in Sleepy Hollow.

In 1960 the greatest concentration of squatters was on Whiskey Flats, where almost a third of the households were located. Of 287 households (see Table 1 for breakdown), 106 consisted of married couples with children and 90 of single men living alone. Only 7 households consisted of single women living alone. Most of the remaining households were made up of married couples without children, and men living together.

A significant feature of the squatter population was the large number of single men, who made up 31.7 per cent of the households, and totalled 128 individuals; most of whom lived on Whiskey Flats. At the end of October 1960, there were 297 unemployed males and 107 unemployed females. By the end of November of that year, there were 428 unemployed males in the Yukon territory and 119 unemployed females. Increased unemployment results when construction ceases.

The ethnic origin of the squatters was determined. About 15 per cent were recent immigrants to Canada. Twelve per cent of the squatters were Indians. The problem of the Indians, either of white or of Indian status, is one that is highlighted by the conditions under which they live when they drift into an urban area in a marginal region. The term "people of Indian ancestry" covers Treaty Indians, Indians who have given up their treaty rights, and Metis. They live mostly in certain localized areas, notably strung out along a road in Sleepy Hollow, and in a crowded part of Whiskey Flats. Poor housing, absence of proper sanitary facilities, overcrowding, inadequate clothing, poor diet, and other signs of poverty were noted among the Indian squatters.

They shared these characteristics of poverty with other squatters with families in the low income group. Such characteristics are frequently identified as "Indian". They have, in fact, no ethnic basis. As the study of the Whitehorse squatters indicated, the problems of low income groups in marginal areas are too complex to be dismissed simply as "Indian problems". The Indians in the squatter areas lived in a sub-culture of poverty which they shared with others who had difficulty in adjusting to urban life in a developing area.

Of the 34 Indian households, 18 had no steady source of income, and 2 were full time welfare recipients. In South Whiskey Flats, 7 of the 8 Indian households had no steady source of income. Some Indians gained a meagre living from trapping and casual employment, although it was reported of one man that he had been unable, in recent years, to recover even his

expenses from this occupation; this man committed suicide in 1961. Some make handicrafts. Where Indians do work they tend to be employed as unskilled labourers. The Whitehorse Agency Superintendent supplied a list of names of Indians of Indian status, but of the 19 names on this list of squatters, only 8 could be traced. The remaining names were those of single men or women, and of women with children. There is obviously a certain amount of inward and outward movement among the Indian population of the squatter areas, and also movement within the areas themselves.

In addition to households all of whose members were of Indian or part Indian ancestry, another group was noted. This consisted of households in which at least one person was of Indian ancestry. Sixty-one such households were noted. These were made up of white men with Indian wives and white men living in common-law relationships with Indian women. There was little attempt to conceal from the writer common-law relationships or temporary liaisons and it appeared that such relationships were part of an accepted pattern of society in the squatter areas. The relationship between transient and semi-permanent whites and Indians has created a number of social problems.

During the survey, 69 *problem households* were identified that presented serious social problems that would hinder relocation: heavy drinking, indigence, common-law relationships, temporary liaisons, child welfare problems, etc. Of these households, nearly half contained at least one person of Indian ancestry; many of them contained the social rejects of the frontier who could not, in the local slang, *cut it*. These people were usually the poorest of the squatters, and it is in examining the income levels and occupations of the squatters that their basic dilemma can best be seen.

An attempt was made to establish income levels among the squatters (Table 2). Since direct enquiries about income might have aroused suspicion and hostility, a tentative division was made into four income groups —

