

Tuckman
Life

CANOES

For water transportation, canoes are used. These are of two types, the log canoe, or mé'tigos, which is still used, and the now obsolete birch-bark canoe, which is termed wiki'hos. The last birch-bark canoe to be found in the tribe was collected by the writer in 1910 for the American Museum of Natural History, where it is now preserved (pl. XLVI). It was carried by its owner from his home to Keshena, a distance of several miles, and on account of its lightness, necessitated no stops for rest (pl. XLV). It is related by the elders that elm-bark canoes (ane'pos) were once used.

Birch-Bark Canoes

The making of a birch-bark canoe was a laborious process, usually accomplished by a group of several families, who held a boat-building "bee," late spring being the season usually chosen. After meeting and making the camp, the men of the party set out in the early morning to select suitable birch trees and gather the bark, which was removed in sections four feet long by three/to (217) four feet broad, cut as nearly square as possible. This task sometimes required as much as two days, for several trees of the proper size had to be found, and these were not common. The bark also had to be thick, and the trees straight with few limbs. When a birch that had all these qualifications was located, the direction in which it was desirable to fell it was decided on. Other trees were then cut to fall at right angles across the field where it was to lie. The birch was felled across and on them, that it might be elevated from the ground and the bark thus more easily stripped from it. Bark sufficient to cover a canoe of average size, that is, at least four "arm-spreads" long, was required. This unit of measurement, called niku'tina in the vernacular, is the distance between the outstretched fingertips of the right and the left hands, when the arms are held out horizontally. When the bark