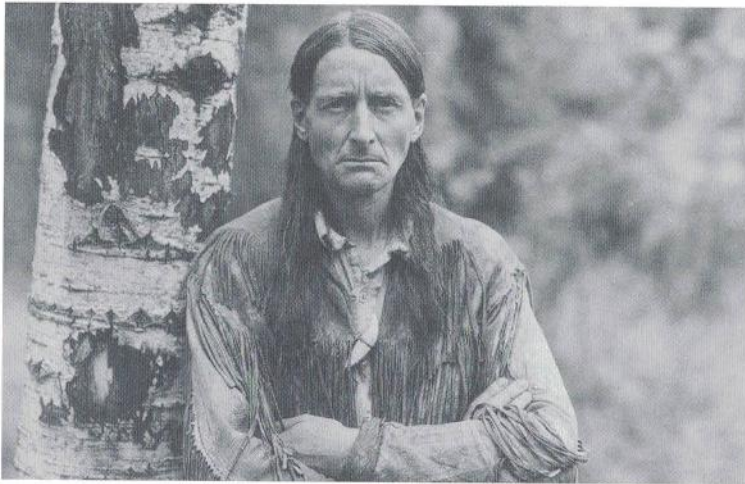




Wild Days

In the summer of 1912, Archie went to Biscotasing. (The town is usually just called “Bisco.”) His dark hair was long and straight now. His skin was dark from the sun. To the people in Bisco, Archie looked half-Indian and half-white.

Around this time, Archie started telling stories about his past. His mother was an Apache Indian and his father was from Scotland. He was born in Mexico and grew up in the American South West. He told one man that his father was a “Texan Ranger.” He and his family traveled with Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show. He went to school in England while the show toured in Europe. Of course, these were all lies, but Archie told them for years. Sometimes he added to them. For example, his father was killed. Archie shot his father’s killer and ran away to Canada.



Archie looked half-Indian and half-white.

Archie was still married to Angele, but he met another woman in Bisco. Marie Girard was a Métis woman. (The Métis were half-Ojibwa and half-French.) She agreed to go trapping with him that winter. Archie was lucky to have Marie with him. He was not a very good trapper. He sometimes forgot where his traps were. Marie helped him a lot, and they had a successful trapping season. Archie had another job, too, as a ranger. He had to protect the forest in the area. (Many people were looking for silver and gold near Bisco.)

Archie continued to watch everything around him and to make notes in his book. “Do you think that I can write?” he asked a friend, sitting at a fire one night. In fact, Archie wrote all the time, but he really wanted to write books.

But there was another side to Archie in Bisco. He still had time for trouble. He shouted at people in the street. He even threw knives at trains. Once, after his return from a trip into the woods, Archie destroyed part of an office. The police were looking for him, and Marie and Archie had to hide in the woods.

Archie left Marie that winter. No one knows exactly why. She was carrying a baby. Did Archie run because of this? Some old friends have said that Archie did not know about the child. We can’t know, but one thing is sure. He never saw Marie again.

It was a year after the start of the First World War, and many Canadians wanted to fight for Britain. Archie traveled for four months, going more than 1,500 kilometers. He went to Digby, Nova Scotia, and he joined the Canadian Army on May 6, 1915. He gave his real name, Archie Belaney, but he told many lies, too. He was born in Toronto. He fought in a war in Mexico. He did not tell the army about his wife, Angele, or his child.

In June, Archie sailed for England as a soldier. When he arrived, he left the army for two weeks. He wanted to visit his two aunts in Hastings. He did not tell the army what he was doing. Archie was in trouble again.