**Table 2. Income level of squatters.**

	Households	No steady income (transfer payments only)	Over \$5,000	\$3,000 \$5,000	Below \$3,000 (At least one person employed)
1. Whiskey Flats (S)	47	16	2	25	4
2. Whiskey Flats (N)	53	21	2	25	5
3. First Ave.	7	0	1	6	0
4. Moccasin Flats	44	11	5	21	7
5. Sleepy Hollow (W)	21	8	0	9	4
6. Sleepy Hollow (E)	48	10	6	26	6
7. Two Mile Hill	6	1	0	5	0
8. W. of 8th Ave.	20	5	0	15	0
9. W. of 6th Ave.	12	5	0	6	1
10. Wye Area	27	3	8	14	2
11. Elsewhere	2	1	0	0	1
<i>Total</i>	287	81	24	152	30
<i>Approx. Percentage</i>		28.2	8.3	53.0	10.4

high (over \$5,000), medium (\$3,000-\$5,000), low (below \$3,000) and those without a steady income. The average male wage in Whitehorse in 1961 was \$4,683. The criteria used included whether the squatter owned his house, the condition of the house, the age and make of car owned, the services, facilities and furniture in the house.

Among the upper income group were a number of young married couples. Their aim in some cases was to live as cheaply as possible, make as much money as possible, then leave the Yukon. The lure of the frontier has often been in the possibility of being able to *clean up and clear out*. Whitehorse and the Yukon Territory are slowly moving out of the *frontier* era of development, as the major construction projects have been completed. One group not encountered during the survey was seasonal workers from outside the Territory who come in to work on construction projects during the summer. They doubtless occupy many of the empty buildings.

**Table 3. Seasonal unemployment in the squatter areas in November 1960.**

	<i>Households</i>	<i>Households with Seasonally Employed Workers, unemployed in Nov. 1960</i>	<i>Total of Seasonally Unemployed Single Men</i>
1. Whiskey Flats (S)	47	15	10
2. Whiskey Flats (N)	53	19	14
3. First Ave.	7	0	0
4. Moccasin Flats	44	8	5
5. Sleepy Hollow (W)	21	5	7
6. Sleepy Hollow (E)	48	10	5
7. Two Mile Hill	6	0	0
8. W. of 8th Ave.	20	3	1
9. W. of 6th Ave.	12	2	2
10. Wye Area	27	1	0
11. Elsewhere	2	0	0
<i>Total</i>	287	63	44

The key to the understanding of the squatter situation lies in the combined numbers of low-income households and those without a steady income, who rely on transfer payments. In all, about one third of the squatters fall into these categories. This is the heart of the squatter problem. Any person with or without a family, who arrives in Whitehorse with little or no capital, and who can only get a seasonal or a poorly paid job, inevitably ends up in the squatter area. This is borne out by the figures in Table 3 which show the level of unemployment among the squatters and the large number of households made up of seasonally employed men. In summer, there has in the past been plenty of opportunity for work in the city and the Territory. A number of men interviewed had worked in the Yukon Territory during the summer and were spending the winter in Whitehorse, living on unemployment insurance benefits. In the Yukon, *good* and *bad* summers appear to be judged by the amount of construction taking place, which greatly affects the amount of money in circulation.

Table 4 shows the types of occupations in which the squatters engage. A heavy dependence upon employment by the services characterizes the economy of the city and direct and indirect spending on defence was the basis of much of the economy before 1964. A few years ago, the Royal Canadian Air Force considerably restricted its operations, and handed over certain responsibilities to the Department of Transport. In 1962, a large construction firm, active in the Territory and employing more than 100 men, closed down. In 1964, the Canadian Army handed over responsibility for the Northwest Highways System to the Department of Public Works.

A local real estate agent estimated that the population of the Territory dropped by 1,000 in 1964. He based his estimate on changes in the demand for housing in Whitehorse, according to a news report published in the *Whitehorse News Advertiser* of 25 November 1964.

Most of the squatters employed by the Department of National Defence were engaged on a temporary basis as labourers, semi-skilled workers and mechanics. Some expressed uncertainty about the future of their jobs, and stated that they did not want to relocate or improve their standard of living. Any increase in capital investment would merely tie up money in land and

**Table 4. Employment — Heads of squatter households.**

	Total households	Employment unknown	No steady source of income	Total Employment known
1. Whiskey Flats (S)	47	6	16	25
2. Whiskey Flats (N)	53	6	21	26
3. First Ave.	7	1	0	6
4. Moccasin Flats	44	7	11	26
5. Sleepy Hollow (W)	21	3	8	10
6. Sleepy Hollow (E)	48	9	10	29
7. Two Mile Hill	6	1	1	4
8. W. of 8th Ave.	20	8	5	7
9. W. of 6th Ave.	12	6	5	1
10. Wye Area	27	1	3	23
11. Elsewhere	2	1	1	0
<i>Total</i>	287	49	81	157
<i>Percentage</i>	100	17.1	28.2	54.7

