MINA BENSON HUBBARD

EDITED BY SHERRILL GRACE

A WOMAN'S WAY THROUGH UNKNOWN LABRADOR

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A WOMAN'S WAY
THROUGH UNKNOWN LABRADOR

Mina Benson Hubbard

Edited, and with an introduction,
by Sherrill Grace

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For Patricia Grace
(1968–2004)

"It was a short, full life journey, and a joyous, undaunted heart that traversed it."
Mina Benson Hubbard

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PREFACE

I do not now remember exactly when I discovered Mina Benson Hubbard's 1908 book *A Woman's Way Through Unknown Labrador*. When I did read it, however, I clearly remember being struck by the quality of the book and by its differences from many other northern narratives I had read. For a number of years during the 1990s I was combing the shelves for books about the Canadian North, and expedition narratives were an item of special interest because from them I was gaining a sense of how nineteenth- and early twentieth-century travellers saw the North and what they found of value in it. The works and ideas of many such writers – Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Diamond Jenness, Robert Flaherty, Agnes Deans Cameron, Gontrin de Poncins, among others – found their way into my book, *Canada and the Idea of North*, but Hubbard's work did not.

At some point in my own journey through the literature about the Canadian North, I decided that Mina Benson Hubbard warranted more than a passing mention or a footnote. Mina, as I have come to think of her, grew on me. She simply would not let me rest and she seemed to insist that I read her again, that I ponder what she was saying and how she was saying it. Research questions have a habit of doing this; they pester me until they capture my attention, and by 1998–99 I knew that Mina had fully captured mine. I tried exorcising her with an article about women explorers, but that only raised more problems than it solved. At about this time, in the summer of 1999, I began an electronic correspondence with Anne Hart, research librarian at the Memorial University of Newfoundland and an authority on Mina Benson Hubbard. Then, in the summer of 2000, I visited the National Library of Canada to examine the microfilm of Hubbard's diary in preparation for writing another article, and it was after this research trip that I met Gwyneth Hoyle. Anne was responsible for gathering the original materials in the Centre for Newfoundland Studies of the Memorial University Library – Mina's diary, birth certificate, photographs, and various memorabilia – and she was writing Mina's biography. Gwyneth had published on Mina and knew the southern Ontario, Rice Lake area where Mina had been born and

grew up. I was grateful to be taken under Gwyneth's wing and shown the Benson home, the church and cemetery, and surrounding countryside in June 2000.

But something else happened, quite unexpectedly, in the summer of 2000, and this small event fuelled my growing determination to bring a new, annotated edition of *A Woman's Way Through Unknown Labrador* into print. A young colleague and former resident of St John's, Newfoundland, sat in my office at the University of British Columbia and told me that when she went to school, she and her classmates had to read Dillon Wallace but had never been told about Mina Benson Hubbard. (Since then, I have had another young scholar tell me this same story.) What were these young people missing! What were we all missing! Mina, I decided, had to get back into print.

But of course, scholarly expeditions never happen in a vacuum. There was Anne Hart in St John's, who was preparing the biography, and, I soon learned, Roberta Buchanan of the English Department at Memorial, who was editing the original diary. Sooner or later we would all need to meet, Gwyneth, Anne, Roberta, and myself, and what better occasion than a conference panel on Mina Benson Hubbard. For various reasons that plan was not realized, and the four of us have yet to toast Mina at the same table. However, three of us did meet in St John's in May 2001, and as a result of that meeting and of my visit to the archives, I found the inspiration and energy for writing my introduction.

It is, therefore, a very special pleasure to thank Anne Hart and Roberta Buchanan, who have read and commented on my work and helped in many ways, and Gwyneth Hoyle, who always prodded me to look further and who answered a number of questions. Without their friendship and collegiality, not to mention their pioneering efforts, new work on Mina Benson Hubbard could not take place. To Wendy Roy, whose graduate work included Mina and who shared some of that work with me, and to Julie Cruikshank, whom readers will know as a leading Canadian anthropologist and ethnographer but whom I know as a colleague, friend, and as Mina's great niece, my warmest thanks. I hope that through this edition I can return something of value and interest to you both.

There are many others whom I wish to thank, including Susanna Egan and Gabriele Helms, my very dear friends and colleagues, for giving me the opportunity to test some of my early ideas on Mina as autobiographer at the "Changing Identities" conference they organized at the University of British Columbia in July 2000; Alec Hoyle for his generous chauffering and photographing; Bryan Greene, canoeist and geographer, for his help with Labrador toponymy; Janet Friskney for her help with William Briggs; Virginia Murray for her information about the Murray archives and her permission to reproduce the original advertisement for the 1908 book; Anne-Marie Knowles, curator, Chesterfield Museum in Chesterfield, Derbyshire, for her help in identifying the English artist who

made Leonidas's and Mina's portraits; George Brandak, manuscript curator in UBC's Special Collections, who is always so patient with my enthusiasms; Keith Bunnell, librarian in UBC's Walter C. Koerner Library, for his assistance with obscure references; my UBC colleagues Pamela Dalziel, for confirmation on Joseph Syddall's art, Veronica Strong-Boag, for advice on Canadian history, Lisa Chalykoff, for word-processing Mina's text so it could be edited and annotated, and Dominique Yupangco, for her expert assistance with technology; Michael Robertson of UBC's Media Group for his great care in photographing the maps and illustrations; Marcel Fortin of the University of Toronto Map Library for his CD scan of Mina's map; the staff of the Centre for Newfoundland Studies who made my brief visit there so productive – Bert Riggs and Susan Hadley – and librarians at the National Archives of Canada, the United Church of Canada Archives, the Smithsonian, the National Archives in Washington, the Lily Library, Indiana University, the HBC Archives in Winnipeg, and the National Archives and Records Administration in Maryland; Aurèle Parisien of McGill-Queen's University Press for encouraging me to do this book; and, as always, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for their continued support of my research.

But there is one person who has helped to make the labour of this book a joy, who has always brought her warm smile, eager curiosity, and scholarly expertise to the research she has helped me with – Jill MacLachlan. In the midst of my conflicting duties, absent-mindedness, and pressing demands, Jill has always been sympathetic and positive, patient and meticulous. If there is, finally, any benefit to flow from the kind of scholarly work involved in preparing a volume like this, it will surely manifest itself in the future work of young scholars like Jill who will find their own ways through the temptations of unanswered questions and in the next generation of readers, in Newfoundland and away, who will discover Mina's way through Labrador.

