

AN HISTORICAL SURVEY OF SOUTHWESTERN MANITOBA

TO 1899.

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## FOREWORD.

The effect of climate and soil upon the people, who, from time to time throughout the past three centuries, have come to and inhabited the Southwestern Plains of Manitoba, has provided an interesting subject of study.

The task of gathering information for the pages which follow has been an interesting, even enjoyable one. The writer made many new friends during his search for material, and will always remember with gratitude the kindness with which they received him into their homes and the eager readiness with which they made available to him the old records and personal diaries they possessed.

It is possible to acknowledge the assistance of only a comparatively few of the many who contributed to the development of this study.

The writer wishes particularly to thank Professor W.L.Morton, of the University of Manitoba, for the suggestion that the history of Southwestern Manitoba would provide a proper topic for a thesis. Not only did he make the suggestion, but by his constant supervision and his patient encouragement, he lightened considerably the work involved in preparing this study.

Material for the pre-settlement period of the history was taken mostly from the journals and contemporary histories kept in the Provincial Library and in the Public Archives of Manitoba. To J.A.Jackson, Provincial Archivist, J.L.Johnston, Provincial Librarian, and Ray Wright, the Assistant Librarian, the writer

wishes to express his thanks for the cheerful way they assisted him to find his way through the maze of material contained in the Archives and in the files of the Library.

Among those in Southwestern Manitoba who assisted the writer, he is especially grateful to Mrs. Una Phillips, of the Boissevain Recorder. Mrs. Phillips very kindly allowed him to use "The Old Timer's Book," a collection of facts obtained directly from the first settlers in the Boissevain district by W.V.Udall, publisher of the Recorder.

Mr. W.A.Bouras, of the Deloraine Times, and Mr. W.D.Ketcheson, of the Melita New Era, were very helpful and considerate, and provided many valuable leads in the search for information.

For interesting reminiscences of pioneer days the writer is indebted to Mr.C.Sankey, Mr. Clare Ramsey and Mr. W.Strang of Waskada, Mr. James Smart, now of Salmon Arm. B.C. Mr. J.Orris of Boissevain, and the mayor of Boissevain, Mr. E.I.Dow.

The generous hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Ramsey, of Waskada, made it possible for the writer to spend some weeks gathering information in the area. Fred supplied his car and his services as chauffeur, and drove many miles, refusing any remuneration for his time and trouble.

John Spence's Memorandum of Events from 1882 is a thorough record of the developments of the pioneer period. Often, when the writer was in doubt, he referred to this diary, and the matter was clarified. Everything is there, in matter-of-fact language, just as many excerpts from it appear in these pages. Crop conditions, grain prices, Patron meetings, election campaign

meetings, first arrivals of railway trains, prairie fires, land prices, wages, and other valuable informations, all appear in its pages. John Spence is now dead, and the diary is in the possession of Mr. H. Cheyne, of Waskada, to whom the writer is much indebted for allowing him access to it.

The work of typing this study was added to the many tasks involved in caring for a husband and a family of growing children. It entailed, more than once, the sacrifice of hours of well-earned sleep. For undertaking and completing it, the writer's wife deserves a reward far better than the writer, under his present financial circumstances, can offer her. If, however, continued love and devotion can repay her, not only for her typing, but for accepting for the past four years the sacrifices involved in being the wife of a student veteran, she may rest assured that she will have it.

"The buffalo trail became the Indian trail, and this became the traders 'trace'; the trails widened into roads and these in turn were transformed into railroads."

F.J.Turner, The Frontier in American History.  
(Henry Holt & Co. N.Y. 1935.) p.14

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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTION.

"Probably no other section of the province is so rich in the romance of hope or so tragic in its disappointments as is Southwestern Manitoba."<sup>1</sup>

The story of man's attempts to exploit the resources of the Southwestern plains of Manitoba can be divided into two fairly distinctive periods. The first period ends and the second begins with the disappearance of the buffalo, which coincides in time almost exactly with the arrival of the first agricultural immigrants. However, as in all history, a large part of the one period is taken up with developments which lead, almost inexorably, to the transformation which begins the next. Indeed, the supplanting of the hunting economy by an agricultural economy, which took place on the Souris plains in 1880, can be traced back, without too much difficulty, directly to Cartier's discovery in 1534 that "furs were to be had from the natives, and at the usual initial bargain prices, measured in trade goods."<sup>2</sup> The transfer of European civilization to the North American continent could, it seems, lead to only

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1. J.H.Ellis and W.Shafer, Crop History and Crop Outlook in the Melita Area. p.3.

2. A.R.M.Lower, Colony to Nation, (Toronto, 1946.) p.8.

## Chapter one.

one conclusion, namely, that every available piece of fertile ground would one day be cultivated, regardless of the obstacles which climate could, and did, place in the way.

This study of Southwestern Manitoba, therefore begins with an analysis of the climate and of the soil which was formed by the action of that climate upon the material left by the continental glacier, for the combination of the climate and the soil it produced has had a profound effect upon all the people who, in succession, came to the region to exploit its resources.

Little is known of the mound-builders, the first people to leave behind them concrete evidence of their stay in the vicinity of the Souris River.<sup>3</sup> Fortunately, however, the way of life established by those who presumably replaced them, the Assiniboins, is fairly adequately portrayed in the journals of the fur-traders, who arrived in the Souris basin while it was still occupied by these Indians.<sup>4</sup> La Verendrye, in 1738, was the first European known to cross the plains between Turtle Mountain and the Souris River. His observations of the Assiniboins make an important contribution to what is now known about them.<sup>5</sup> David Thompson, who travelled in 1797 from the mouth of the Souris River, to locate the 49th parallel and the Missouri River, added his share to this knowledge,<sup>6</sup> as did

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<sup>3</sup> see below, ch.3.pp.23, f.

<sup>4</sup> see below, ch.3.pp.26, f.

<sup>5</sup> see below, ch.3.pp.27, f.

<sup>6</sup> see below, ch.3.p.31



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Alexander Henry, the younger, who followed Thompson's footsteps in 1806.<sup>7</sup> Henry Kelsey, in 1690,<sup>8</sup> came into contact with the Assiniboins in other localities. The journals of these, and of other traders, make it possible to include in this survey a fairly full account of the Assiniboins and the "buffalo economy" they established on the Souris and nearby plains.

The fur traders, besides leaving a clear account of the Assiniboins and their way of living, played an important part in paving the way for the agricultural economy which was to succeed them. David Thompson was sufficiently impressed with the region lying north of Turtle Mountain to make the prediction that some day it would be supporting an agricultural population.<sup>9</sup> Alexander Henry the Younger, in a similar environment on the Saskatchewan River, could not resist the urge to try to make the fertile soil respond to cultivation.<sup>10</sup> Henry also gave a clear warning of the hazard of periodic drought, a difficulty that agriculturalists would have to cope with in cultivating the Souris Plains, namely,

"It happens sometimes in this country in very dry seasons that water is only to be found in some particular creek or lake," he wrote. "When this is the case we provide ourselves with small kegs or bladders. But this often proves insufficient; some people have lost their lives on this account.... our thirst

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<sup>7</sup> see below, ch.4.p.44.

<sup>8</sup> see below, ch.3.p. 26.

<sup>9</sup> see below, ch.4.p. 46.

<sup>10</sup> see below, ch.3.p. 45.

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is perpetual, and at every pool some of us stretch out on our bellies to drink."<sup>11</sup>

The fur-traders did not experiment extensively with the soil, but they cultivated enough of it to draw the attention of the outside world <sup>to</sup> its fertility,<sup>12</sup> and in so doing they began a chain of reactions which made inevitable the agricultural exploitation of the Western Canadian Plains, including those of Southwestern Manitoba.

The immediate result of the fur-trader's gardening was the arrival, at Red River, of the first agricultural colonists to come to Manitoba, Lord Selkirk's settlers.<sup>13</sup> Although they never came closer to Turtle Mountain than within at least 150 miles of it, they take their place in the history of the Southwestern Plains, for they created a British vested interest in Western Canada which led to its inclusion, in 1870, in the new Dominion of Canada.

Palliser from England, in 1857,<sup>14</sup> and Hind, from Canada, in 1858,<sup>15</sup> made the first organized investigations of the possibilities of the Souris Plains, and their conclusions, while not optimistic, form links in the chain of events which lead to their settlement. Then, in 1874, sixty years after Selkirk's settlers began to break the soil at Red River, the Mennonites arrived in Manitoba

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11. Elliott Coues, New Light on the Early History of the Greater North West, (New York, 1897)p.307

12. see below, ch.4.pp. 47 f.

13 see below, ch.4.pp47 f.

14 see below, ch.4.pp. 52 f.

15 see below, ch.4.pp.54 f.

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and demonstrated to all that the soil of the open plains was just as fertile as that in the river valleys and on the wooded hills.<sup>16</sup>

About this time John Macoun came to the North-West, and his reports directed settlement to the Souris and Regina plains, regions which, he insisted, had been formerly mistakenly regarded as "sandy sterile wastes."<sup>17</sup> Shortly thereafter, in 1880, homesteaders followed the Boundary Commission Trail to Turtle Mountain and chose land for their homes on its slopes and in the Souris River Valley.<sup>18</sup>

The experiences of the settlers from Ontario and the British Isles, during the period 1883 to 1900, and, indeed, of those farmers who reside there to-day, corroborated the fact that first the gardening fur-traders, and then the Selkirk settlers had demonstrated. Climate, and not soil fertility is the determinant in successful exploitation of the soil of Southwestern Manitoba as well as of other parts of the Canadian and American plains. Every phase of the way of life<sup>f</sup> the pioneers succeeded in establishing in the area by 1900 was affected by this fact. How they were brought to realize it, and how, after some years of seemingly fruitless effort they established a wheat-exporting community, complete with its supporting institutions based on the ideas of social organization they had brought with them, fills the pages of a large part of this History of Southwestern Manitoba to 1900.

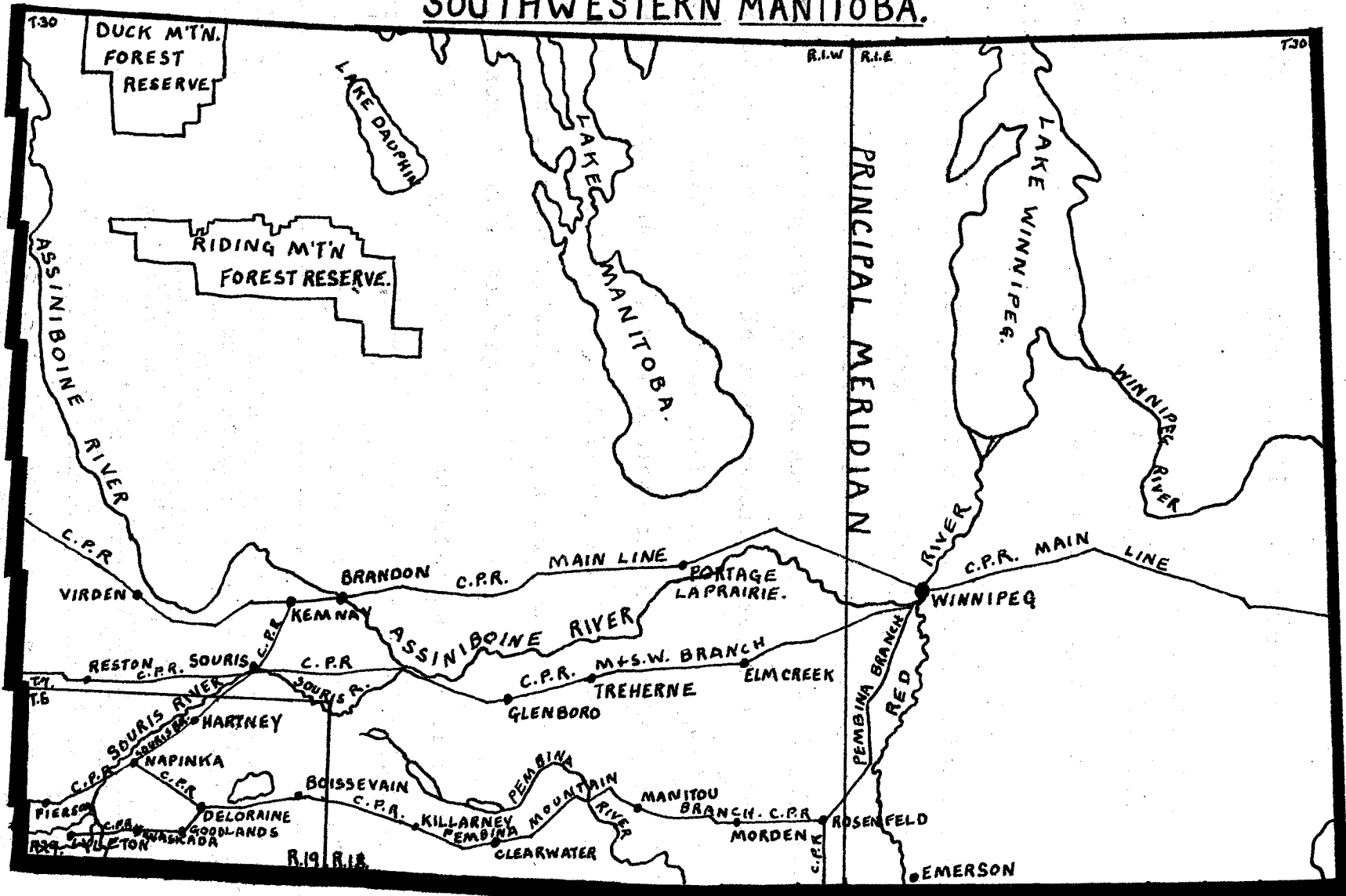
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<sup>16</sup> see below, ch.4. pp. 67 f.