**Places of employment**

	Known employment	Dept. of Nat. Def.	Other Gov't. Fed. & Terr.	White Pass & Yukon Route	Service Industries	Construction	Retail store, hotel, restaurant	Self-employed including landlords, trappers	United Keno Hill Mines	City
1. Whiskey Flats (S)	25	2	4	2	4	5	3	5	0	0
2. Whiskey Flats (N)	26	8	1	0	9	4	1	3	0	0
3. First Ave.	6	1	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	0
4. Moccasin Flats	26	7	4	2	6	1	1	2	3	0
5. Sleepy Hollow (W)	10	7	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0
6. Sleepy Hollow (E)	29	6	2	3	1	3	3	5	5	1
7. Two Mile Hill	4	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
8. W. of 8th Ave.	7	3	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0
9. W. of 6th Ave.	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
10. Wye Area	23	9	1	1	4	0	3	2	3	0
11. Elsewhere	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Total</i>	157	46	12	11	29	15	12	19	12	1
<i>Approx. Percentage</i>		28.3	7.7	7.0	18.4	9.5	7.7	12.1	7.7	0.6

houses that might be worthless if they lost their jobs. This attitude of mind was not restricted to the squatter population of Whitehorse, but appeared to be general among the townspeople, who were only too aware of the heavy government spending in the area.

Added to this was the problem of living costs in Whitehorse. A survey carried out by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics in the city in 1958 showed that living costs were some 30 to 40 per cent higher than in the large urban centres of Canada. The federal government recognizes the increased cost of living in Whitehorse, and pays a northern allowance of \$1,350 for married employees and \$798 for single people. Housing is also provided. Territorial government officials get neither isolation allowances nor housing (except teachers).

An examination of the savings on service costs, taxes, and other costs showed that the difference in the basic cost of living between the townsite and the squatter areas could be as high as \$700 or \$800 a year for a home owner.

The high price of land (and the cost of housing) forced many settlers who came into the area after 1950 to settle in the squatter areas. Complaints about the cost of land and accommodation were often voiced to the writer. A new Canadian paid \$135 a month out of a total salary of \$300 for accommodation when he arrived in Whitehorse in 1958. He then bought a house in Sleepy Hollow, and estimated that he had saved its cost in two years. A *cheap* lot in the townsite costs \$1,200 for 5,000 sq. ft. Land occasionally comes on the market at this price, but the average cost of a lot is nearer \$2,000 to \$3,000. A church in Whitehorse paid \$3,000 for a 50 by 100 ft. lot; a similar sized lot nearby was priced at \$5,000. Land is not only expensive in the lower townsite, it is also scarce. Unplanned growth and lack of control over land prices helped to keep prices of land high when the need for housing became acute in the 1950's. Despite the need for land, large parts of the lower townsite were taken up with defence warehouses, marshalling yards, truck parking; some land simply lay vacant.

The only alternative to buying a lot in town was for a new resident to move into one of the Territorial subdivisions. In Riverdale all lots were sold with services installed, and the cost of single lots ranged from \$1,200 to \$2,000; in 1965 the prices ranged from \$2,300 to \$4,300. A standard house sold for about \$11,000 in 1960, so that any newcomer had to be prepared for an immediate capital outlay of \$1,200 (the price of the lot serves as the down payment on the house) and to take on commitments for another \$11,000. Such an investment is obviously beyond the means of most of the squatters.

The other alternative sites for settlement in the Whitehorse area in 1960 were strung along the Alaska Highway in the Territorial subdivisions at Mile 910 (Macrae), Mile 912 (Canyon Crescent), Mile 921 (Porter Creek), Mile 923 (Crestview) and Mile 925. Lots in these Territorial subdivisions could be bought for as little as \$150, although the average price was between \$200 and \$250. On the recommendations of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation three of these subdivisions were closed down in 1962. By then a satellite village of about 500 people had grown up at Porter Creek; about 150 people lived at Crestview.