S.E.G
Vancouver, 2003

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NOTE ON THE EDITION

This edition of *A Woman's Way Through Unknown Labrador* is based on the John Murray first edition of 1908 and reproduces the text exactly, including a facsimile of the original map, which has been bound in at the back of the book.

Annotations to Mina Benson Hubbard's narrative are indicated by consecutive numbers within the text and appear at the end of the book. These are limited to people, places, and references not already explained in my introduction; for more detail, readers should consult Roberta Buchanan's edition of the 1905 diaries, Anne Hart's biography, and the cartography and topo-nymy of Bryan Greene, all in *"It's All So Grand and Beautiful": The Life and Labrador Diary of Mina Hubbard*, soon to be published (see Hart or Buchanan in the Bibliography). Annotations to Leonidas Hubbard's Diary and George Elson's Narrative have been kept to a minimum to preserve the focus on the 1905 expedition and on *A Woman's Way Through Unknown Labrador*, but sources for further information on the 1903 expedition or on Labrador local history are listed in the Bibliography. Mina Benson Hubbard's spelling has been retained throughout her text, but in my introduction and notes I have used Naskapi for the First Nation group now commonly called, with the Montagnais, the Innu and Naskaupi for the river; Mina Benson Hubbard sometimes calls the small community on Hamilton Inlet from which the expedition started Northwest River, but I have used North West River throughout my portions of the edition. The spellings I have chosen are consistent with those used by Buchanan and Hart.

References to this edition of Mina Benson Hubbard's book included in my introduction and the annotations are indicated as WW, followed by a page number, and all citations of archival materials held in the Centre for Newfoundland Studies at the Memorial University of Newfoundland are given in parentheses as CNS followed by collection and file numbers when these are available. Instead of a Works Cited I have included a short, general bibliography that will hopefully be of interest and use to readers. The Murray edition included a general index

of names, places, and terms, but here I have provided a subject index to the entire volume. Because considerable controversy has developed over why Mina Benson Hubbard made her expedition, with writers from 1905 to the present either stating as fact or implying that she made public accusations against Dillon Wallace, I have transcribed the two interviews she gave to the *World* and reprinted them in the Appendix. These interviews provide as accurate an account of her public statements to the press as we are likely to find. My only further additions are the nine figures used in my introductory chapter. I hope these images will not only help set the stage as it was in 1905 and 1908 but also, with Figure 9 – the map of Nitassinan – show the Innu Labrador of today.

FIGURES

(INTRODUCTION)

ABBREVIATIONS

CNS: The Centre for Newfoundland Studies at Memorial University of Newfoundland, which holds the Hubbard and Wallace papers and extensive newspaper clippings

GE: George Elson

Illus.: This always refers to the original illustrations chosen by Mina Benson Hubbard for her book, to distinguish them from the figures that accompany the introductory essay.

LH: Leonidas Hubbard, Jr

MBH: Mina Benson Hubbard. Although I call her familiarly by her given name in my narrative, in my notes I use this formal abbreviation.

WW: *A Woman's Way Through Unknown Labrador.* For cross-references within this edition of MBH's book, I give the abbreviation followed by a page number.

A WOMAN'S WAY
FROM EXPEDITION TO AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Sherrill Grace

> The Canadian public may someday honour a woman whose claim to recognition rests upon pluck and brains. (Graham, 471)

When Jean Graham wrote these words, she may not have imagined how slight the recognition would be for Mina Benson Hubbard or how slow it would be in coming. The occasion for Graham's remark was her September 1908 review in the *Canadian Magazine* of Hubbard's account of her successful 1905 expedition across Labrador – *A Woman's Way Through Unknown Labrador*. Mina Hubbard undertook her expedition in the hope of completing the work begun in 1903 by her husband, Leonidas Hubbard, Jr, who died of starvation in October that year with his expedition a tragic failure. And yet, despite her actual success in the summer of 1905 and the generally positive reception of her book, she has either been forgotten or relegated to a minor role in the expeditionary dramas played out in Labrador during 1903 and 1905.

Almost a century ago, however, Jean Graham described the woman, her journey, and the book in terms that must have appealed to Mina[1] (if she read Graham's review) and that suggest why the book matters today. While acknowledging Mina's explanation that she went to Labrador because of her husband, Graham insists that "as one continues to read this chronicle of a journey through unknown districts, one comes to the conclusion that the wife of Leonidas Hubbard has a spirit akin to his own, and that the canoe trip over stretches of unexplored lake and river appealed to her love of the remote and primeval" (469–70).

Mina Benson Hubbard (1870–1956) certainly did come to love the Labrador wild. In addition to having "pluck" (a word that sounds trivializing now but was a common term of praise for men and women in Mina's day) and "brains," she was determined, practical, proud, and passionately committed to the task she set herself and to her husband's memory. Judging from contemporary photographs and from the portraits by Joseph Syddall (see Figure 1 and illus., p. 2), she was beautiful, slim, feminine, even fragile looking – attributes that would not

Figure 1. Portrait of Mina Benson Hubbard by Joseph Syddall reproduced on the John Murray advertising flyer for her book. Syddall did this full portrait drawing in 1907, and Mina used his three-quarter profile drawing, dated 1907, for the frontispiece of her book (see illus., p. 2). The text of the advertising copy highlights her achievements and the role played by William Cabot.

necessarily serve her serious interests. Moreover, she could write well and could tailor her prose to suit different audiences. This achievement, given that she was a trained nurse and not a professional writer like her husband, is in some ways as significant as her expedition, and it makes the neglect of her book all the more puzzling. Not only did she mount her own expedition across a hitherto un-mapped section of Labrador – the very country and attempt that had taken her husband's life – she accomplished, in record time, all he had hoped but failed to do. Then, she not only survived to tell the tale, but wrote about it in five articles and a book, and gave public lectures, with lantern slides, about her expedition. While it would be an exaggeration to say that Mina lived for and through her expedition (she had a very full life after 1908; see Hart), it is fair to say that the expedition of 1905 and the book published in 1908 were watershed events in her life.[2]