<sup>17</sup> John Macoun, Manitoba and the Great North West,  
(Guelph, Ont., 1882)p.473

<sup>18</sup> see below, ch.6.

# SOUTHERN AND CENTRAL MANITOBA, SHOWING RAILWAY APPROACHES, AS AT 1900 A.D., TO SOUTHWESTERN MANITOBA.



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bank deposits. On the other hand, a succession of years of scanty rainfall, when hot winds prevail for weeks and swarms of grasshoppers infest the land, will wipe<sup>away</sup> these cash reserves and reduce the people to a condition of acute distress and require them to accept government funds or private charity for survival.<sup>5</sup>

Southwestern Manitoba is not the only section of the province to experience the rigors of drought. The Red River Valley, the Assiniboine Delta, and even the mixed farming country east of the Red River and between the lakes have had seasons in which crop returns have been disappointingly low because of insufficient rain.

The agricultural portion of Manitoba is a marginal region lying between two contrasting zones of rainfall and vegetation. The eastern and northern fringes of this portion blend into the forests covering the boundaries of the Laurentian Shield, while the southwestern part merges into the treeless<sup>plains</sup> of the Canadian prairies and the Dakotas. The 20-inch rainfall line, sometimes referred to as the 'critical' line for agriculture, enters Manitoba at the 98th meridian of longitude and then curves to the north-west.<sup>6</sup> This meridian exactly bisects the southern boundary of the province. South-west of this line, trees become less and less

<sup>5</sup> Ellis, Crop History, p.3

<sup>6</sup> Webb, The Great Plains, p.18.

\* 'critical' because rain-fall below 20 inches is not sufficient for the type of agriculture practised in Ontario and the more eastern states.

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plentiful, except in the river valleys and on Turtle Mountain, and soil cultivation requires the application of special ~~dry~~ <sup>irrigation</sup> farming techniques. There are some years, however, when rainfall is abundant over all of Southern and Central Manitoba, while there are others in which Southwestern Manitoba can properly be called part of the 'Great American Desert'. The swing of the climatic pendulum about the 'critical' line more profoundly affects this area because of its proximity to Palliser's 'Triangle', and, on account of the nature of its soils.

On the average, there is less rainfall in the southwestern section than elsewhere in Manitoba. In the 36 townships of Crop Reporting District #1, (Melita) the average annual rainfall (Aug. - Oct. plus Apr. - July) , for the period 1884 to 1942, inclusive, is approximately 13.46 inches.<sup>7</sup> The average at Winnipeg for the same period is 20.4 inches.<sup>8</sup> The average wheat yield in the district was 15.1 bushels to the acre as against the provincial average of 17.2 bushels.<sup>9</sup>

If average conditions prevailed most of the time, then agricultural operations in Southwestern Manitoba could be undertaken with a reasonable degree of security. Unfortunately for the farmers in the area, less than average rainfall has been the experience for 35 years of the period recorded, and better than average in only 23 years of the total of 58.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ellis, Manitoba Agriculture, p.42.

<sup>8</sup> A.S.Morton, History of Prairie Settlement, (Toronto, 1938)

<sup>9</sup> Ellis, Manitoba Agriculture, p.40. p.

<sup>10</sup> Ellis, loc.cit.

The most serious consequences for the area arise, not from the fact that rainfall is usually below the long term average, but from the frequent wide deviations from the average. Deviations have ranged from plus 12.9 inches to minus 6.86 inches, during the period.<sup>11</sup> For example, the rainfall recorded in 1891 amounted to 26.36 inches, giving a wheat yield averaging 27.8 bushels to the acre. Only two years previous to this, rainfall and wheat yield were 6.6 inches and 8.7 bushels.<sup>12</sup> The all-time low yield was that of 1934, when with 8.38 inches of rain, an average of only 0.6 bushels of wheat was harvested.<sup>13</sup> What was not destroyed in that year by drought and hot winds was devoured by grasshoppers.<sup>14</sup>

Of equal importance to the district as the total rainfall received in any year is the seasonal distribution of it. A good crop yield is the result of a combination of favorable circumstances. Good fall rains supply the moisture needed to germinate the seed sown in the following spring. Dry weather in April and early May allows farmers to work on the land. If late April and May are warm, the seeds germinates rapidly, and if, at the same time, these weeks experience dry weather, the young wheat plants are forced to send their roots deep into the soil. If rain showers appear after the second week in May, and increase in frequency and in intensity during June and early July, the growing plants

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<sup>11</sup> loc. cit.

<sup>12</sup> loc. cit.

<sup>13</sup> loc. cit.

<sup>14</sup> According to residents of the region.

receive moisture to meet their increasing needs. A few good rains are needed in the first part of July to counter-act the excessive heat. A good heavy shower when the wheat is "in the milk" will ensure a well-filled kernel. Good harvesting weather is enjoyed when rainfall is reduced during August and September.<sup>15</sup>

With an ideal distribution of even scanty rainfall, some good yields of wheat have been produced in the Melita area. In 1903, for example, a yield of 17.8 bushels to the acre was produced with only 8.02 inches of rain,<sup>16</sup> i.e., a crop of almost four bushels better than average resulted from a rainfall of 5.44 inches below the long-term average. This phenomenal result can only be explained by the fact that the rains received were very timely. In 1915 one of the best crops ever harvested in this section of Manitoba, (25 bushels per acre), was produced with only 10.24 in. of rain.<sup>17</sup>

Meagre rainfall, combined with its poor distribution, will produce a discouraging crop, but of particular concern to farmers in Southwestern Manitoba is the fact that often these conditions will prevail for several years in succession. As a result, "the wealth produced in the good years melts away,"<sup>18</sup> the farmer is unable to meet the expense of properly cultivating his fields, so his land deteriorates and becomes infested with weeds.

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<sup>15</sup> Morton, Prairie Settlement, p.xvii.

<sup>16</sup> Ellis, Manitoba Agriculture, p.40.

<sup>17</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>18</sup> Ellis, Crop History, p.3.



Five successive years of relatively poor crops were experienced in the Melita area from 1896 to 1900, the average yield over the period being 13 bushels to the acre with the year 1900 showing a yield of only 7.9 bushels per acre.<sup>19</sup> Six years of drought and poor crops followed one another from 1916 to 1921, with an average yield for this period of only 8.4 bushels per acre the worst year, 1921, recording only 5.6 bushels to the acre.<sup>20</sup> The longest dry period on record is that lasting from 1931 to 1937. The average through these years was 6.2 bushels to the acre. The poorest year showed 0.6 bushels per acre, (1934). Other low yields were 1.7 bushels in 1931 and 3.5 in 1933. The best yield was 12.4 bushels per acre in 1937. The eight year average of 6.2 bushels per acre was less than half of the 12.9 average received in the whole of Manitoba during this distressing period.<sup>21</sup>

The wide range of crop yields recorded for Southwestern Manitoba is not attributable entirely to the wide variations in rainfall. The beneficial effects of plentiful rainfall and the disastrous effects of drought are equally accentuated by the nature of the soil.

Soil and climate are intimately related determinants of the degree to which an agricultural economy can be developed successfully. No amount of rainfall will suffice to produce

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19 Ellis, Manitoba Agriculture. p.40

20 Loc. Cit.

21 Loc. Cit.

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profitable crops if the land is not fertile. On the other hand, the most fertile land will remain sterile unless it receives rainfall.

The nature of the soil of a region depends upon the material upon which it is based and the climatic conditions which prevail during the period in which it is formed. Soil fertility varies with the mineral content and the organic content. The parent material determines the mineral content while the character of the vegetation which the climate will support determines the concentration and depth of the organic material within the soil.

The parent material of most of the soil under cultivation in Manitoba is boulder till, or glacial drift, which was spread over the country by the action of the continental glacier which moved down from the north.<sup>22</sup> In some places the boulder till was covered with a layer of lacustrine sediment, brought in by rivers, and deposited on the floors of two great glacial lakes, Lake Agassiz and Lake Souris.<sup>23</sup> This sediment varies in composition, according to the nature of the land from which it was carried by the rivers. Some of it is coarse gravel, some, coarse or fine sand, and much of it is fine silt. Soil developed on sediment varies from the deep inexhaustible silt loams of the Red River Valley to the light loamy sands and sand dunes of the Souris basin.

Because some soils were formed directly from boulder till while others were developed from the various sediments deposited

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<sup>22</sup> Ellis, Soils of Manitoba. p.17.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 30.

over it, the agricultural soils of Manitoba show a wide variation in character, with sections of rich loamy soils being interspersed often with sections of barren sand dunes or gravelly ridges. But even soils developed from the same parent materials vary in texture and fertility because of the climatic conditions which normally prevailed during the long process of soil formation. For example, the soil formed on boulder till in eastern and north central Manitoba is the grey-wooded type, with only a shallow layer of organic material on the surface. These soils are also found on Turtle Mountain and the Riding and Duck Mountains where the altitude is sufficient to cause the heavier precipitations required to support the growth of mixed forest.<sup>24</sup> Where the soil on till plains is formed under a grass cover the layer containing organic material is much deeper and highly concentrated. In these soils the organic matter is formed within the soil as well as on the surface, because every year grass roots enter the soil, die, and decay.<sup>25</sup> The depth and concentration of organic material depends on the moisture conditions which normally prevail over the area. On the till plains sloping from the Riding Mountains to the Assiniboine River the soil is known as the northern block earth type, because rainfall has been sufficient to develop a cover of tall prairie grasses, interspersed with aspen groves.<sup>26</sup> From the till has been formed a fairly deep layer of black earth,

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p 31.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p.30.

<sup>26</sup> Ellis, Manitoba Agriculture. p.30.

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making the land excellent for agricultural purposes.

The third type of soil formed from boulder till is the dark-brown to black transition soil which covers the till plains sloping west, north, and east from Turtle Mountain. Here the normal rainfall has been sufficient only to support the growth of short prairie grasses, and for moisture to penetrate only a few inches into the soil. The result is that the organic material forms a layer only 4 to 7 inches deep, but is highly concentrated.<sup>27</sup> Below this highly concentrated layer is another containing some organic material, because there have been periods when rainfall was more plentiful and the roots penetrated deeper than usual.<sup>28</sup> These dark brown soils are less drought-resistant than the black earths north of the Assiniboine, chiefly because moisture does not penetrate them so deeply. However, the organic matter in the top-soil makes it very fertile so that there have been seasons, when rainfall was adequate, in which the till plains around Turtle Mountain have produced more abundant crops than have the till plains north of the Assiniboine River.

While differences in moisture conditions have produced different types of soil on boulder till in Manitoba, there is a more striking difference between the soils produced on the lacustrine sediments left by the great glacier lakes. Two factors combine to create this difference, the climate and the

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<sup>27</sup> Ellis. Soils, p.43.

<sup>28</sup> Loc. Cit.

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character of the sediment.