**Table 5. Length of Residence in the Yukon as squatters on present site.**

<i>Location</i>	<i>House-holds</i>	<i>Not known</i>	<i>Few weeks</i>	<i>Few weeks to one year</i>	<i>1-5 years</i>	<i>5-10 years</i>	<i>10-20 years</i>	<i>20 years</i>
1. Whiskey Flats (S)	47	8	6	5	17	7	3	1
2. Whiskey Flats (N)	53	7	2	4	17	13	10	0
3. First Ave.	7	1	0	3	1	1	1	0
4. Moccasin Flats	44	7	2	5	19	9	2	0
5. Sleepy Hollow (W)	21	4	2	1	8	6	0	0
6. Sleepy Hollow (E)	48	9	1	2	22	10	3	1
7. Two Mile Hill	6	0	0	1	2	3	0	0
8. W. of 8th Ave.	20	2	0	1	13	4	0	0
9. W. of 6th Ave.	12	2	0	2	7	0	1	0
10. Wye Area	27	4	1	4	11	6	1	0
11. Elsewhere	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
<i>Total</i>	287	37	20	38	122	51	18	1
<i>Percentage</i>	100	12.9	7.0	13.2	42.5	17.8	6.3	0.3

**Table 6. Length of Residence in the Yukon.**

<i>Location</i>	<i>House-holds</i>	<i>Not known</i>	<i>Few weeks</i>	<i>Few weeks to one year</i>	<i>1-5 years</i>	<i>5-10 years</i>	<i>10-20 years</i>	<i>20 years</i>
1. Whiskey Flats (S)	47	18	0	2	10	5	10	2
2. Whiskey Flats (N)	53	10	0	2	11	10	15	5
3. First Ave.	7	1	0	2	2	1	1	0
4. Moccasin Flats	44	15	0	0	9	13	6	1
5. Sleepy Hollow (W)	21	15	0	0	1	5	0	0
6. Sleepy Hollow (E)	48	9	1	2	22	10	3	1
7. Two Mile Hill	6	3	0	0	0	0	2	1
8. W. of 8th Ave.	20	2	0	1	7	6	2	2
9. W. of 6th Ave.	12	3	0	0	4	1	4	0
10. Wye Area	27	3	0	2	9	8	5	0
11. Elsewhere	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
<i>Total</i>	287	79	1	11	75	59	49	13
<i>Percentage</i>	100	27.5	0.4	3.8	26.2	20.5	17.1	4.5

There appeared to be no bars to squatters moving into the townsite or out to the subdivisions if they acquired enough capital to buy land and build a house. This simple process changed them from social liabilities into real settlers in the eyes of the city's residents. The subdivisions were not particularly favoured by squatters. They cited distance from town, high cost of electricity (the minimum monthly charge for electricity in 1960 was \$10), the absence of a water supply, as reasons for not going there. Low income groups cannot move far from the townsite and its services if they do not have a car. In the past, when squatters have moved they have tended to go to other squatter areas. For instance, Sleepy Hollow which was opened up within the last few years has attracted squatters from the older areas.

It is not impossible to move completely away from the squatter areas if money, the will, and the desire are present. Many squatters lack the financial means to make a change, or have tied up all their capital in their houses. If a squatter has to make a break, he may well choose to move away from Whitehorse and take up residence in such booming areas as that around Prince George, in British Columbia.

Indications were that the squatter population had reached a certain degree of stability by November 1960 (Tables 5 and 6). The squatters have lived in their present homes, in most cases, through a period of construction which has offered even the most unskilled labourer the chance to earn a living. How stable the squatter population, and that of the city, will be in future remains to be seen.

### Conclusion

The major weakness of the squatter study was lack of time and opportunity to obtain data on the population of the townsite for comparison with the data on the squatters. Nevertheless there are sufficient for a number of conclusions to be drawn.