In preparing this new edition of *A Woman's Way Through Unknown Labrador* for publication a full century after her decision to make her "way," I have had several goals in mind. First, and most important, I want to bring this book back into circulation so that it can be read, discussed, critiqued, studied, and enjoyed. *A Woman's Way* deserves attention. It belongs, I am convinced, with books like Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa* (1897) or with any number of travel books that have received attention in recent years.[3] It belongs, especially, with the volu-

minous literature on exploration and travel in the Canadian North – with books by Warburton Pike, William Cabot, Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Diamond Jenness, Franz Boas, and Gontran de Poncins, or with the works of Isobel Wylie Hutchison, Agnes Deans Cameron, and Clara Vyvyan. It belongs, as well, side by side with books about Labrador, from *Lure of the Labrador Wild* by Dillon Wallace to *Sketches of Labrador Life* by Lydia Campbell, *Labrador Memories* by Margaret Baikie, *Woman of Labrador* by Elizabeth Goudie, *Nitassinan: The Innu Struggle to Reclaim Their Homeland* by Marie Wadden, and (albeit in a very different way) *It's Like the Legend: Innu Women's Voices* edited by Nympha Byrne and Camille Fouillard. Seen in the contexts of turn-of-the-nineteenth-century travel writing, of northern expedition writing, and of women's autobiography, *A Woman's Way* is fascinating because so many of the challenges, contradictions, complications (biographical, ideological, narrative), and conflicts inherent in any attempt to write about one's personal experiences of travel through an arduous, unfamiliar landscape come into sharp focus. Like so many travel writers before and since, Mina discovered that she was writing about herself, and in our current age, which seems obsessed with biography and autobiography, her wrestle with the angel of life-writing is deeply moving.

This edition of *A Woman's Way* is closely based on the original edition, published in the spring of 1908 by John Murray in London and, under the imprint of William Briggs, in Toronto. I will say more in due course about the textual variations of the book and its publishing history, but my choice of the Murray/Briggs as my copy text is important because this is the edition that Mina saw through the press herself. I have lightly annotated the text where references cannot be explained in this introduction, and I discuss the book's genesis (from her expedition diary to its unusual final form), its illustrations (drawn from her own and others' photographs), and its reception by contemporary reviewers. But because Mina also gave public lectures and published articles about her expedition, no re-evaluation of *A Woman's Way* would be complete without some consideration of the other venues and opportunities she seized for telling her story.

> It seemed to me fit that my husband's name should reap the fruits of service which had cost him so much, and in the summer of 1905 I myself undertook the conduct of the second Hubbard Expedition, and ... successfully completed the work undertaken two years before. (*WW*, 43)

Who was Mina Benson Hubbard? Why did she undertake such a challenging task? And what did she achieve? These questions seem to have haunted the story of the second Hubbard expedition right from its beginning in June 1905. As soon as word leaked out that a woman – the widow – was going to Labrador, the Amer-

ican and Canadian newspapers went wild. The June headlines were often lurid and sensational: "Widow Goes to Arctic to Solve Death of Hubbard"; "Mrs. Hubbard Suspicious: Seeks Husband's Trail"; "Delicate Woman Explorer Ready for the Labrador"; "Hubbard's Death Mystery Lures Widow to Labrador." And the reporters, who regularly got their facts wrong, raised a first-rate storm of speculation and suspicion over Mina's motives. One tabloid ran a full-page story, complete with cartoons and photographs, under the title "What Does Mrs. Hubbard Expect to Find?" Despite her considerable efforts to keep her plans secret and her refusal to say much at all to prying reporters, she soon found herself accused of harbouring dark, unspecified suspicions about her husband's death and about Dillon Wallace's role in the fall of 1903. She was described as competing with Wallace, of being his rival, of *following* Wallace into Labrador, and of insisting on her foolish trip despite the advice of men (like the guide George Elson and the lawyer Alonzo McLaughlin). That the publicity swirling around her was based on innuendo, partial truths, outright errors, and wild speculation whipped up by journalists seems to have made little difference to the picture of Mina that has emerged since the clamour of 1905.[4]

Biography is not my purpose. For a detailed narrative of Mina's life, we must wait for Anne Hart's account in *"It's All So Grand and Beautiful."* But a few basic facts help to situate this woman who, at thirty-five, decided to mount an expedition unlike any other undertaken by a white woman in the Canadian North up to that time and for some time after.

Mina Adelaide Benson was born, the sixth of eight children, in an Irish immigrant farming family at Bewdley in the Rice Lake District of Ontario, near Cobourg. Her family was deeply religious. Her father, James Benson, was active in the Bible Christian Church congregation and the Plainville Wesleyan Methodist Church (today the Plainville United Church; see Martin et al., 100–1), and Mina's broad spiritual interests remained strong throughout her life. Professionally, Mina chose to serve through teaching and nursing. In her twenties she taught at the local public school in Glourourim until she left, in 1897, for New York, where she trained as a nurse. It was while working as assistant superintendent at the S.R. Smith Infirmary on Staten Island that she met and nursed Leonidas Hubbard, Jr (1872–1903) through a bout of typhoid. They married on 31 January 1901, and it is he, more than anyone or anything else in the Labrador stories about to unfold, who remains for me the greatest mystery. Mina adored this man. Indeed, he seems to have inspired a remarkable degree of affection, loyalty, respect, and admiration in everyone who knew him.

In 1903 Hubbard was assistant editor of the American wilderness magazine *Outing*. He was keenly interested in fishing, canoeing, and gentlemanly exploration, activities from which he hoped to produce nature and adventure stories.

Mina shared some of this passion for the outdoors: they spent their honeymoon camping and she accompanied him on a 1902 canoe trip in Canada (see Leonidas Hubbard, "Off Days on Superior's North Shore"). His expedition to Labrador was supposed to supply him with rich material for stories – about the great caribou migration, about the Naskapi, and about a largely unexplored and unmapped part of the northern wilderness. Dillon Wallace (1863–1939), a close friend and a lawyer, agreed to go with Hubbard, and the two Americans hired George Elson (1876–1944), a Canadian Scots-Cree from James Bay, as their guide.[5]

The story of Hubbard's 1903 expedition has been told many times by individuals with varying degrees of vested interest in the spin to be put upon events. Wallace, with Mina's uneasy approval and with the ghost-writing assistance of Frank Barkley Copley, prepared *The Lure of the Labrador Wild*, but when she finally read the manuscript, Mina was greatly disappointed because the narrative appeared to confirm newspaper speculation that her husband had been weak and foolish and that his expedition would not have failed so utterly, nor would he have starved to death, had he planned the trip with greater care.[6] Moreover, Wallace portrayed himself, and was seen by his readers, as a hero who, although barely surviving himself, had stayed on in Labrador to retrieve Hubbard's body and bring it back to the United States and who had then persevered to produce "the issue of our plighted troth" (*Lure*, np) in the form of his book. Although George Elson was the only one of the three men to make it out for help, he was relegated to the margins, to the position of a fifth business, by Wallace, whose narrative is not an expedition narrative but an elegiac romance that enhances his own role as the heroic survivor who testifies to actual events and tells the true story of his friend's death.[7]

