

## Discovering the Source of the Nile, Andrew McCammon, June 2024

When I was a boy, my parents had the use of a cottage for a month in Quebec's Eastern Townships. The cottage was on the third road cut into a hill above Lac Massawippi.

On many mornings, my older brother would wake up early, take his rod and tackle, and walk down to the lake to fish. I did not share his passion for fishing and instead often poked around for frogs and other treasures along the small creek that ran beside the cottage.

I remember one day suddenly wondering where the water came from. That hill looked pretty steep, and dark.

Being a brave 8, I naturally recruited my 4-year-old brother for the expedition.

The footing was alternately wet rocks, slippery mud, or dry banks about a metre high that crumbled under our feet.

Scrambling and grabbing branches as needed, we were determined to make it to the top. Near the crest of the hill, we came across a fork in the creek. Ahead lay a few more meters of a dry swale, leading to a field. To the right was an exposed pipe with water cascading into the creek.

This section was the steepest, and we had to push through about 15 metres of dense shrubs to see where the pipe came from.

We conquered the ravine, emerging at the edge of a pasture full of Jersey cattle. This was a part of Mrs. Virgin's champion herd and, as Jersey bulls can be a bit testy, we realized that we had gone as far as we could.

But there, just inside the pasture, was a large pond – the source of our Nile.

It's funny how life can fulfil itself from young roots. Today, my older brother still fishes, and I work for the Ontario Headwaters Institute, regularly exploring Ontario's headwater catchments.



*Lac Massawippi, Quebec*

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