The squatters are concentrated on government land and on that owned by the largest private company operating in the city. Numerous attempts to clear the land of squatters have failed, sometimes for political reasons, sometimes because of the private company's fear of becoming unpopular and sometimes because of lack of co-ordinated action. After the writer's survey, a full-time inspector was appointed to make sure that no further buildings were erected in the squatter areas. On 31 March 1965, only 109 squatter buildings remained. Squatters in the Wye area secured title to their land. Of the 109 buildings, 43 were on North Whiskey Flats, 30 on Moccasin Flats and 13 in Sleepy Hollow. Eight buildings remained west of Sixth Avenue, and another 8 were located west of Eighth Avenue. South Whiskey Flats had been almost entirely cleared.

The basic problem of housing low income groups and transients in the Yukon Territory remains.

The squatter problem in Whitehorse illustrates what can happen in a region with a tenuous economic base, where attractive land and accommodation near a townsite are scarce.

It may appear paradoxical that people who move into an empty land like the Yukon Territory should settle in and around the towns and villages, but this is where the employment opportunities are. Farming is negligible: only 47 people were listed as *farm population* in the 1961 census. Scattered settlement is associated with the tourist industry, oil and gas exploration, mineral exploration, and transportation and communication networks. The subarctic climate restricts movement, and people tend to crowd together to enjoy community facilities and to live near the amenities of a large settlement.

Rogers (1962 p. 9) notes that the population of Anchorage, Alaska, numbered 3,495 on 1 October 1939. In 1960, the city's population numbered 44,237; the population of the election district of Anchorage numbered 82,833,

or roughly a third of the total population of the State. In 1961, only 34.4 per cent of the population of the Yukon Territory was classified as urban, compared with 69.6 per cent for the whole of Canada. In 1961, as in 1951, *urban population* was defined by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics as consisting "mainly of the population residing in cities, towns and villages of 1,000 persons or more". In the Yukon territory only the city of Whitehorse was included as *urban* under this classification; the service camps around Whitehorse, and the subdivisions were not included.

In 1961, within 10 miles of the city centre, there lived in all about 8,000 people, or roughly 55 per cent of the whole population of the Territory; in the town of Mayo and the city of Dawson, the 2 major mining centres of the Territory, lived another 1,223. In 5 other mining and transportation centres (Elsa, Calumet, Keno Hill, Haines Junction and Watson Lake) 1,742 people lived. Such places may be *rural*, by definition, in the Canadian Census, but they are certainly urban in form, function and feeling. Approximately 11,000 people or 75 per cent of the population of the Territory, in fact, live in centres that could be termed *urban* in a northern setting.

Urban centres, like Whitehorse, frequently are segmented into small communities, difficult to service and expensive to operate. If these older established centres are called upon to perform new functions in relation to resource development, they will not be able to do so as efficiently as towns specifically designed for such development. The new northern towns of Canada — Schefferville, Thompson, Manitouswage — are replicas of the newer parts of older southern centres, with the same designs, services, housing, amenities, and facilities. They are subdivisions rolled out in the bush. There is a tendency to view the Canadian subarctic, in which the Yukon Territory lies, as an extension of southern Canada, and not as a distinct northern environment. People who go into these areas for a particular purpose or job (as distinct from those who drift into the north) expect the same standard of living as that prevailing in southern Canada.

They do not expect to have to build their own cabins, cut their own wood, and haul their own water. But the subarctic areas in Canada do not have the same diversified economic base that most parts of southern Canada possess. What may be socially desirable is not always economically feasible. Rogers (1962) has pointed out this problem of "building fifth Avenue on the tundra" in Alaska. In new resource towns such as Schefferville, large companies, using vast amounts of capital, make large investments to develop specific resources, usually rich ore deposits. And they provide towns that satisfy the needs of their skilled labour force.