But Wallace was by no means the only interpreter of this expedition. In a June 1904 article, William Cabot, himself a knowledgeable traveller in Labrador, protests the negative representations of Leonidas in the press and, by implication, in Wallace's forthcoming book. Cabot, about whom I will have more to say, tries to put Hubbard's failure in the context of Labrador realities as he knew them: starvation, he points out, is all too frequent in this harsh subarctic environment, where weather and game are unpredictable and maps (for white men) are incomplete and unreliable. Cabot reminds his readers of Sir John Franklin's fate in 1845 and of Warburton Pike's description of the challenges (including near starvation) of such travel in his 1891 book *The Barren Ground of Northern Canada*. Less than a year later, in March 1905, Caspar Whitney, the chief editor of *Outing* and an amateur explorer, entered the fray by publishing his own version of events in his magazine, together with substantial excerpts from Hubbard's 1903 diary.[8] Whitney, who had the reputation and potential legal liability of *Out-*

ing to consider, claims that he was "not in sympathy" with Hubbard and had "sought to dissuade" him from undertaking the trip (642). Moreover, he makes a point of insisting that Hubbard told *Outing* nothing about his equipment, the clear inference being that had he done so Whitney would have warned him about its inadequacies. This article, which runs to forty-seven pages and includes many expedition photographs (as well as the photograph of Leonidas used by the English artist Joseph Syddall for his portrait of Leonidas in Mina's book; see illus., p. 156) and rough maps, devotes considerable space to the details of Wallace's return to New York with Hubbard's body, before turning to Hubbard's diary. And it ends, significantly, with Hubbard's praise and exoneration of Wallace and Elson, and with Hubbard's words, which have been cited and recited ever since: "I think the boys will be able, with the Lord's help, to save me" (687).

It is impossible now to sort out with absolute certainty just what caused the rift between Mina Benson Hubbard and Dillon Wallace, or to determine exactly when she or he decided to mount their expeditions. However, as soon as the press got wind of *her* plans, the furor began, and it is important to examine the press coverage, between June and December 1905, of her and Wallace's expeditions in order to appreciate the challenges she faced and the socio-cultural complexities of her undertaking. What I can affirm is that Wallace's *Lure of the Labrador Wild* appeared in early 1905 and that published announcements of his intention to return to Labrador appeared in February 1905; the first I am aware of was on 25 February 1905 (CNS 6.02.003). On 27 March 1905 the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* ran a major feature on Wallace, with an interview, photographs, and references to 1903 and to his *Lure of the Labrador Wild;* he is touted by the reporter as a "hero" and an "explorer" about to set forth on "The Dillon Wallace Expedition." Mina, for her part, kept her plans quiet until June, when she arrived in Halifax on the way to Labrador.[9] Later, in one of her articles, she insisted that her "journey into the interior of Labrador was decided upon quite suddenly one day in January 1905":

> I was sitting at my writing-table that day, feeling very, very helpless and sad. I suppose no one will ever quite know with what a sickening sense of limitation I longed to be a man, so that I might go away and do the work to which my husband has given his life, and which his death left unfinished. But I was a woman, and it did not occur to me that I could do anything until that January day, when, as I sat looking out of the window, aching with a sense of my own littleness and impotence, suddenly something thrilled through my whole being. I could not tell you what it was. I could not in any definite way describe it to you; but it came like a sudden illumination of darkness, and it meant, "Go to Labrador." ("Through Lonely Labrador," 82)

Did she already know, in early January 1905, that Wallace was planning to return? Possibly. Might such knowledge, combined with her disappointment over his forthcoming book, have steeled her resolve to go? Possibly. Does it matter? No – unless one wants to suggest that she had no business going to Labrador at all and only went out of jealous spite and in a spirit of ungenerous rivalry. But these are precisely the terms picked up by the press of the day, and repeated by others since, to describe her and her expedition.

When someone undertakes a dangerous or improbable-seeming adventure, it is natural to wonder why, and few areas of dangerous endeavour have led to greater competition, rivalry, and dispute than exploration. Northern exploration is no exception. Only think of the race to discover the Northwest Passage, the millions of pounds spent on searches for Franklin, the indignation of no less a person than Charles Dickens over allegations of cannibalism in the final stages of that disaster, the ruin of Dr John Rae's career and reputation (a reputation still in need of reparation; see McGoogan), or the unscrupulous battle waged over the discovery of the North Pole by Robert Peary and Frederick Cook (see Bloom). The Labrador expeditions of 1903 and 1905 were staged before a decades-old backdrop of mystery, defamation of character, jealousies, competition (individual and national), and immense financial investment and in a historical context defined by the nineteenth-century scramble for conquest and economic advantage, glory, and immortality by being the *first* to discover the passage, the pole, or some other rare, exotic site or group of people. So why should anyone be surprised or offended when journalists fanned the rhetorical flames of contest and rivalry in the Hubbard affair or when they attempted to put a human face on what must have seemed a bizarre undertaking? Their job was to sell newspapers. Jealousy, greed, love, hatred, mystery, and suspicion make good copy.

The possible explanations for why shouts of competition and jealousy would be taken so seriously in this case are many. Wallace had already represented himself, and been represented by others, as a hero; therefore, any suggestion that he had not behaved well in 1903 was scandalous. Mina was a woman, a grieving widow. Women, by contemporary definitions of gender, had no business going on expeditions; any woman who did came under special scrutiny. Her motive could not be professional work because she could not profess geography, cartography, ethnography, or field photography. Another motive must be sought, and in Mina's case it was not far to seek. Many reporters repeated the negative comments from Wallace's supporters and spouted contemporary views on gender; it was easy for them to dismiss her as a distraught female unable to resign herself to her husband's death, full of illogical hostility and petty suspicion, jealous of Wal-

lace's role, resentful of his survival, and preoccupied with the perfection of Leonidas. In some newspaper accounts she seemed little short of deranged. How else explain such a mad, useless, costly, and above all unfeminine and inappropriate undertaking?