The layer of sediment in the Souris basin is quite shallow compared with that in the Red River Valley. Glacial Lake Souris, while the older of the two glacial lakes, was not in existence as long as Lake Agassiz, because, as the glacier retreated north and east past the Manitoba escarpment, Lake Souris drained rapidly through Lang's Valley and the Pembina Channel and its waters were added to the volume of Lake Agassiz.<sup>29</sup> Because of a difference of over 350 feet in the altitudes of the two lakes, these waters were transferred in a vast rushing stream, carrying with it a great deal of silt from the basin of Lake Souris, leaving behind the heavier sediments.<sup>30</sup> Because of this, loamy silt soil is found in only one small part of the basin, that lying west of the Souris river and south of South Antler Creek, to the International boundary.<sup>31</sup> The soil in the remainder of the basin ranges from fine sandy loam to sand dunes and patches of gravelly soils, which contrasts strongly with the loamy clay silt soils of the Red River Valley.<sup>32</sup>

The soils formed on the varying sediments of the Souris basin were developed under short grass, which was the vegetation the semi-arid climate could best support, while that in the Red River Valley was formed under tall prairie grasses which

<sup>29</sup> R.W.Murchie and H.C.Grant, Unused Lands of Manitoba (Man. Dept. of Agriculture 1926) p.22.

<sup>30</sup> Ellis, Soils, p.30.

<sup>31</sup> Ellis, Crop History p.2.

<sup>32</sup> Loc. cit.

flourished because of the more favorable moisture conditions. For this reason the organic material in the Souris soils is confined to the top five or six inches, while organic matter in the Red River soil is found as far as seventeen inches to two feet below the surface. Another feature of the soils found in the Souris basin is that they contain varying amounts of sand, a factor which allows the moisture received to pass quickly through them, leaving the topsoil very dry, so that these soils are much less drought resistant than the deep clay loams of the Red River area.

The soils in the Southwestern part of Manitoba are therefore of two general types, the dark-brown to black transition soil formed on the till plains about Turtle Mountain, and the various sandy loams formed from the sediments deposited in the basin of glacial Lake Souris. Both of these types have one feature in common, they are less drought-resistant than soils in the moister regions to the east and north, but in one important detail they differ. Moisture does not penetrate more than five to seven inches into the soil on the till plain, so that what moisture is received is held in the top-soil, while the sub-soil remains dry in normal seasons. On the other hand, much of the moisture received by the sandy soils of the Souris basin penetrates very quickly into the subsoil, leaving the top-soil dry, while at the same time forming a reservoir four to seven feet below the surface. <sup>33</sup> The dark brown to black soils of

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the till plains, therefore, are able to stand longer periods between showers before crops are damaged than are the sandy soils of the basin.

The area chosen as the subject of this study is the rectangle of land forming the extreme Southwest corner of Manitoba. It measures roughly 75 miles from east to west and 30 miles from north to south. On the south, it is bounded by the International boundary, and on the west by the boundary between Manitoba and Saskatchewan. The northern boundary is the line between Townships 6 and 7, and the eastern boundary that between Ranges 17 and 18.

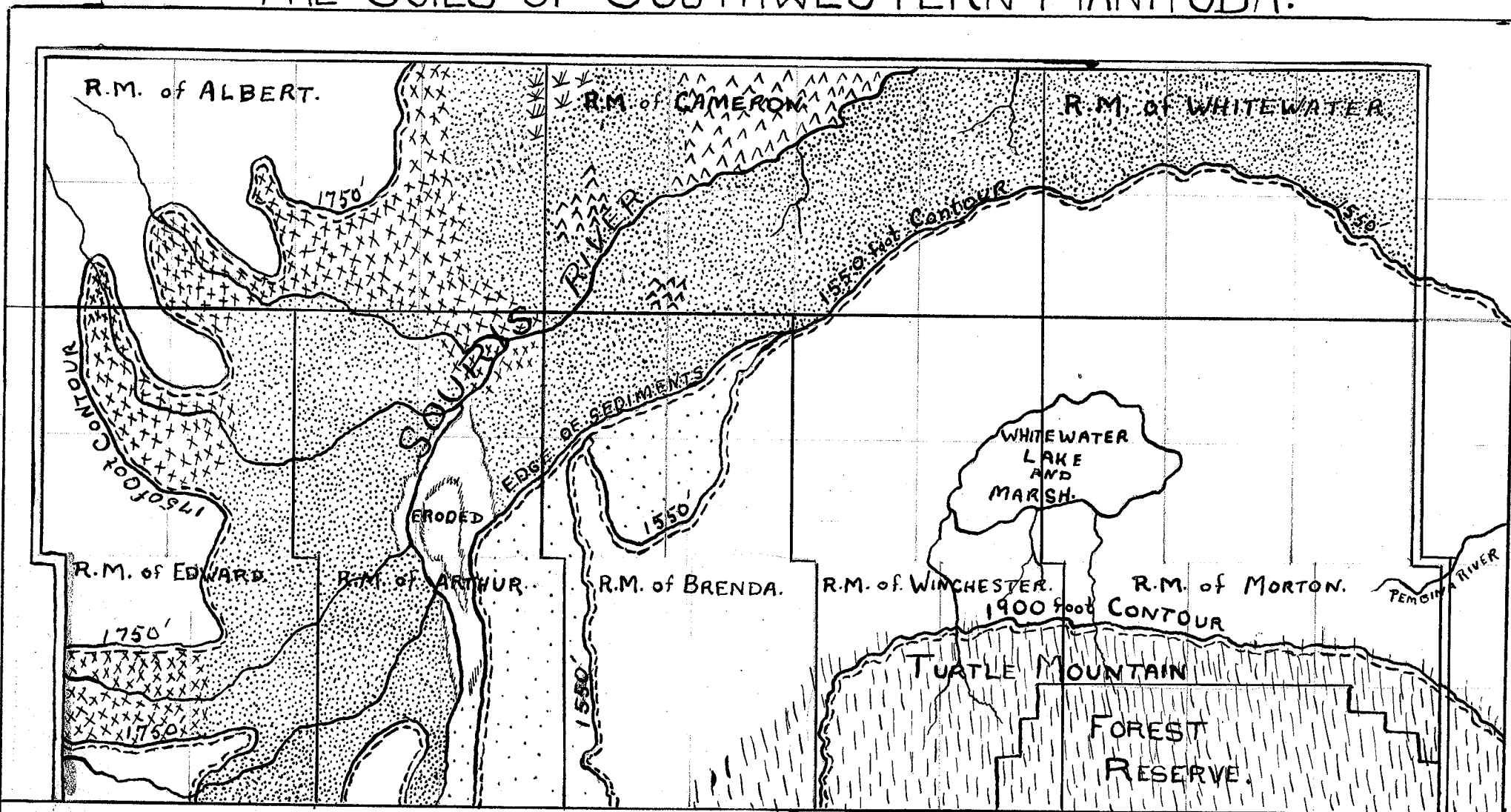
This rectangle of land can be divided into four distinct soil zones. Three of these are under cultivation, while the other forms the Turtle Mountain Forest Preserve.

The zones are roughly divided, one from the other, by the general topography of the area. The most <sup>prominent</sup> topographical feature is, of course, the Turtle Mountain, which is located at the south-east corner of the rectangle under consideration. The mountain rises to between 2400 and 2500 feet above sea level. That part of it lying above the 1900 foot contour is covered with mixed forest interspersed with several lakes. <sup>34</sup> Moisture-bearing winds, passing over the mountain, which lies from 500 to 1,000 feet above the surrounding plains, are cooled and deposit sufficient moisture to support the forest and to form the lakes. Turtle Mountain is roughly bisected by the International boundary. The forested area extends for about 30 miles east and west along the boundary, and reaches

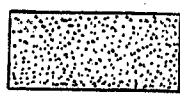
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34 Ibid., p.22

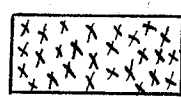
# THE SOILS OF SOUTHWESTERN MANITOBA.



DUNE SAND.



SAND to SILT.



GRAVEL.



MORAINIC.



LEVEL to UNDULATING.



## Chapter two

north about 8 miles into Manitoba. The soil on the mountain, being formed on morainic till under a forest cover, is the grey-wooded type. An interesting feature is the presence of a layer of coal which crops out in places on the western slope.<sup>35</sup>

The treeless till plains begin just below the 1900 foot contour, and slope away to the west, north, and east of the mountain to the 1500 foot level which marks the highest point reached by glacial Lake Souris. These plains form a rough crescent around the mountain, extending 15 miles to the west of it, and 30 miles to the north and to the east. This crescent is the zone in which, except for a small area of marshy alkaline soil on the margins of Whitewater Lake, the soils are the dark brown to black prairie soils with dry subsoils. Close to the mountain these plains are sharply rolling, those to the north containing gullies formed by water making its way from Turtle Mountain to the lake, while further away they change from rolling to gently undulating and level. The outer margin of this crescent is broken into by a succession of deep valleys which were probably ancient courses of the Souris River to the north-west and north and the Pembina River to the north-east and east.<sup>b 36</sup>

The third soil zone is that of the sandy soils formed on the lacustrine sediments of the Souris basin and lies below the 1500 foot contour. The eastern margin of this zone merges for

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<sup>35</sup> W.H.Tierney, "Geographical Outline of South-West Manitoba", Deloraine Times, March 30, 1944

<sup>36</sup> Ellis, Soils p.22.

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for the most part with the crescent shaped till plains, but the western edge is very irregular. At the International boundary it is about twelve miles wide, but about three miles north of the boundary it extends westward into Saskatchewan, the extension being about six miles wide. North of this the western margin of the basin has three more extensions, which were formed by the stream from the west which drain into the basin. The Souris River has cut a deep channel along the eastern margin of the basin.

This soil zone, as has been already explained, contains a variety of soils. South of the South Antler Creek the soil is a very good silt loam, except for a small area of boulder till which intrudes from the south.<sup>37</sup> The four westward extensions of the basin contain soils which are based on a gravelly subsoil, and may be considered as generally unsuited to cultivation.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup>The soil in the rest of the zone ranges from fine to coarse sandy loam, but there some townships, notably south and west of Lauder and east of Grand Clairiere in which pure sand is blown into dunes.<sup>39</sup> The zone as a whole is very susceptible to short summer droughts but it has one advantage over the till plains which lie to the east and west. The sandy sediment which is deposited on firmly packed boulder till forms a catch basin for rainwater and for water draining into the zone from

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<sup>37</sup> Description of Manitoba A synopsis of Surveyors notes, published in 1893 by the Dominion Dept. of Immigration.

<sup>38</sup> Ellis, Crop History p.2. (map)

<sup>39</sup> Loc.cit.

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the higher till plains on either side, so that water for livestock and for garden irrigation is easily obtainable, while it is very difficult to get on the till plains.<sup>40</sup>

The fourth soil zone in this part of Manitoba is the boulder till plain lying above the 1500 foot level between the basin of old Lake Souris and the Saskatchewan boundary. The soil here is of the dark-brown to black prairie type but is much more stony than that on the plains around Turtle Mountain. One feature of this zone is the fact that much of it is being clothed with poplar groves, particularly the depressions between the knolls.<sup>42</sup>

A feature which can not be overlooked in the study of the soil and climate of Southwestern Manitoba is the character of the prevailing winds during the growing season. Besides being taken from the soil by transpiration through vegetation, moisture is removed by evaporation. If the prevailing winds are warm and dry, the rate of evaporation is high, and growing crops are threatened seriously. If the winds are strong, dry light soil drifts, and soil erosion results.

On the Canadian prairies generally, fresh to strong winds (22 to 45½ feet per second) reach the peak of their frequency in April, blowing for 24% of the time, and continue blowing 22% of the time in May. Their velocity falls off noticeably in June.<sup>42</sup> Very often the two windy months are dry months as

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p.5.

<sup>42</sup> A.J.Connor, The Climate of Manitoba (Province of Manitoba, Economic Survey Board, 1939) p.22

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well, and if the soil has received very little moisture during the preceding fall, the topsoil dries out rapidly and begins to move with the wind. No vegetation develops to protect the soil for the seed in blown out before it can germinate and take root.

The prevailing westerlies are deflected southward by the Missouri Coteau over the dry plains south of the International boundary and then are funnelled into southeastern Saskatchewan and southwestern Manitoba between the Coteau and Turtle Mountain.<sup>43</sup> During the period from 1931 to 1937 these hot dry winds were particularly devastating, and their effect is vividly described by a contemporary poet.