But what happens when there are no basic resources, as in Whitehorse? The federal government has invested large sums of money in the Territory to provide roads, housing and all the facilities of a modern country (Table 7), and since 1954 has set the scene and provided suitable conditions and facilities for northern development. The difficulties, however, were demonstrated when the new tungsten mine on the Yukon-Northwest Territories boundary, that had only been opened in 1962, ceased operation in the summer

**Table 7. Federal Government Revenue and Expenditure in the Yukon Territory  
Fiscal Years 1954-55 to 1962-63.**

<i>Fiscal Year</i>	<i>Revenue</i>	<i>Expenditure</i>
1962-63	\$6,214,862	\$23,401,693
1961-62	6,290,402	23,155,554
1960-61	5,625,323	22,159,743
1959-60	4,809,600	21,977,033
1958-59	5,522,951	24,195,043
1957-58	3,815,314	20,037,108
1956-57	3,841,061	13,707,704
1955-56	4,005,348	10,969,791
1954-55	4,099,114	10,713,505
<i>Total</i>	<b>\$44,223,975</b>	<b>\$170,317,174</b>

Gross expenditure per person (on basis of 1961 census) \$11,355.00.

Net expenditure per person (on basis of 1961 census) \$8,400.00.

of 1963 because of the fall in the price of the metal (the mine reopened again in the fall of 1964). For other developments it may be necessary to wait a number of years, and while the population waits, the cost of running and servicing the Territory and such extended communities as Whitehorse, will continue to mount. The sort of *stop and go* development exemplified by the tungsten mine also increases costs.

Whitehorse is still on the fringe of settlement, with all the problems of distance from the southern parts of Canada. It is the most westerly urban centre in Canada, and if a person cannot make a living in the south of Canada, or feels footloose, or wants to escape, or feels the need for challenge and adventure, new sights, new sounds and new faces, he can always head west and north, and he may end up in the Yukon Territory, and in Whitehorse.

The North has always attracted the non-conformist and the individualist; but not all northern towns are populated by non-conformists. A number of such people moved into the Yukon Territory before, during and after the Second World War. They rejected the outside world — its comforts as well as its pressures. In the North they lived as best they could, and the squatter areas are a reminder of this individualistic era. A number of people still drift up the Alaska Highway and reach Whitehorse during the summer months. These people, unlike government employees or employees of large private companies being transferred, have no guarantee of employment. They must fend for themselves, and live as they can. They may drift down to the squatter areas or rent a room in a cheap hotel.

Any person arriving in Whitehorse in the future, and seeking to escape, to live as he pleases, to get away from civilization, to get away from urban pressures, will find in the city conditions similar to those from which he is attempting to flee. Whitehorse, in recent years, because of heavy government expenditure and the consequent setting up of southern standards of performance and behaviour, has come more and more to resemble a southern Canadian city.

The distinctively northern part of the city with its squatter areas seems doomed to disappear, thus rendering the city even more southern in appearance. To a person from southern Canada the plan and the physical and social structure will resemble those of the area from which he came. The Federal government spending in recent years has provided excellent services and amenities, but it has introduced standards too. The man who drifted into the Yukon before the Second World War could build a cabin or a house and live as he pleased. Now any prospective home owner in the immediate environs of Whitehorse must get title to his land, satisfy building standards and sanitary regulations. He must pay his taxes, keep his house and its surroundings clean and neat, and search for work through agencies such as the National Employment Service.

One of the squatters on Whiskey Flats unwittingly managed to sum up the problem of the modern Canadian North. He complained that no one had bothered him and the other squatters before the bridge over the Yukon River was built in 1957. Then, when the bridge was completed, and the building of the new high class suburb of Riverdale across the river began, people travelling from this suburb to work in the city had to pass over the bridge and see the Flats twice a day. "That's why they don't like us now, and want to shift us," was his conclusion. The building of the bridge and of the new subdivision made the squatter areas on Whiskey Flats central to the city, instead of being peripheral. It also emphasized the contrast between the new northern urban area (planned, serviced, modern) and the old type (unplanned, unserved, home-made).

The mixture of old and new settlement functions and forms in Whitehorse shows that adjustment has been made, and still is being made, between the former way of life in the North and the modern approach to this area. The squatters of Whitehorse illustrate the social and economic dilemma of those who wish to live in the old northern way in a region with a tenuous economic base. Their presence highlights the basic problems of old established northern towns that have assumed new functions.

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