In June and November of 1905 the American and Canadian newspapers kept Mina Benson Hubbard and Dillon Wallace in the headlines. The articles varied in length, sometimes used photographs, and usually got the facts, people's names, and what was said (or not said) wrong. Wallace was represented as a hero, an explorer, and an author, the man who had risked his life in 1903 to save his friend and was now going to complete his friend's work. His motive for going was never in question. Mina was repeatedly presented through her status as a widow and through her physical appearance – fragile and pale were the terms most often used – while he was presented as a man of action and iron will, with legitimate goals and work to do. On 13 June 1905, under the headline "Mrs. Hubbard Suspicious," she is described as undertaking a "strange visit" that is "purely sentimentally inspired" because her "mind" cannot conceive of her husband as anything less than a genius (*New York Tribune*, 1). These disparaging comments are attributed to Alonzo McLaughlin, a law partner and friend of Wallace's and the lawyer handling Leonidas Hubbard's estate, but they are not the only troubling remarks ostensibly given to the *Tribune* reporter. S. Edgar Briggs, who worked for Fleming H. Revell (Wallace's publisher), was quoted as refusing to discuss the "estrangement" between Mina and Wallace and as saying that Mina had not gone to Labrador to explore (2); his implication was that her reasons were personal, even spiteful. And so the tone was set for the majority of the news coverage to follow every few days in June. Her "visit" to Labrador was "strange" and sentimental, conceived by an unbalanced mind full of suspicions. Her "secret mission" (New York *Evening Telegram*, 13 June 1905, 16) was shrouded in mystery, driven by estrangement, and characterized by emotion and personal dispute.

In fairness, Mina was not presented only in this negative light by the press, and ironically, she may have contributed to the speculation whirling around her from the 10th of June on because she refused to answer reporters' questions and deliberately kept her plans private (see her letters to John Gillis for 19 April and 21 May 1905, CNS 2.01.001). Sometimes she was described as "plucky," "intrepid," "daring," determined, and fond of the outdoors. Nevertheless, the dominant image of her constructed by the press was negative. When Dillon Wallace's doting sister became involved, a further negative twist was added to the story. In an article for the St John's *Evening Herald* dated 19 June 1905 but with a Halifax 12 June byline, under the dramatic subtitle "Mrs. Leonidas Hubbard Sails for Northern Wilds in Opposition to Dillon Wallace," we are informed that Hub-

bard and Wallace are "hot rivals," that she "keeps her mouth tightly closed" (4), but that Wallace's sister is "not so reticent": "Her story in brief is that Mrs. Hubbard is jealous of Wallace, that she feels that in publishing 'Lure of the Labrador Wild' and going on the present expedition he is doing something that should be hers to do" (4). In her loyal attempt to support her brother, Annie Wallace went out of her way to tarnish and diminish his "rival." A case of women beware women? Or of all is fair in love and northern exploration? From this point on the newspapers had what they wanted, and a presumptuous jealousy was added to Mina's emerging portrait.

How much of this reporting she was aware of I cannot say, but at least one friend was aware and tried to set the record straight. On 22 June 1905 the Reverend James E.C. Sawyer, her Williamstown pastor, wrote a letter to the editor of the New York *World* protesting the errors and speculations being published in its pages and in other papers. Sawyer, who was in a position to know the facts, assures the press and public that Mrs Hubbard had no doubt about how her husband died and had gone to Labrador "to complete the work which her husband undertook" (6). He insists that she did not harbour a "spirit of rivalry" and that "her plan [to go to Labrador] was carefully matured several months before she learned that [Wallace] intended an expedition." He points out that Wallace was not three weeks ahead of her, that she was not following him, and that her party "will probably enter the wilderness ahead of his." Then, in an interesting aside, Sawyer comments on George Elson's presence as her guide. Elson, Sawyer explains, was the "mainstay" of Leonidas Hubbard's expedition and responsible for saving Wallace's life; he agreed to guide Mina, Sawyer states, because "he has confidence in the success of [her] arduous and hazardous enterprise."[10] While Sawyer allows that Mina was displeased with *The Lure of the Labrador Wild*, he dismisses the rumours circulating in the press by focusing on her exploration "work," which was the purpose of her "heroic undertaking." He stresses the "enthusiasm" with which "she gives herself to exploration," the absence of any rivalry with or suspicion of Wallace, and the "carefully matured" nature of her plans prior to any knowledge of Wallace's. Sawyer concludes by reminding readers that Dillon Wallace owed his life to George Elson and he enjoins us to respect Mina's efforts; her "consecration to her husband's memory should," he urges, "win the sympathy and admiration of the world."

Two weeks later, on 2 July, well after Mina was safely on her expedition and beyond the reach of the paparazzi, the *World* published a full-spread tabloid-style piece purportedly based on an exclusive interview with her by a *World Magazine* correspondent in her Halifax YWCA room just before she left for Newfoundland (see Appendix). This article, although highly decorative, is billed as "'Why I Went to Labrador': Mrs. Hubbard's Own Story" and boasts two stylish

Figure 2 (left). Image of Mrs Hubbard in the forest, from her interview with the New York World, 2 July 1905. Figure 3 (right). Image of Mrs Hubbard as the serious widow, from her interview with the New York World, 2 July 1905.

illustrations, one of "Mrs Hubbard in the Canadian Forest, Photo taken at the time of her marriage" (Figure 2) and the other of "Mrs. Hubbard as she is today" (Figure 3). Inserted at the left side of the page is a full-length photograph of Leonidas, an image familiar to readers of Wallace's *Lure of the Labrador Wild*, where it is the frontispiece and where Leonidas is facing left, looking out over a lake. In this article, however, Leonidas is shown facing right, looking towards his smiling bride and beyond her to his unsmiling widow, and the caption reads: "Leonidas Hubbard who starved to death in Labrador." The text of this article, which includes many passages in quotation marks, confirms that she "Meant to Go Secretly," although she does not explain why she believed secrecy, even from her mother, was so important. She then goes on to describe the work she plans to do mapping the Naskaupi and George Rivers and when and how she planned her expedition. In a revealing comment, she explains that she "wished, time after time, that I were a man, so that I could take up this work, but it had not struck me that I, a woman, could go to the wilds of Labrador on an expedition" (1).

Then she dates her decision to go as early as January 1905, when she had asked George Elson to accompany her and immediately began preparations. She also insists on telling the reporter many biographical details about Elson – that he is Scotch and Cree (she does not say "halfbreed"), which she calls "a splendid combination," that he is an experienced guide, hunter, canoeist, and surveyor who can make maps, that he made "nobly heroic efforts" to save her husband, and that he was responsible for bringing the body out of the interior. She concludes her description of Elson by stating that he is "loyal, true and brave."