"As we pushed on from Deloraine  
 Into the endless treeless plain  
 A slow, hot wind began to rise...  
 Like ashes on the floor of Hell  
 Grey dust kept drifting ceaselessly...  
 And ever hotter grew the air <sup>44</sup>  
 Out of some furnace in the South."

The early settlers, in addition to overcoming the hazards of drought and high winds, had to face the prospect of early fall frosts. Red Fyfe was the wheat generally sown in southwestern Manitoba before Marquis wheat was developed.<sup>45</sup> This wheat normally matures in about 115 to 125 days, but in backward seasons, when germination was slow, this period has extended for another ten days or two weeks. Red Fyfe wheat sown in 1890 on April 10 did not ripen until August 22, some 134 days later.<sup>46</sup> There were no early frosts to warn the

<sup>43</sup> A.O.Legge, Sunny Manitoba. (London, 1890) p.43.

<sup>44</sup> Watson Kirkconnell, The Flying Bull and Other Tales p.40.

<sup>45</sup> A.A.Titus. "Deloraine's Early Wheat". Deloraine Times.  
 Mar.30, 1944

<sup>46</sup> A.S.Morton, History of Prairie Settlement, (Toronto 1938)  
 p.71

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newcomers during the years 1871 to 1881, but in the next decade they occurred frequently. <sup>47</sup> In 1883, a year with a dry and late spring season, severe frost caught some grain on September 7. <sup>48</sup> A damaging frost struck on the night of August 23, 1885, when John Spence, of Waskada, recorded in his diary that some grain was frozen. Again, on August 1, 1888, Spence reported frost, and eight days later, on August 9, he wrote, "a big frost, 5 degrees - potatoes hurt." <sup>48</sup> That year no crop records were kept, for the crop was completely destroyed by heat and frost.\* Since the introduction, in 1911, of Marquis wheat, the frost hazard has been substantially reduced.

Scanty rainfall and its distribution, hot and dry spring winds, and early fall frosts, are the features of the climate which, together with the soils of Southwestern Manitoba, make the agricultural exploitation of those soils more hazardous than it is in any other grain-growing section of the province. The climate is, on the average, more arid, and the soils, produced under the influence of the climate, <sup>are</sup> ~~is~~ less drought-resistant. Then, too, the sandy soils in parts of the region are very susceptible to soil drifting in the spring of the year. All these factors have combined to affect profoundly the lives and the institutions of all those who, through the centuries, have come into Southwestern Manitoba to exploit its resources.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p.68.

<sup>48</sup> John Spence, Memorandum of Events from 1882. (An unpublished diary at Waskada, Man.)

\* Margaret McWilliams, Manitoba Milestones, (Toronto, Dent & Sons, 1928), p.166

## CHAPTER 3

### EARLY SUBSISTENCE ECONOMIES IN THE SOURIS BASIN

"The Indians form the connecting link between the natural environment and the civilization that within the last century has been superimposed upon it."<sup>1</sup>

For uncounted centuries before the first party of settlers from Ontario followed the Commission Trail to Turtle Mountain in 1880, Many peoples at different times faced in various ways the problem of making a living from the resources of the semi-arid environment of Southwestern Manitoba.<sup>2</sup> So far as it is definitely known, none of them were able to establish an economy based on agriculture. Moundbuilders, Indians, Fur-traders, and Red River half-breeds came one after the other into the Souris Basin, and they all depended for subsistence, some mainly and some entirely, upon the one animal the short grass of the plains sustained in greatest numbers. This<sup>was</sup> the bison, more commonly known in North America as the buffalo.

The first people to have left much evidence of their venture into the Souris country were those commonly called "mound-builders."<sup>3</sup> They are believed to have come from the more humid

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<sup>1</sup> W.P. Webb, The Great Plains, p.47.

<sup>2</sup> W. Wedel, Environment and Native Subsistence Economies in the Central Great Plains, Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, Aug.20,1942,p.1.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Geo. Bryce, "The Moundbuilders", Transactions of the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba, #66, Feb. 9, 1904, p.39.

regions lying to the east or southeast,<sup>4</sup> and may have established themselves on the plains along the Souris River during a period when moisture conditions were more favorable than usual. Their mounds are located in a small triangle, protected on three sides by the deep valleys of the Antler Creek and the Souris River, some six miles north of the International boundary.<sup>5</sup> The

The Sioux name for the Antler Creeks is He-ka-pa-wa-kpa, the Head and Horn Creek,<sup>6</sup> a name aptly descriptive of the way they branch out from the Souris River.

This group of mounds is unique because of the fact that the triangle in which they are found is protected on the south by a remarkable series of embankments, ranging from seventy-five to two hundred yards long. They are from five to ten yards wide, three to four feet high and look somewhat like abandoned railway grades on the open plain.<sup>7</sup> At the ends of the larger ones are placed large mounds, varying in size from twenty to sixty feet in diameter, four to seven feet high, and they are shaped like flattened cones. One theory is that these embankments were constructed to ward off attackers from the plains to the south and that these large mounds were built purely for observation purposes, since they contain no bones, implements or trinkets.<sup>8</sup> Other mounds, when opened in 1904, were found to contain pottery and artifacts of stone, bone, and even seashells, but no articles of European manufacture.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Wedel, Op.Cit., p.11.

<sup>5</sup> Bryce, Op. Cit., p.39.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.40.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp.39-40.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.41.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp.40-41.

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Dr. Bryce, who opened the mounds, concluded that, because they are located on very fertile land, their builders were agriculturalists.<sup>10</sup> This is true of those who built the mound-groups further south in the Jamestown-Devils Lake-Sheyenne area in the Dakotas,<sup>11</sup> but a later investigator of mounds in Manitoba has pointed out that the mounds in the Rock Lake and other areas nearer the Souris have provided little evidence of agricultural activity. On the other hand he does list 4 hoes in a catalogue of 4,083 articles he has collected.<sup>12</sup> But flesh-scrapers of bone and stone are very common, so it would seem that these early dwellers in the Souris basin, like those who followed them, depended mainly upon the buffalo and other animals for their existence.

The people living in the Souris basin at the time the first fur-traders came to the west were the Assiniboins. All available evidence points to the fact that these Indians came from the woodlands to the east, and very soon wandered over all the country lying between the Missouri River and Hudson's Bay.<sup>13</sup> About the year 1660 they were living in the vicinity of Grand Portage, beyond the north shore of Lake Superior. They were known then as the Poulaks or Assinipoulacs.<sup>14</sup> The

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.43.

<sup>11</sup> W.Wedel, Prehistory and the Missouri Valley Development Program. Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, vol.107. no.6 (Washington, April, 1947) p.3.

<sup>12</sup> C.Vickers, Archaeological Report 1946

<sup>13</sup> T.L.McKenney and J.Hall., The Indian Tribes of North American (Edinburgh, 1934) vol. 3 p.58.

<sup>14</sup> John Maclean, Canadian Savage Folk (Toronto 1896)p.19.



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name Assiniboin is of Ojibway origin, "Bwan" meaning "Sioux", and "Assin" meaning "Stone". "Assin-bwan" is therefore "Stoney Sioux".<sup>15</sup>

They cooked their food on heated stones, and boiled water by dropping hot stones into skin or bark containers.<sup>16</sup> Du Lhut met and talked with a number of Assiniboins at Kaministiquia in 1697.<sup>17</sup>

They were related to the Sioux, and sometime within the next thirty years they appear to have broken away from their kindred tribes and migrated to the country between the Assiniboine and Missouri Rivers.<sup>18</sup> Some bands moved even before Du Lhut was on the Great Lakes, for Henry Kelsey, "In sixteen hundred and ninetieth yeare... Got on ye borders of stone Indian Country..." a region which he says, "affords nothing but Beast and Grasse."<sup>19</sup>

This was somewhere south of the Saskatchewan River. At any rate by the time La Verendrye reached Kaministiquia in 1730, all the Assiniboins were out of the Great Lakes region, for he was told that they then lived "in a very level country"<sup>20</sup> to the west.

La Verendrye learned more about the Assiniboins from three Cree chiefs, before he left this post. Their tribe was numerous. They were always wandering and carried their "cabins" about with them.<sup>21</sup> They did not know how to hunt beaver, a ~~fact~~ <sup>fact</sup> which prompted Chief Pako to suggest that the explorer sharpen their wits when he reached them.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>16</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>17</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>18</sup> McKenney and Hall, Op. cit pp.58-59.

<sup>19</sup> Public Archives of Canada - Kelsey Papers (Ottawa 1929) pp2-3

<sup>20</sup> L.J.Burpee- Journals and Letters of La Verendrye (Champlain Society, Toronto) p.44.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp.44-45

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 302.

Eight years later, in October 1738 La Verendrye built his first Fort la Reine "on a portage which leads to the Lake of the Prairies" (Lake Manitoba), because the Assiniboins went this way on their trips to the English on Hudson's Bay.<sup>23</sup> On the 18th of the month he set out to visit the Mandans of the Missouri, a people of whom he had been writing to Beauharnois for several years. While making this journey, he located a village of one hundred and two lodges of Assiniboins, camped somewhere between Turtle Mountain and the Souris River.<sup>24</sup> He was given ample opportunity to study these Indians and learn of their ways, for the whole village packed up their tents and chattels and stayed right with him until he reached the Mandans and for some weeks thereafter. His journal describes them critically. Although they were numerous, they were not brave, and were particularly afraid of the Sioux.<sup>25</sup> They did not raise any field or garden crops, and traded guns, axes, kettles, powder and bullets, and knives and awls to the Mandans for corn, tobacco, furs and colored plumes. In this trading the Mandans always outsmarted them. Neither could the Assiniboins do the fine work the Mandans did in dressing or decorating leather.<sup>26</sup> La Verendrye says nothing about trying to teach them to kill beaver. If he did try, he failed, for Samuel Hearne, at Cumberland House, in 1774, notes that "Grass Indians from the Buffalow Country came with

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp.305f.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp.316f.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 322.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pp.324-332.

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a few wolf-skins some Dry'd meat and a little Buffalow fatt.<sup>27</sup>

The famous French explorer was somewhat unfair to the Assiniboins, for, whatever their shortcomings, they had, within a few generations, completely adapted themselves to a way of life which enabled them to survive in a very rigorous natural environment. Moreover, they had established themselves as the predominant people over a large extent of territory. Even in 1806, when their ascendancy was waning, Assiniboin country extended from the Hair Hills (Pembina Mountain), west to the junction of the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers, then south to the Battle River, south and east to the Mandan village on the bend of the Missouri, and then north-east again to the Hair Hills.<sup>28</sup> Before taking over this territory, they probably lived by hunting rather than by agriculture, and when they moved from the swampy bush lands of the Lake country to the western plains, they came into contact with what was "an inexhaustible beef supply unrivalled by anything elsewhere known to man,"<sup>29</sup> an animal whose total herds on the North American plains are estimated to have contained from four million to twelve million head at one time.<sup>30</sup>

The Assiniboins very quickly established what can be termed a pure "buffalo economy." Buffalo meat provided them

<sup>27</sup>

Journals of Hearne and Turnor.

(Champlain Society-1934) p.187.

<sup>28</sup> John Maclean Op. cit., (quoting from Henry, Journal Of Adventure, no page). p.19-32.<sup>29</sup> Webb, Op cit., p.44.<sup>30</sup> Webb, Loc. cit.,

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with what was most often the only food they consumed. Buffalo hides gave them clothing, shelter, horse harness, dog harness, warshields and, when they needed them, even boats. Buffalo sinews supplied thread for sewing and cord for bowstrings. Buffalo ribs, often glued together with glue from buffalo hoofs were used to make the bows themselves. Other buffalo bones made short spears, or were shaped into spoons or knives used in preparing meat and for dressing hides. Buffalo "bellies" were kettles in which to carry and boil water.<sup>31</sup> Last, but not least important, buffalo dung, "bois de vache", provided what was often for months the Assiniboins' only fuel supply.<sup>32</sup> By 1776, and probably before, these Indians had become so accustomed to using the buffalo to supply all their needs that Alexander Henry the elder could say "they had all they needed in the buffalo" so that they were indifferent to the white man's trade goods.<sup>33</sup>

Whether the Assiniboins developed this buffalo economy because they had an early hunting tradition, or whether the buffalo were so easily obtainable that any attempt to establish a more diversified economy was not worth the effort, for them to supplement their diet by engaging in agriculture or horticulture was probably beyond their capabilities. The Mandans on the southern edge of their territory did develop an economy based partly on corn and beans, and partly on the buffalo,

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<sup>31</sup> A.S.Morton. History of the Canadian West to 1870 pp.315f

<sup>32</sup> Burpee. Journals of La Verendrye p.50.