This interview, "the first she has given and the last she will give before she returns from the Labrador wilds," took place so that she could "correct erroneous statements ... as to the object of her trip," which suggests that she knew something about the unwelcome publicity and innuendo swirling around her and that she may have wanted secrecy to avoid just such allegations and speculations appearing in the press. The interview also serves to position her and her party in a legitimate and positive light. She is going to Labrador to complete her husband's work and her companion and guide is well known and eminently respectable. Moreover, she sounds thoughtful, determined, and well organized. Her words, as quoted, complement the image of her serious face and direct look. It is hard to imagine how she could have more effectively countered the accusations used against her in the June newspapers. This interview article identifies her as a Canadian, a trained nurse, and a devoted wife, in short, as a person to be taken seriously and to be, at the very least, believed.

The period between 2 July and 8 November 1905 was comparatively quiet. Both the second Hubbard expedition and the Wallace expedition were completely incommunicado. However, on 22 July the pot was stirred once more when Leonidas Hubbard's sister, Daisy Hubbard Williams, sent a letter to the *World*, the New York paper with a considerable vested interest in reporting on the Labrador affair. In this letter Mrs Williams rejected any suggestion that Dillon Wallace did not do enough for her brother and, although she maintained that Mrs Hubbard (Mina) could not have implied any criticism of Wallace in her 2 July *World* interview (as indeed she did not), Williams's letter gave the impression that she blamed Mina for the public disparagement of her brother's loyal friend. In praising Wallace, Daisy Williams implied that the Hubbard family supported him, not Mina. This letter provided new grist for the gossip mill and was picked up and quoted by other papers.[11] The press in its wisdom had decided that the Hubbard family sided with Wallace, which it appears they did (see Hart).

Other items for July and August were brief and confusing. The *New York Herald* announced on 14 August: "Mrs. Hubbard to Give Up Labrador Expedition." This idea gave immediate rise to another, more graphic headline, "Mrs Hubbard

Turns Back from Quest – Fails to Penetrate Labrador Wilderness to Investigate Husband's Death," and to the terse "Mrs. Hubbard Gives Up Labrador Trip." Regardless of her statements in the *World* interview, the journalists persisted in misrepresenting her motives and goals. Then, on 8 November 1905, the *New York Tribune* speculated that Mina and Wallace "may have perished" in a front-page item titled "Fear for Explorers." The paper went on to describe news received from three members of Wallace's party who had been sent back to the coast, but noted that Wallace and a companion were continuing on to Ungava (see Wallace, *Long Labrador Trail*, 166–75, and Davidson and Rugge, 353–6). The item concluded by stating that Mina "had caused a sensation by forming an expedition of her own" (1). Also on the 8th the *North Adams Evening Transcript* (published in North Adams, where Wallace was working on his book, and near Williamstown, where Mina had gone after Leonidas's death) ran a speculative piece about what they called "The Rival Explorers" (8). And so it continued for a few more days.

The first accurate news was Mina's Wednesday, 8 November 1905 telegram, sent from Chateau Bay, Labrador, to Herbert Bridgman, business manager of the *Brooklyn Standard-Union*, secretary of the Peary Arctic Club (see Officer and Page, 154), and her close friend and supporter: "Successful. Will return home by steamer King Edward." On 9 November the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* published a detailed summary of the 1903 and 1905 expeditions under the title "Mrs. Hubbard Telegraphs She Has Been Successful" (5). On 9 November the *Evening Telegram* ran a shorter piece declaring that "Mrs. Hubbard and Party are Safe"; the paper cites her telegram to Bridgman and adds that "Wallace and Companions are also Heard From" (5). On the 10th the *World* ran a major piece with her photograph (see Figure 3), quoting at length from her letter to its editor, calling her "intrepid," and touting her as the "WOMAN WHO TRAVERSED LABRADOR'S ICY WASTES" (4).

At this point one might well think that Mina Benson Hubbard's worst troubles were over. The public knew that she had returned safely from Labrador and had been successful. However, the press consistently criticized or downplayed her expedition. On 9 November Alonzo McLaughlin is quoted as saying that she "gave up," despite the publication of her telegram. Caspar Whitney holds forth praising Dillon Wallace and refusing to discuss Mrs Hubbard. But perhaps the unkindest cut came in the *North Adams Evening Transcript* on 10 November. In this piece her telegram to Bridgman is quoted but the anonymous reporter goes on to assert that "she cannot have carried out her original intentions [because that] would take her on a much longer journey" (8). On the 14th the *New York Tribune* followed suit with comments attributed to the Reverend Dr John B. Marchand, clearly a highly educated clergyman who knew Labrador and could

state, with all the authority of his person, that Dillon Wallace was alive (just how he knew this is not clear). The good reverend describes Wallace as "a level-headed fellow" who could "forge ahead, even without an Indian guide," and who, even at this stage in his expedition, had "already done much." Then Marchand is reported as assuring the American public that they would soon hear that Wallace "has planted your flag on a new land" (5)! Of Mina he concludes: "I do not think Mrs. Hubbard got into the interior; in fact, I don't see how she could in such short time" (5).

By the time Mina arrived back in Williamstown on the evening of 22 November 1905, the papers had largely agreed to dismiss her claims. Her return was noted briefly, along with some scattered details (the maps used by her husband were incorrect, she was perhaps writing a book or articles, the flies were bad), but with one exception, she was neither praised nor given serious attention. As far as I know, only the *New York Tribune* was positive and then only in terms of gender: "fitted out at her own expense, [her expedition] is one of the most remarkable exhibitions of woman's courage in recent years. She was the only woman in the expedition" (22 November 1905. 16). Its emphasis, then, was not that she had succeeded, that she had headed the expedition, or that she had accomplished something, but that she was courageous *for a woman* and that she had been "the only woman" on an otherwise male team. In everyday parlance this is called damning with faint praise.