<sup>33</sup> Morton. Op. cit., p315, (quoting from Henry's Journal)

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but they were successful only because they exploited the warmer sheltered fertile spots along the Missouri, and because they managed to develop, or to adopt, a drought resistant type of corn.<sup>34</sup> Even in the most fertile parts of the country through which the Assiniboins wandered, they were faced with the fact that their environment added a shorter growing season to the common hazard of drought. This combination, early frost and drought, was to prove almost fatal to the wheat economy of the white settlers who replaced them. Taking all factors into consideration, the Assiniboins could do no other than establish a subsistence economy based exclusively on the buffalo.

Horses were brought to the American plain by the Spaniards, about the year 1541.<sup>35</sup> By the middle of the 18th century they were plentiful all over the plains, but there is some doubt as to when the Assiniboins learned to use them. According to an American writer, these Indians were using horses at least as early as 1742,<sup>36</sup> but when La Verendrye visited the Assiniboins and Mandans in 1738, neither tribe had horses.<sup>37</sup> La Verendrye's sons reported that they first saw horses, in 1742, among the tribes living to the west of the Mandans, and to the southwest of the Assiniboins country.<sup>38</sup> Anthony Henday saw horses when he visited the Assiniboins and the Blackfeet in 1754, but he observed that neither tribe seemed to bother

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<sup>34</sup> Wedel, Environment. p.10.

<sup>35</sup> Webb, The Great Plains. p.57.

<sup>36</sup> Loc. cit.,

<sup>37</sup> Burpee, Op. cit., p.108.n.1.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p.387.n.1.

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with them.<sup>39</sup> As late as 1766 the Sioux, who were living mostly to the south and east of Assiniboin territory, were reported to be hunting on foot.<sup>40</sup> The Assiniboins did not put the horse to work before 1776, because in that year the elder Henry recorded that they were using them.

The Assiniboins may have been unable to learn to kill beaver, but they very quickly learned how to obtain horses cheaply, for according to David Thompson, they were "most noted horse-thieves" in 1797. "Give a Yorkshireman a bridle and he will find a horse. These will find both the bridles and the horses."<sup>41</sup>

What was important for the future was the fact that the Assiniboins were using the horse as an invaluable aid in the buffalo-hunt just at the time the chief surplus buffalo product, pemmican, was coming into large demand as the principal food supply for the northern brigades of the fur companies. For use in winter, the Assiniboins had developed the practice of drying large quantities of meat, then mixing it with buffalo fat, and sometimes with berries, and storing it in skin bags.<sup>42</sup> This preparation was the famous pemmican.

Pemmican, though not particularly delectable, was highly nutritious, was packed compactly, and would keep indefinitely. The supply seemed inexhaustible and dependable. For all these

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p.108, n.1.

<sup>40</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>41</sup> J.B. Tyrrell, David Thompson-Narratives of His Explorations in North America (Champlain) Society, Toronto, 1916 p.208.

<sup>42</sup> Wedel, Environment p.8.

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reasons it was indispensable to any large scale exploitation of the fur resources of the north-west by the traders from Montreal.<sup>43</sup> Without pemmican, the expense of maintaining the long communication system from Montreal to the Athabaska would have increased beyond the point where trade in furs was profitable.<sup>44</sup> The rigorous and extensive drive to establish forts on the Assiniboine, made by both the major fur companies, arose as much from the need for pemmican as from the desire to exploit new fur areas.<sup>45</sup>

The forts on the Assiniboine at or near the mouth of the Souris River, were strategic stations on the pemmican supply line, for they tapped the pemmican resources of a favorite grazing ground of the Red River buffalo range, the Souris basin.<sup>46</sup> These herds would winter in the basin, and south-east as far as Devil's Lake in the Dakota country. In the spring they would move east toward the Red River and the Sheyenne and in June they would turn north and move west again toward the Grand Coteau. On their way west they would, during the fur-era, swing north before reaching Turtle Mountain, and make their way around it to the Souris River valley, and from there range west to the Coteau until the snow fell. Then they returned to the Souris basin for the winter.<sup>47</sup> By 1858, however, they had changed this route, swinging north in the

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<sup>43</sup> Morton. *Op. cit.* p.316.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p.510.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.436f.

<sup>46</sup> H.Y.Hind, Reports of Progress (Queen's Printer, Ottawa 1860) p.116.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p.117.

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summer around the west slope of Turtle Mountain, avoiding the country to the east of it.<sup>48</sup>

Naturally enough, the principal camping grounds of the Assiniboins were in close proximity to the favorite grazing ranges of the buffalo. The locations of these camps were marked for years by the circles of boulders which were used to anchor down the skin tents of the Indians. In 1873 there were a few of these stone circles near Turtle Mountain, but closer to the river they "became very abundant and mark every spot favorable for camping."<sup>49</sup> Here must have been good hunting for the banks of the Souris River are still scored with deep "buffalo runs" showing where the herds converged from the plains to their favorite watering places. Whitewater Lake was another favorite spot.

Montreal traders first exploited the pemmican resources of the plains south of the Assiniboine River from Pine Fort, built by Oakes, Boyer and Pangman in 1768.<sup>50</sup> This post was located just west of Pine Creek on the north bank of the river. It later became a post of the North-West Company, who enjoyed a monopoly in the area until 1793. In that year Peter Grant, the independent trader built a fort two miles upriver from the mouth of the Souris,<sup>51</sup> and before the year was out his post was crowded by two others. One was a North-West Company post manned by "Old Auge," and the other, the Hudson's Bay Company's

<sup>48</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>49</sup> G.M.Dawson, Geology of Canada (Montreal, 1875)p.290.

<sup>50</sup> Morton, Op. cit., p.219.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p.433.



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first Brandon house, in charge of Donald Mackay, "le malin".<sup>52</sup>  
 In 1794 the Montreal partners abandoned Pine Fort in favor of  
 "Old Auge's" post, Thereafter known as Fort la Souris.<sup>53</sup> That  
 the Souris basin was regarded as a strategic source of supply  
 for the various fur trade systems is indicated by the action of  
 the X.Y. Company, which, when it went into business, was faced  
 with the necessity of finding supplies for its new fur brigades.  
 The X.Y. men built their own Fort la Souris, on the south  
 bank of the Assiniboine, opposite the posts of their older and  
 larger rivals.<sup>54</sup>

For a few years, the posts near the mouth of the Souris  
 did take in some beaver, but by 1797 the fur at the North-Wester's  
 Fort la Souris consisted almost entirely of dressed and undressed  
 buffalo hides and some wolf skins.<sup>55</sup> This was the logical thing,  
 for the traders in that area would be dealing almost entirely  
 with the Assiniboins. The posts obtained some added revenue by  
 outfitting 'free traders' who crossed the plains to the Missouri  
 and traded on their own account with the Mandans.<sup>56</sup>

The important <sup>part</sup> that pemmican, the chief surplus product  
 of the Assiniboin buffalo economy, played in the life- and-  
 death struggle between the North-West Company, on the one hand,  
 and Lord Selkirk's colony and the Hudson's Bay Company on the  
 other, usually receives only passing mention by historians.  
 Pemmican that was gathered at the Souris and other posts on

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p.434.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 434.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 510.

<sup>55</sup> E. Coues, New Light on the Early History of the Greater  
 North West, (New York, 1897) p.298.

<sup>56</sup> H.S. Pinkerton, Hudson's Bay Company, (London, 1932) p.132.

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the Assiniboine was almost continuously the subject of quarrels between the Nor-Westers and Selkirk's governors.

The supply of pemmican, so vital to the economic operation of the fur trading systems, was subjected to a sudden and severe strain by the arrival of Lord Selkirk's colonists in 1812. Pemmican intended for the fur brigades was diverted to the Red River to sustain the settlers, who, until they succeeded in breaking land and harvesting crops, were to be as dependent on the buffalo for survival as had been the Indians before them. Brandon House, under John Mackay in 1812<sup>57</sup> and Peter Fidler in 1813, responded to every appeal for provisions<sup>58</sup> "in a cordial spirit," Fidler sending to Red River sixty bags of pemmican weighing ninety pounds each.<sup>59</sup> But the Nor-Westers were not so obliging, and Miles Macdonnell, as Selkirk's governor, proclaimed, on January 8, 1814,<sup>60</sup> an embargo on the exportation of provisions from the territory under his jurisdiction, which included the Souris forts.<sup>61</sup> John Wills at Fort la Souris, denied the legality of the embargo<sup>62</sup> and to enforce it, Macdonnell ordered the seizure of a shipment of 96 bags of pemmican moving down the Assiniboine from that fort.<sup>63</sup> Some time later, the governor ordered the surrender

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<sup>57</sup> Morton, History of Canadian West. p. 548.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 552

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 553

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 560

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 534

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 561

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 562

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of all forts within his jurisdiction.<sup>64</sup> The Nor-Westerns seized the initiative in the struggle for pemmican, when, in May 1816, Alexander Macdonnell, operating from a fort on the Qu'Appelle, attacked some Hudson's Bay boats which were in difficulty at some rapids below Brandon House and took away all the pemmican they carried.<sup>65</sup> After this feat, they seized and rifled Brandon House, and then, under Cuthbert Grant, they moved east, gathering half breeds and Indians as they went. Their advance continued until they reached Seven Oaks, where, on the 19th of June, 1816, they were met by Governor Semple. The governor and some twenty of his men were killed.<sup>66</sup> Thus, in a very real sense the buffalo economy had a tragic and profound effect upon the events immediately following the first attempt to establish an agricultural economy in Manitoba.

After the amalgamation of the rival companies in 1821, the Souris basin began to lose its importance as a source of pemmican for the fur brigades.<sup>67</sup> Reorganization in the interests of economy meant that the northern brigades were henceforth supplied from the posts on the Saskatchewan. Brandon House "although(it) showed a nominal profit by the quantity of buffalo, undressed hides and provisions for which (it) took credit," was closed by Governor Simpson in 1822.<sup>68</sup> A new Brandon House was built in 1828 to resist the encroachments of

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p.567.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p.576.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p.577.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., pp.660f.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p630.

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Americans operating in the vicinity of Turtle Mountain,<sup>69</sup> but in 1834 this was abandoned and thereafter whatever hides and pemmican came from the Indians in the Souris basin were handled at Fort Ellice,<sup>70</sup> built in 1832 near the mouth of the Qu'Appelle River.

While by this time Carlton and Edmonton had become the chief source of supply of pemmican for the fur brigades,<sup>71</sup> buffalo hunting on the Souris plains was by no means discontinued. It was only changed in character from an economy providing the entire livelihood of Indians to an operation which provided part-time employment for many of the half-breeds who were no longer needed in the fur-trade. Even in 1820, the year before amalgamation, 540 buffalo carts went from Red River to the western plains. By 1830 these had increased in number to 820, and in 1840 over 1200 carts made the trip.<sup>72</sup> French Metis in particular were temperamentally suited to the excitement of hunting buffalo on horseback, and on the buffalo hunt they developed a way of life which contrasted strongly with that of the Scottish agriculturalists settled north of the "Forks". They gathered for the hunt in large bands, operating under the command of chosen leaders who enforced self-imposed regulations. This practice developed a body of skilled, well-disciplined horsemen, a factor which aided

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p.703

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p.696

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p.698.

<sup>72</sup> G.F.Stanley, The Birth of Western Canada (London 1936) p.13.

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Riel to organize them quickly, in 1869.<sup>73</sup>

As the buffalo range gradually retreated to the west, the half-breeds, with their carts, followed them. Exactly when the Red River half-breeds made their first appearance in the Souris River area is not certain. They did so some time before 1858, because, at that time Professor Hind reported that then the western limit of the Red River hunt was at the Grand Coteau, Much further west.<sup>74</sup> His guides, who were Red River men, were quite familiar with the country, and at least one of them had been over it some twenty years before Hind explored it.<sup>75</sup>

As late as in 1857, buffalo were very numerous in the vicinity of the Souris River. Hind, in 1858, noted large numbers of buffalo bones and skulls, "the remains of last year's run".<sup>76</sup> At some undetermined time within the next twenty years, "the east margins of Whitewater Lake glowed with the campfires of the Red River hunters."<sup>77</sup> When Mrs. Nellie McLung arrived at Milford, on 20-7-16, in 1879, the Indians in that neighborhood still had pemmican in bags, but buffalo were rarely seen.<sup>78</sup>

By 1880, only odd groups of two or three would be seen on the prairie west of Mountain Turtle/to the Souris River. These would usually be rounded up and killed as soon as they were sighted. One writer tells of a band of six, which, one summer afternoon, was reported to be moving north around the Mountain. Some half-breeds butchered them in

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p.178.

<sup>74</sup> Hind, Reports of Progress, p.53.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p.54.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., pp.51 & 52.

<sup>77</sup> W.H.Tiernan, "Geographical Outline of Southwestern Manitoba," Deloraine Times, March 30, 1944.

<sup>78</sup> Nellie L. McLung, Clearing in the West, p.47.

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gully somewhere between the slope of the mountain and the river.<sup>79</sup>

As the buffalo dwindled in numbers, so did the Assiniboin. They were thought to total between eight and ten thousand early in the nineteenth century.<sup>80</sup> This total conforms closely with Alexander Hendry's statement in 1809, when he said that they could muster two thousand fighting men.<sup>81</sup> Thirty years earlier, they were probably more numerous, for in 1782 small pox took a heavy toll.<sup>82</sup> In 1836 this dread disease struck them again, and this time four thousand or more of them perished.<sup>83</sup> By 1897 only about 1300 were left in Canada, while another 1100 or so were said to be living in the vicinity of the Missouri River.<sup>84</sup>

Like the buffalo, the Assiniboin seem to have been forced out of the Souris basin to move further west. One authority has pointed out that they began a gradual withdrawal from what is now Manitoba at least as soon as the early years of the nineteenth century, retreating before the pressure of the Chippewas, or Ojibways. He draws attention to the fact that, when Lord Selkirk negotiated his treaty with the Indians in

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<sup>79</sup> Tiernan, Op. cit.

<sup>80</sup> D. Jenness, The Indians of Canada, Bulletin 65, Anthropological Series no. 15, National Museum of Canada, p.316.

<sup>81</sup> E. Coues, New Light, p. 523.

<sup>82</sup> Tyrell, Thompson's Narratives, p. 215.

<sup>83</sup> Jenness, Op. cit. p. 316.

<sup>84</sup> Coues, Op. cit. p. 522, n.3.

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1817, the Assiniboins were not present, nor were they consulted.<sup>85</sup>

Sir George Simpson has stated that the Ojibways were hunting in the Turtle Mountain during the 1830's.<sup>86</sup> However, according to Hind , there were still some Assiniboins near the Mountain in 1858, although the Sioux seemed to be contesting with the half-breeds for control of the area.<sup>87</sup>

Whatever the facts regarding the withdrawal of the Assiniboins from Southwestern Manitoba, one thing is certain. The last remnants of the huge herds on which they had based their buffalo economy disappeared from the vicinity of Turtle Mountain and the Souris River just at the time when the white settlers , with their wheat economy, were beginning to come in.

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<sup>85</sup> Vickers, Archaeological Report, 1946.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Hind, Reports of Progress, p.52.

EUROPEAN AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENTS TO 1870.

"The exploitation of the beasts took hunter and trader to the west....and the exploitation of the virgin soil of the river valleys and prairies attracted the farmer. Good soils have been the most continuous attraction to the Farmers' Frontier."<sup>1</sup>

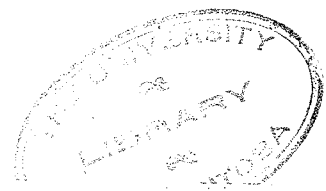
Even during the long years of the Assiniboin exploitation of the buffalo on the Souris Plains, the attention of people in other parts of the world was being directed to the possibility of exploiting the soil in the forests and on the plains of the Hudson's Bay watershed. Servants of the Hudson's Bay Company and Canadian fur traders cultivated plots of ground at posts as far apart as James Bay and the Peace River valley, and recorded the results of their labours in their journals.

As time went on the journals accumulated, and their pages supplied enough information to implant in the minds of government authorities and land-hungry people the idea that agricultural exploitation of much of the country was a possibility. The idea originated in England, with people who had never seen the region, but many years later it was taken up by men in the Province of Canada. There it crystallized into a determination to take the land and transform it into a thriving agricultural community.

The agricultural activities of the fur-traders, although conducted on a very small scale, proved that some of the land

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<sup>1</sup> F.J.Turner, The Frontier in American History, (New York, 1935) p.18.





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along the rivers between the Red River and the Rocky Mountain was fertile even though the results obtained were often meagre and disappointing. At the same time, the fur traders' journals provided a clear warning that climate, and not soil fertility, was to be the determining factor in the success of an agricultural economy. The disastrous effects of early frost, drought, and grasshoppers were placed on record over and over again, and yet, although the record of almost two centuries was there for them to read, the settlers who arrived in 1871 and thereafter, knew only that the land was fertile, and nothing of the climatic hazards which been shown to prevail.

The first agricultural experiments were conducted on the islands of James Bay and at York Factory. The Hudson's Bay Company Charter stipulated that the Adventurers<sup>2</sup> establish a colony, so as early as in 1674, wheat, rye, and garden seeds were shipped from England in order to discover if they could be grown in these latitudes.<sup>3</sup> Little is known of the early harvests, but it may be assumed that they were disappointing, for in 1683 Governor Sergeant was ordered "to try to the utmost if you can grow anything in that country,"<sup>4</sup> an order which shows that agriculture was a matter of considerable importance to the governors of the Company.

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<sup>2</sup> A.S.Morton, History of Prairie Settlement p.5.

<sup>3</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup> Loc. cit.

That they had good reasons to be concerned about agricultural activities is shown in the attempt, some sixty years later, of Arthur Dobbs and his friends to challenge the monopoly granted by the Charter. Dobbs maintained that the whole area from Pennsylvania to the Hudson's Bay was suitable for agriculture and charged that the Company was deliberately neglecting to have it tilled and settled.<sup>5</sup> His witnesses testified on oath before an investigating committee of the British Parliament that "there were vast lands suitable for cultivation,"<sup>6</sup> and that "wheat would mature in the latitude of York Factory."<sup>7</sup> Fortunately for the Company, the records of the early experiments were available, and the special committee was persuaded, in 1749, that Dobbs had not proved his case.<sup>8</sup>

The first attempt by a European to cultivate the soil of the interior seems to have been made, not by a Hudson's Bay servant, but by a Frenchman, the Chevalier de la Corne, at Fort la Corne on the Saskatchewan River, a post he established in 1753.<sup>9</sup> To this day the Indians call the location Ne-cha-me-ka-gi-kanis, "where we first saw vegetables grow."<sup>11</sup> There is no evidence to show if la Corne experimented with

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.6.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.6. Testimony of Matthew Sargeant.

<sup>7</sup> Loc. cit. Testimony of Joseph Robson.

<sup>8</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.7.

<sup>11</sup> A.S.Morton, Prairie Settlement p.7.

grains. Other experiments were tried in the interior during the next half-century. Sometime between 1774 and 1790 a garden was cultivated at Cumberland House, for an entry in Turnor's Journal, dated June 10, 1790, reports "People at work in Garden &c. & c."<sup>12</sup> About the same time, ground was broken at Hudson House, twenty miles west of Prince Albert," to grow barley in."<sup>13</sup>

By this time, many of the traders from Montreal had turned to gardening. Sir Alexander Mackenzie describes a garden on the Peace River, which he says was started in 1788.<sup>14</sup> Peter Pond had a fine garden on the Athabaska in 1787.<sup>15</sup> Mackenzie records his opinion that the soil west of Lake Winnipeg was fertile,<sup>16</sup> and that that in the Peace River district" would be very productive if a proper attention was given to its preparation."<sup>17</sup> Alexander Henry the Younger had an extensive garden at Pembina, on the Red River, in 1801. In 1803 he sowed his seed on May 7,<sup>18</sup> and on October 27 his men took in 1,000 bushels of potatoes, 40 bushels of turnips, 300 small and Savoy cabbage and good quantities of other

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<sup>12</sup> Journals of Hearne and Turner. (Champlain Society, Toronto 1931) p.316.

<sup>13</sup> A.S.Morton, Prairie Settlement, p.9. Quoted from Hudson House Journal, May 10, 1783

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.8.

<sup>15</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>16</sup> Sir A.Mackenzie, Voyages p.lxv.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.129.

<sup>18</sup> E.Coues, New Light on the Early History of the Greater North West (New York 1897) vol.1. p.183.

vegetables.<sup>19</sup> Later, Henry transferred his gardening activities to the Saskatchewan district at Fort Vermilion. Here he encountered and recorded the difficulties that in later years almost defeated the settlers on the prairies, namely "hard dry soil"<sup>20</sup> and early frost. These conditions defeated him at another post where he tried barley.<sup>21</sup>

The gardens nearest to Southwestern Manitoba during the fur trade era were those at Brandon House. In 1810, melons, cucumbers, and 458 kegs of potatoes were harvested.<sup>22</sup> The observations of Peter Fidler are of particular interest, for the soil at the mouth of the Souris is much like that of the rest of the Souris basin.

There were upwards of three "English acres" of land under cultivation at the post. From 1812 to 1816 good crops of everything were produced. Wheat and barley had been grown successfully at this and other western posts, the wheat yielding 40, and the barley 45 bushels for every bushel sown. The soil was much more sandy than that at Red River, and when the dry summers began in 1817, agricultural activities ran into difficulties. Grasshoppers destroyed the barley in 1818, and almost continuous drought ruined the potatoes, turnips and other vegetables. "Wherever I have been (in the district between Turtle Mountain and the Souris River). I gather that

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<sup>19</sup> A.S. Morton, History of Prairie Settlement, p.8.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>22</sup> A.S. Morton, Prairie Settlement, p.10.

the land is drier than formerly."<sup>23</sup>

Meanwhile the Nor-Westerners at Fort la Souris had established what is probably the first herd of cattle to appear in the agricultural section of Manitoba. The first animals very likely arrived as calves, in canoes. Peter Fidler in 1813, bought a bull, a cow and a calf at this post, and took them with him to Red River when he went to survey the land in that colony.<sup>24</sup>

The fur traders near the plains usually raised their field and garden crops on their own initiative, their incentive being to relieve the monotony of living on pemmican and the mouldy stores brought in from London or from Montreal. Yet they learned sufficient about the land to enable them to make some remarkably accurate forecast. David Thompson, describing the soil along the Assiniboine as rich and deep, prophesied that in time the area would be supporting a considerable population. He pointed out that in the area to the North of "Turtle Hill", the climate was "good" the summers warm, and the autumns favored with many fine days. Most amazing, considering that the railway engine was still unknown, he foretold that "when a civilized population shall cover these countries, means will be found to make its produce find a market."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Peter Fidler, Hudson's Bay Company Factory Journals, Box 521, no.495, "General Report of the Red River District, May 1819."

<sup>24</sup> Morton, Op. cit. p.10.

<sup>25</sup> D.Thompson, Narratives, (Champlain Society, 1916) p.186.

More important for the immediate future of the country, the journals of the fur-trader-gardeners convinced the Hudson's Bay Committee that an agricultural colony could be established for the purpose of doing away with the necessity of importing food supplies from England.<sup>26</sup> The first idea was to man the colony with retired servants, together with the increasing number of dependents of mixed blood which had to be maintained at the various posts.<sup>27</sup> This plan, however, was superceded in 1810 by Lord Selkirk's project to provide a home for impoverished inhabitants of the British Isles.<sup>28</sup> There seems to be little doubt for believing that Selkirk was strongly influenced by Mackenzie's estimate of the fertility of the soil.<sup>29</sup>

The history of Selkirk's Red River colony provides an important demonstration of the difficulties that were to be overcome in any attempt to establish an agricultural community in the Canadian west. Miles Macdonnell, who had previously farmed in the Canadas, was enthusiastic about the soil when he arrived at the Forks in 1812." The country exceeds any idea I had formed of its goodness" he wrote to Selkirk. "I am only astonished it has been so long unsettled."<sup>30</sup> Within five years, the colonists who came with him were to learn what the trader-gardeners had learned, that climate and not the

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<sup>26</sup> Morton, *Op.cit.*, p.13.