Once again the thinness of the reporting may have resulted from Mina's refusal to talk to reporters. Given her treatment at their hands in June, such reluctance is understandable. However, it is very likely that she had promised full details to the *World*; they carried her first and only interview in June and now they could boast the rights to her first-hand account of success. On Sunday, 26 November, the *World* published a half-page spread (see Appendix), with her picture, titled "Mrs. Leonidas Hubbard's Own Story of her Trip Through the Wilderness of Labrador" (E3). Here, in her first published narrative of her expedition, Mina describes her work in detail, gives the dates on which she reached Lake Michikamau (6 August), arrived at the George River Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) post (27 August), and started home on the *Pelican* (22 October), and confirms that she will "write a book or a magazine article." Most importantly, she is quoted as saying:

> I accomplished all that I started for. I explored the Nascaupee and George Rivers which, while marked on the maps, are incorrectly placed. I saw the caribou crossing at the height of land and I visited the Indians in their homes. This is what my husband tried to do and that he failed was due, as I have said, to his missing the Nascaupee River and to the impossibility of finding food in that unfortunate year. (E3)

The only other American interview I have located was given to a reporter from the *North Adams Evening Transcript* in the Reverend James Sawyer's home, first published in that paper on 23 November and reprinted in the morning edition of 30 November. After briefly summarizing some details about the expedition, the reporter adds that Mina is "a small, frail woman of a retiring nature and the very last person one would suppose would attempt such a hazardous undertaking," before going on, at some length, to praise Wallace for crossing Labrador without an Indian guide.[12]

If one were to judge Mina Benson Hubbard and her expedition from the stories in the press between June and November 1905, it would be hard to take her seriously. She is cast as a woman with dubious motives, undertaking a costly and dangerous trip against the advice of men who knew better and in deliberate, wilful competition with the very man best suited to complete her dead husband's work. Above all, she is repeatedly defined by her appearance, her emotions, and her gender. She is frail, weak, secretive, unhinged by her husband's death. The occasional adjectives of praise – plucky, intrepid, courageous – are outweighed by the generally negative rhetoric used to describe her. That the accusations of rivalry between Mina and Wallace were fabricated by the press and clearly fuelled by Briggs, Whitney, McLaughlin, and Miss Wallace seems not to have mattered. Female jealousy and rivalry made more sense to the public (and to Wallace's friends) than any other motive that might explain why she embarked on her expedition. Even when she returned successful, she was doubted and her accomplishments diminished. Put simply, in 1905 it was incredible for a woman to mount and complete a successful northern expedition. If a woman went on such a "strange" trip, then she was a masculine virago or emotionally disturbed, and either way she was behaving in an inappropriate way. She could not possibly have accomplished what she claimed – the Reverend Dr Marchand said so – but if she did, then Wallace had done something better.

More recently it has become popular to diminish Mina by crediting George Elson and the three male guides with the successes of the expedition or even by criticizing her for not giving them more credit, but these readings of the second Hubbard expedition end up pretty much where those of 1905 were – by concluding that a woman can only be a bit player in a man's game of wilderness exploration. The truth (if one can even use that word) is somewhere in between all the competing (I would say *complementary*) versions of the day, and it is far more complex than the rhetoric of masculine heroics or the genre of first-person discovery allow. But a few things are certain: sensible white explorers in Canada's North, from Hearne to Low, hired Native guides and relied on First Nations peoples; really sensible whites listened to their guides, and Mina followed this tradition and completed her expedition in record time, with complete success and without serious mishap.

> "Writing to-day. Slow. Hard to decide what to write about. Afraid of writing what people are not at all interested in and being thought silly or rather a bore. Wish I knew a bit better what public is interested in." ("Diary," 31 August 1905)

There is little doubt now that Mina Benson Hubbard, with the real and essential help of George Elson and her party, achieved a great deal on the second Hubbard expedition. Her diary, maps, and the surviving photographs prove that she went where she claimed to have gone. More intriguing, I believe, is how she came to write her articles and book. As the above quotation makes clear, she struggled to find her subject and her voice. She struggled, as well, for the self-confidence required to speak and for the conviction necessary to see her through to publication. By comparison with the physical demands of the expedition, during which she was solicitously cared for and fortunate in weather, writing her book became, I believe, the larger, more terrifying challenge. In Labrador she was far from public scrutiny and yet never alone; in *A Woman's Way* she was truly on her own and, ultimately, in the public eye. And the distinction I am making between the actual expedition and the writing of the book is important. By going to Labrador she had challenged the masculine establishment of the Peary Arctic Club and the Royal Geographical Society, as well as public opinion on a woman's proper place, but she had done so, as it were, privately. By daring to write about her success and to publish her account, she was going public seriously, staking a claim to readership, and joining the ranks of those explorers (the overwhelming majority male) who had published before her. How to set forth on an expedition presented solid, practical problems. How to write about it was another matter.

The facts of the expedition are straightforward. If we can assume (and I do) that she resolved to mount an expedition sometime between late December 1904 and early January 1905, then the time between January and early June must have been spent in quiet but careful preparation. Herbert Bridgman assisted her in the selection of her equipment; Elson found the right men to accompany them – Joseph Iserhoff, Russian-Cree, and Job Chapies, Cree, both of whom were friends of George's from Missanabie, and Gilbert Blake (1885–1979), a young man of white and Inuit ancestry from North West River. A few surviving letters from Mina to John Gillis, manager of the Grand River Pulp and Lumber Company, between 19 April and 3 June 1905 confirm the plans she had made to travel to Labrador. She purchased two canoes and equipped her team with the supplies she lists in the book (see WW, 45). In her personal gear she took two Kodaks, a sextant, an artificial horizon, a barometer, a thermometer, a revolver, some fishing tackle, and appropriate clothing; she included a few luxuries as well – an air mattress, a feather pillow, a hot-water bottle, and brandy, which would play its

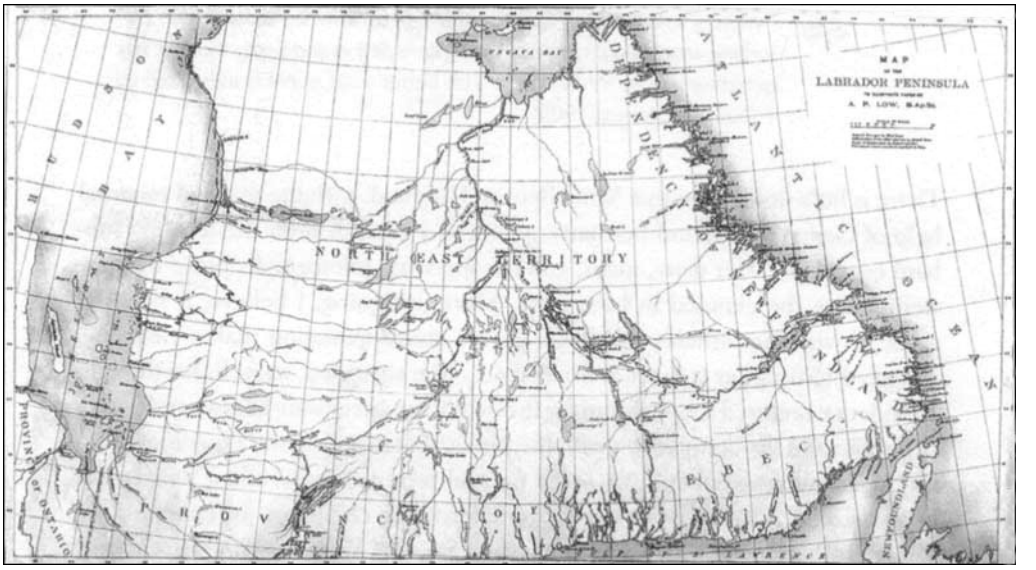

Figure 4. A.P. Low's 1894 map of Labrador, reproduced from his 1895 article "Explorations through the Interior of the Labrador Peninsula, 1893–1894." It shows the incomplete status of contemporary Labrador cartography.