<sup>27</sup> Morton, *History of the Canadian West.*, p.532.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p.534.

<sup>29</sup> Morton, *Prairie Settlement*, p.11.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14.

"goodness" of the soil was the predominant factor in western agriculture. From the inception of the colony, in 1812, to the coming of the land-surveyors, in 1869, the proceeds of agriculture had to be supplemented with aid, first from the buffalo, and then from private charities and government assistance, in order for the colony to survive.

The very first crop, that of 1813, was almost a total failure. While some blame for this can be attached to the lack of plows and harrows, the weather did take its toll.<sup>31</sup> Four years later, in 1817 the colonists received a blow from a crop hazard of which the fur-traders journals had warned them, and which was to threaten field crops in Western Canada for almost the next hundred years. An early frost occurred on September 10, which was followed four days later, <sup>by a high wind</sup> which threshed the blighted grain from the stalk.<sup>32</sup> Enough was gleaned for seed but "none to eat" and only the buffalo kept the colonists from perishing.

Drought and grasshoppers were the rule from 1818 to 1822, the year 1821 being one in which the damage done was "very great".<sup>33</sup> The grasshoppers disappeared in 1822,<sup>34</sup> and a succession of favorable years apparently followed for in 1825 the colony was reported to be established and thriving.<sup>35</sup> From then on periods of good crop conditions alternated with

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p.15.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.20.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 20-21.

<sup>34</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p.24.

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periods of drought. However, by 1837 a herd of cattle had been established and expanded to the point where the colony was able to export to Norway House 1,000 lbs. of beef, 50 "firkins" of butter, and 300 lbs. of cheese, together with 10,000 lbs. of flour.<sup>36</sup>

Most of the last ten years that the colony was under the rule of the Hudson's Bay Company were years of famine. In 1861, wheat yields were poor, and barley and potato crops were "perfect failures."<sup>37</sup> In the spring of 1862 dozens of starving people besieged the Hudson's Bay offices at Fort Garry, begging for food to eat and wheat to sow,<sup>38</sup> For the next five years drought and grasshoppers afflicted every crop, and in 1867, disaster was added to disaster by the simultaneous failures of the buffalo hunt and the fisheries. By this time the colony's reserves were completely depleted, and food, clothing and seed wheat had to be imported and paid for by money raised by charitable societies in Canada, in the United States, and even in Great Britain. The Canadian government helped out by providing relief employment on the western end of the Dawson Route.<sup>39</sup>

While the Red River settlers were demonstrating, on land within a mile or so of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, that agricultural exploitation of the prairies was very much a

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p.25.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p.37.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p.38.

<sup>39</sup> Loc.cit.



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marginal venture, events were taking place elsewhere that were to lead to the first organized investigation of the possibilities of the drier plains further west. To the south, during the 1850's American settlers were moving on to the semi-arid plains and establishing themselves with varying degrees of success.<sup>40</sup> Minnesota, on the north eastern fringe of the plains, grew in ten years from a territory with 6,000 pioneers in 1850 to a full state in 1860 with 172,000 inhabitants,<sup>41</sup> and its legislators were ambitious to extend their jurisdiction to the Red River colony. As the American pioneers were pushing further into the High Plains area, they were at the same time developing the equipment requisite to extensive grain farming,- the barbed-wire fence, the sulky plow, the multiple plow and the self-binding reaper.<sup>42</sup>

To the East, in Canada West particularly, only the fringes of the farmers frontier remained to be exploited. Public authorities, in the late 1850's were striving to counteract the attraction of the prairie lands in the new American states by driving roads into such outlying districts as the Huron-Ottawa tract.<sup>43</sup> They set up a Bureau of Immigration to offset the exodus of farmers by inducing immigration from overseas.<sup>44</sup> Canadian public men, hearing that the open plains

<sup>40</sup> W.P.Webb, The Great Plains pp 270f

<sup>41</sup> C.Martin, Dominion Lands Policy (Toronto, 1934) p.213.

<sup>42</sup> Webb, Op.cit. p.391.

<sup>43</sup> A.R.M.Lower, Colony to Nation (Toronto, 1946) p.292.

<sup>44</sup> Loc.cit.

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Between the Red River and the Rocky Mountains were fertile, began to feel that Canadian westward ~~expansion~~ expansion was possible and desirable. A group of men in Toronto, headed by George Brown and William McDougall, began to draw attention to Rupert's Land and the North-West, about the year 1855.<sup>45</sup> These men convinced themselves and many Canadians that the biggest obstacle to settlement was not the fact that prairie lands were easily obtainable in the American west, nor yet the lack of adequate communication between Canada and the Red River, but was the reluctance of the Hudson's Bay Company to allow interference with the fur trade.

In 1857, an opportunity was provided for an extensive investigation into the desirability of opening the western country to settlement. A select committee of the British House of Commons was designated to investigate the question of extending the Company's privileges for a further term of years. Like that given before the Dobbs commission, one hundred years earlier, the testimony heard varied widely. Sir George Simpson, the man who knew most about the land, told the Committee that even on the good land of the Red River valley crop returns were always uncertain, and that in many years grain had to be shipped into the colony for seed for the next crop. Further west, he said, "the climate is even less certain."<sup>46</sup> Col. Lefroy, an explorer, pointed out the vulnerability of crops to early frost, and the danger

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p.294.

<sup>46</sup> Morton, Op. Cit., p.31.

of recurring drought on the plains further south.<sup>47</sup>

Against this testimony was placed that of A.K. Isbister and John Ross. The farmer claimed that wheat could be grown anywhere south of the Saskatchewan River, and that more of it would be grown if it could find a market. He blamed the Hudson Bay Company for not finding an outlet for it.<sup>48</sup> Ross, member of the Canadian legislature and head of the Grand Trunk Railway, insisted that agricultural settlement would develop all along a railway line running north of Lake Huron and Lake Superior!<sup>49</sup> Because witnesses were so contradictory in their testimony the Committee decided to recommend extending the Company's privileges for a further term, but included in their report a suggestion that Canada should be enabled to annex "such portion of the land as may be available to her for the purposes of settlement."<sup>50</sup>

This inquiry led both Imperial and Canadian interests to realize that not enough was known of the country to warrant arriving at a definite decision regarding its future. Accordingly the British government engaged Captain Palliser, and the Canadian government, H.Y. Hind, a scientist, and S.E. Dawson, an engineer, to inspect the land, investigate the climate, and to consider and report upon the feasibility of opening up the country to agricultural exploitation. Palliser conducted

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<sup>47</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p.32.

<sup>49</sup> Doc. cit.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p.33.

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his exploration of the prairies and the Rocky Mountains in 1857, and the two Canadians followed him in 1858 and 1859, Dawson inspecting the region between Rainy Lake and the Red River, and Hind the area between the Red River and the Rockies.<sup>51</sup>

Palliser was the first to <sup>point</sup> out the division of the prairies into three prairie levels, but just as important is his division of the country into three belts according to what he considered were the agricultural possibilities of each. The first he called the "arable prairie" of the Red River Valley and the Lower Assiniboine. Next was the "willow prairie" an area which he thought was originally covered with timber but had been overrun with forest fires which had come in from the south. The last belt he called "true prairie", a region he considered an extension of the "great American desert". He believed a colony could be established in the two fertile belts, and extend from Red River to the Rockies, but that settlers would stay out of the third region,<sup>52</sup> which to this day is called "Palliser's Triangle."

Palliser reached Turtle Mountain on August 4, 1857.<sup>53</sup> His report contains very little information about the soil on the plains sloping away from the mountain, or about that in the Souris River. He was not impressed with any of it, for he placed all the land west and north west of Turtle Mountain within the boundaries of the Triangle which he considered

<sup>51</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p.35.

<sup>53</sup> Captain Palliser, Papers Relative to the Explorations of Captain Palliser, (London 1859) pl3.

settlers would avoid.

Hind's report was a bit more favorable to the land between the mountain and the river, for he placed it outside the semi arid triangle. The land west of the river, he called "a dry and treeless plain",<sup>54</sup> but he thought that the treeless stretch east of the Souris would revert to woodland if it were protected from fire. Lack of timber, he considered, rather than<sup>of</sup> soil fertility would provide the most serious obstacle to successful settlement.<sup>55</sup> Hind's inspection seems on the whole to have been carried out more thoroughly than that of Palliser. He noted that the prairie country did not consist simply of three belts in which conditions were uniform, but that each belt contained a wide variety of soils. These might be, in some places, level, rich and well-drained, while a mile or two away they would be marshy and wet. The land might be undulating and stony, sandy and barren, salty and herbless, or arid and sterile. All these soils are found in the Souris River-Turtle Mountain area.<sup>56</sup> During the summer of 1857 the short prairie grass in the district was so dry and badly withered that a prairie fire swept up from the south and ran west for hundreds of miles. For this reason he found few buffalo in the Souris basin for in 1858 they stayed far to the south.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> H.Y.Hind, Reports of Progress (London 1860) p.49.

<sup>55</sup> A.S.Morton, History of Canadian West to 1870. p.834.

<sup>56</sup> H.Y.Hind, Report contained in Appendix to vol. 17. Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada, Jan.-May, 1859.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., (Pages not numbered)

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Hind describes vividly the flights of "countless multitudes of grasshoppers" which he observed while travelling up the Souris River. <sup>58</sup>

The reports of Hind and Palliser did provide some scientific basis for the claims of Canadian orators that the agricultural possibilities of Rupert's Land and the North West were unlimited. From this time on until the Hudson's Bay Company relinquished its privileges, Canadian people were subjected to a barrage of eloquent speeches, pamphlets, Board of Trade Resolutions, and press editorials extolling the rich prairie soil and condemning the reactionary attitude of the Company. No one mentioned early frosts, recurring droughts, or the clouds of grasshoppers which periodically infected the prairie, nor did anyone refer to the fact that during the eight years previous to the transfer of the territory to the Dominion, the only agricultural community in the district was gradually being forced to resort to outside charity for its very existence.

It must be conceded, however, that the Canadian proponents of westward expansion were wiser, perhaps, than they knew. Developments outside their jurisdiction were moving to the point where the establishment of an agricultural economy, even on the plains of the Souris basin, was inevitable. A milling process was soon to be evolved which placed a premium on the cereal grain most suited to the region - hard spring

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<sup>58</sup> Hind, Reports of Progress pp. 49f.

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wheat.<sup>59</sup> The railroad was moving steadily across the northern plains of the United States and bringing closer the day of adequate communication which would provide, as Thompson had foretold, the means of taking the produce of the Souris Plains to market. St. Paul had replaced the Hudson's Bay as the avenue of communication between Red River and the rest of the world,<sup>60</sup> and the country was threatening to become an economic hinterland of the Minnesota city.<sup>61</sup> If agricultural expansion was to develop under Canadian auspices, the government of the new Dominion had to take the gamble and do it quickly.

The transfer of Rupert's Land and the North-West Territories to Canada was the realization of the hopes kindled by the discovery of the fur-traders that the land was fertile. The transfer not only gave jurisdiction of the land to the Dominion but gave with it the problems which two centuries of agricultural experiment had shown to exist. The fur-traders and the Selkirk colonists had indicated the nature of the problems, but not the methods by which they were to be overcome. The problems of administration, including organizing and surveying the land, of devising a policy for its disposal, and of providing transportation to take agricultural produce to market and to bring people (and sometimes relief supplies for them) to the land, were to require another ten years before

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<sup>59</sup> A.H.R. Buller, Essays on Wheat (Toronto 1919) p.31.

<sup>60</sup> Morton Op. cit. p.37.

<sup>61</sup> Martin, Dominion Lands Policy. p.213.

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their solutions became apparent. These the Dominion government could and did cope with before the farmer's frontier moved into the Turtle Mountain district. But the fundamental problems of the prairies, early frosts, recurring droughts and grasshoppers could be solved only by the incoming settlers themselves, after years of painful trial and error.



THE APPROACH OF SETTLEMENT TO SOUTHWESTERN MANITOBA.