own role on the trail. She left Halifax to sail directly for Labrador on 16 June aboard the Gillis lumber boat *Harlaw* and arrived at the North West River HBC post in Hamilton Inlet on the 25th. Two days later she, Elson, and the three other members of their team left the post. On 27 August, two months and almost six hundred miles later, the Hubbard party arrived at the George River HBC post to a surprised but warm welcome from the factor, Mr John Ford and his wife. They had almost two more months to wait until the English supply ship *Pelican* arrived to take them south, and the last week, after Wallace arrived at the post (on 14 October), was very difficult for Mina. Although she makes no mention of this trial in the book, she records her revulsion towards Wallace very clearly in her diary.

The events and experiences of the weeks en route from North West River to Ungava are described fully in her diary and shaped into a compelling narrative in her book. There is no need to summarize them here except to point out that the group had no serious accidents, made record time, and met with both the Montagnais and the Naskapi. Along the route Mina took numerous photographs and made the measurements necessary to complete an accurate map of the Naskaupi and George Rivers. She was helped in this work by George Elson, who, as is clear from his diary entries for 6 and 7 August, took several photo-

graphs of Mina during the expedition. When completed and published, her map was judged to be excellent, the first accurate cartographic representation of the Labrador interior through which she passed (see Cabot, *In Northern Labrador*, 10). With this map she was able to prove that A.P. Low's map, on which her husband had relied, was incorrect and that Leonidas had turned into the Susan River (in reality little more than a brook) instead of the Naskaupi River that flowed east and south from Lake Michikamau. Low's map, however, did show clearly that this great lake led north to the George River and on to Ungava (see Figure 4).

On 18 December Mina gave her first public lecture in the Williamstown Methodist church. The lecture, during which she used lantern slides prepared from the photographs taken on the expedition, lasted for almost two hours. According to the report in the *North Adams Evening Transcript* for 21 December 1905 ("Mrs. Hubbard Tells the Story of her Expedition"), her lecture "was full of human interest and was forcibly and entertainingly delivered ... without being made in the least tiresome" (1). She described the expedition's meeting with both the Montagnais and Naskapi, the extraordinary experience of observing the caribou migration, and the details of her provisions, clothing, equipment, and exploration work, and she recognized and praised the work of George Elson and her entire team. Significantly, she apparently tackled head on the rumours and accusations that had swirled around her in the press over the past seven months. The *Transcript* reporter describes her statement as follows:

> In closing Mrs. Hubbard spoke of the many stories that had been afloat since her departure last spring concerning the purpose of her expedition. She said that no living person had ever heard her intimate that the companions of her husband had deserted him. She branded such reports as malicious lies, which emanated from the camp of her enemies. She said that her sole purpose in going to Labrador was to carry out the work of her husband. (1)

In this, her first public story-telling venture, Mina Benson Hubbard must have settled upon many of the narrative components of the book that we know she was already writing. She was, as it were, exercising her narrative muscles, stretching her writerly legs, and testing her authorial voice. It is regrettable that the only surviving trace of this appearance as a successful explorer/author/photographer and expert on parts of Labrador exists in a newspaper account; none of her lecture texts or lantern slides appears to have survived. If we can safely judge from this news report, however, it does seem that she had fully realized both the necessity of defending herself against accusations and the importance of legitimating strategies such as visual proof and factual detail. Moreover, she must have found

enough of a voice to hold an audience for what, by any measure, was a long lecture. Mina, it seems, could tell a good story, and the apparent success of this venture must have buoyed her self-confidence.

Between 1905 and February 1908, when *A Woman's Way* was published, Mina gave several more well-received public lectures in Canada, the United States, and England. Many years later, she again spoke in Canada about her expedition when she was invited to give the prestigious "Year '26 Lecture" – the first woman to do so – to the Ontario Agricultural College (now the University of Guelph) on 29 October 1936. On this occasion she joined the ranks of contemporary men of distinction such as Sir Robert Falconer, Professor Stephen Leacock, the Reverend James Endicott, and major Canadian cultural figures such as Arthur Lismer and B.K. Sandwell, and she was praised for her courage, accomplishments, and the "exquisite language" of her address.[13] In addition, she published her articles, and these, unlike the lectures, have survived in full so that they can be considered for what they demonstrate about her efforts to publicize her work, how she categorized that work, and her talent for pitching her material to a specific audience.

Reflecting now on her somewhat poignant remark in the diary for 31 August 1905 (quoted above, xxxi) I am tempted to say that Mina did not fully appreciate what her contemporary public was interested in or, more precisely, the degree to which any public was conditioned by publishers to want, and to see value in, certain kinds of stories. However, she did come to a remarkably astute understanding of how to write for different publics. Her first two articles, both published in 1906, provide an illuminating study in contrasts. "Labrador, From Lake Melville to Ungava Bay," for the *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society*, provides what its title suggests – an objective and factual account of her expedition. "My Explorations in Unknown Labrador," for *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, while presenting many of the same facts, is much more personal and subjective.[14]

The *Bulletin* article is made more objective by her language, rhetoric, and selective use of materials: the photographs included are topographical, not personal; her map is given pride of place; and cartographic and geographic information is stressed. It begins in a factual, third-person voice and presents a genealogy of Labrador exploration. The reader is told that in "the northeastern portion of the Dominion of Canada is the great Labrador Peninsula, which, though first to be discovered, is of all the regions of North America the last and least explored" (529). After a brief summary of its size and topography, Mina reviews what is known about the place: she begins with the Hudson's Bay Company's posts, credits John McLean as the "discoverer of the Grand Falls of the Hamilton River" (later called Churchill Falls), cites the work of Henry Youle Hind, R.F. Holme, and two American expeditions in the early 1890s, and concludes with