"Today(1882) Southwestern Manitoba is called the garden of the Province. Five years since it was supposed to be a barren irreclaimable waste".<sup>1</sup>

Ten years were to intervene between the extension of the Dominion of Canada to the Rocky Mountains and the appearance of the first agricultural settlers in the Turtle Mountain region. Canada, in 1870, found herself confronted with the problems of preparing for settlement, and supplying communication and transportation for, a territory amounting to five times the size of the original Dominion.<sup>2</sup> Canadian public men had promised to duplicate, in this 'veritable empire', the rapid advance of settlement which was taking place on the prairies south of the 49th parallel. By promising to build a railway to the Pacific coast within ten years, they placed their country, in 1871, under a further load of responsibility. But before they could place settlers on the newly acquired land, and before they could even start the railway on its way across the continent, they discovered that many things had to be done. The land had to be measured and marked

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<sup>1</sup> John Macoun, Manitoba and the Great North West, p.52.  
<sup>2</sup> C. Martin, Dominion Lands Policy, p.223.

out, newcomers from Ontario had to be shown that the treeless prairie was fertile, and land policies had to be formulated to attract settlers to the land, and at the same time, to induce private capitalists to invest in railway building. World depression and five years of cautious economical government intervened to delay the work of surveying and the beginning of the railway,<sup>3</sup> while settlement proceeded slowly because of the competition of attractive lands in the American states. However, during the ten year period the farmer's frontier pushed steadily over the townships close to the border until, in 1879, it reached both the north slope of Turtle Mountain and the valley of the Souris River.

Difficulties arose in succession, some which the Dominion authorities could not have foreseen, and others whose complexity they had underestimated or ignored in their anxiety to forestall possible American occupation of the territory. They were fortunate, however, in being able to overcome many of these by adapting American precedents to Canadian circumstances. To forestall the trouble American authorities had experienced over "squatters' rights" and preemption claims,<sup>4</sup> the Canadian government ordered Colonel Dennis to begin surveying the land even before it came formally into the Dominion.<sup>5</sup> But the Riel troubles intervened,

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<sup>3</sup> Alex. Begg, History of the North West. vol.2 p.382

<sup>4</sup> Martin, Op.cit. p.236.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.232.

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and it was not until two years later that surveying was resumed, by an Order-in-council dated April 25, 1871.<sup>6</sup> The early survey would have laid out the land in townships of 64 sections, each containing 800 acres,<sup>7</sup> but the final Order-in-council reduced them to 36 sections of 640 acres each. If the government had intended to use the townships as the unit area of local administration, this modification made it too small for the purpose, particularly on the plains more distant from Winnipeg.

According to their notebooks, the surveyors measured the first row of townships on Turtle Mountain as far as Township 1, Range 23, in 1875.<sup>8</sup> It was four years later before they surveyed the second row of townships to that Range, and they went on, in 1879, to complete the first two rows to Range 29.<sup>9</sup> Before the next year was ended, all the land in the first six rows of townships to the Saskatchewan boundary had been laid out ready for settlement.<sup>10</sup> One historian credits the contrast between the two periods 1875-79 and 1879-'80, to the change from an economical government to one anxious for expansion in the west.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.234.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.232.

<sup>8</sup> Description of the Province of Manitoba, (Department of the Interior, Ottawa, 1893), pp.221ff.

<sup>9</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>10</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>11</sup> Alexander Begg. History of the North West, vol.2, pp.380f  
<sup>7\*\*</sup> Also, "Letter of Instructions, McDougall to Dennis,"  
 (Original), d. July 10, 1869, P.A.M.,  
 and, Sessional Papers, Canada, 1871, No.XII, Vol.V.

While the land surveyors were measuring and marking the land, they were also recording and reporting their ~~op~~inion of it. Those working in the Turtle Mountain district seemed favorably impressed with most of the land in the area. For example they described Township 2, Range 23, lying on the north slope of the mountain near the west end of it, in terms which would attract the most exacting settlers. "Well-situated for settlement - rolling prairie with rich sandy loam. Good supply of spring water."<sup>12</sup> The next township north, however, is described in terms so contradictory that the reports are of little use. W.Pearce, later an important official of the Department of the Interior, considers the land on Township 3, Range 23 as not very good with "alkali in places"<sup>13</sup> while J.Morris claims the township is "beautifully situated with perfect natural drainage"<sup>14</sup> and has rich, deep, and loamy soil. One feature common to all these reports is that no surveyor ~~assesses~~ ~~mentions~~ the ability of the land to withstand drought.

With the survey well started in the more eastern parts of the province, the Dominion government sent out the Boundary Commission in 1873 to mark out the International Boundary.<sup>15</sup> Experts were sent with the expedition to collect information which would add to that made available by Hind's party in 1858-'59. The Commission's assignment extended from the Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains and they completed the work

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<sup>12</sup> Description of the Province of Manitoba, p.221.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.220.

<sup>14</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>15</sup> Macoun, Manitoba and the Great North West, p.613.

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during the next two years. Dr. G.M.Dawson was the geologist of the party and he was asked to report his opinion as to what were the most serious detriments to settlement.<sup>16</sup>

Dawson came to the general conclusion that the fertile Red River Valley would be the first region to receive settlers, and that then settlement would follow the Saskatchewan Valley to its head and spread north and south at the base of the Rockies.<sup>17</sup> He thought that only after these areas were filled would settlement filter into the drier plains to the south, and that it would do so from the north. He considered the chief detriments to settlement would be distance from markets, grasshopper visitations, and scarcity of timber. "Profits from wheat must always be small" because transportation charges would form a large part of the price at the seaboard.<sup>18</sup> He recommended that some method of destroying the grasshoppers should be discovered and he suggested fall-plowing and spring burning.<sup>19</sup> He proposed a tree-planting program to reduce the severity of droughts and offset the scarcity of timber.<sup>20</sup>

The scientist was not too favorably impressed with the land in the vicinity of Turtle Mountain. East of the mountain to the Pembina River the soil, while very fertile, was not so deep as that in the Red River Valley, and the rainfall was

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<sup>16</sup> G.M.Dawson Geology of Canada. p.301.

<sup>17</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.303.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.308.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.317.

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lighter, but he thought that it might prove to be sufficient for agricultural purposes.<sup>21</sup> West of the mountain, however, he found the country "considerably drier," with precipitation consisting only of local thunder showers.<sup>22</sup> In the Souris Valley he noticed some flat and very fertile land which was richest in the vicinity of the Antler Creeks, but because short prairie grass was the predominant vegetation over most of the area, he concluded that "it would appear at least doubtful whether the rainfall over much of this area is sufficient for the maturing of crops."<sup>23</sup> He went on to remark that he considered the soil and subsoil too light to retain sufficient moisture for sustaining growing crops in the periods between showers.<sup>24</sup> Dawson was in the area during a period of dry years, 1873 through 1875, which were featured by grasshopper plagues.<sup>25</sup> The surveyors were there when moisture conditions were excellent, in the last years of a period during which Manitoba was on the edge of an immense area in the centre of the continent which enjoyed abnormally high precipitation from 1876 to 1880. They probably saw no reason to take time to consider the moisture absorbing and retaining capacity of the soil. Nor would they be as careful as the painstaking scientist.

Dawson's none too optimistic report was probably overlooked following the wide circulation given the views of his

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21 21 Ibid., p.291.

22 Ibid., p.292.

23 Loc.cit.

24 Loc.cit.

25 Macoun, Manitoba and the Great North West, p.467.

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contemporary, Dr. John Macoun. This investigator profoundly influenced the course of settlement in Southwestern Manitoba and on the Regina Plains, areas long thought of as "sandy sterile wastes."<sup>26</sup> His reports also influenced considerably the final decision to locate the transcontinental railway much closer to the International Boundary than had been the original intention.<sup>27</sup>

Macoun first travelled through Manitoba and the North-West in the years 1872 to 1874.<sup>28</sup> Returning to Ottawa he testified before a parliamentary committee, and his testimony differed so greatly from the reports of previous investigators that when he was commissioned in 1877 to accompany Sir Sanford Fleming he was cautioned not to draw upon his imagination. He was accused by a Nova Scotian of actually accepting bribes to make the prairie country appear better than it was.<sup>29</sup>

Macoun persuasively argued away many of Palliser's and Hind's objections to settlement of the dry plains. His own reports, he maintained "showed millions of acres of fertile land in regions regarded by public opinion as a desert,"<sup>30</sup> and he declared that "very little observation was necessary to correct Palliser's mistake which at best was a hasty conclusion come to by the absence of trees and water."<sup>31</sup> Rainfall, he explained, instead of forming brooks and running off the land, was held by the matted grass and remained in the soil.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p.473.

<sup>27</sup> Morton, History of Prairie Settlement, p.51.

<sup>28</sup> Macoun, Op.cit., p.610.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.473.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.283.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p.610.

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soil.<sup>32</sup> Trees were scarce only because of the fires which annually ran through the area.<sup>33</sup> If the land was drier when Palliser saw it, it was so because the buffalo had cropped the grass too closely for it to retain water, and not because rainfall was scanty.<sup>34</sup> Refuting Hind's contention that lack of timber would deter settlement, Macoun pointed out the example of the "practical Yankee" who knows that the effort needed to carry wood twenty miles or more is more than made up by the ease with which treeless land is cleared.<sup>35</sup> In Southwestern Manitoba, "Settlers will get their fuel for years to come from Turtle Mountain."<sup>36</sup>

Macoun claimed that on the Souris Plain, both east and west of Turtle Mountain, crops were raised "on the apparently dry and sandy soil" which astonished the world.<sup>37</sup> No crops whatever were grown either north or west of the mountain while Macoun was in the area, nor were they until 1880. Here he seems to deserve the caution he was given, before he set out. Needless to say, however, his optimistic reports were well received by public speakers and others who were enthusiastic about western prospects.

Meanwhile, during the years between Macoun's first trip west and the end of the decade, certain events were taking

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.285.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p.27.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.286.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p.294.

<sup>36</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p.52.



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place in Manitoba which were forcing the frontier to advance along the boundary to the Turtle Mountain. Beginning with a party of eight in April 1871, <sup>38</sup> settlers continued to arrive in a slow but steady stream. Most of the newcomers came from the east by the Great Lakes to Duluth, then by rail to Moorhead, Minnesota, and by boat from Moorhead to Winnipeg. In winter they travelled by rail from Detroit to Moorhead and then by stage to Winnipeg. <sup>39</sup> The slow, steady, stream which reached Emerson and Winnipeg may well have begun with a swollen current when it left Ontario, for American immigration officials and railway agents were alike determined to persuade as many people as possible to prolong their stay in the American Union indefinitely. These boarded all trains and told the travellers terrible tales about the snowstorms and grasshoppers in Western Canada, and offered to take them free of charge to any state in the Union where they might wish to establish a home. <sup>40</sup> Small wonder that the Dominion government regarded transportation through southern channels as only a temporary method. The Dawson trail was kept open for a year or two at tremendous expense and in 1872 and 1873 over a thousand came over it directly from Ontario, but in 1876 it was permanently closed, <sup>41</sup> so that until the Canadian Pacific road was built, the heavy loss of immigration in transport had to continue.

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<sup>38</sup> J.W.Dafoe, "Economic History of the Prairie Provinces"  
Canada and Its Provinces, (Toronto 1914)  
vol. 20, p. 291.

<sup>39</sup> Mrs. Margaret McWilliams, Manitoba Milestones, p.161.

<sup>40</sup> Begg, History of the North West.

<sup>41</sup> J.V.Dillabough, Transportation in Manitoba (Economic  
Survey Board Province of Manitoba 1938)

The fanning out of settlement across the plains was accelerated for various reasons. In the first place, the early pioneers avoided the treeless prairie lands, for they "doubted the fertility of the soil," and were also afraid to spend the winters out of the protection of surrounding trees.<sup>42</sup> Those from Ontario, and they formed the great majority of the newcomers, sought the combination of wood, land, and water they had known in the East, and their search for it led them to pass over the fertile plains of the Red River Valley and the Portage Plains district, and take lands along the Pembina Mountain and the Whitemud River.<sup>43</sup>

The Mennonites were the first to demonstrate that agriculture could be carried on successfully on treeless land remote from the river valleys and timbered hills when they deliberately chose the level prairie land west of the Red River. They were sufficiently successful in growing wheat and flax on their open farms that others were soon following their example.<sup>44</sup> By 1879 a settler on the semi-wooded slopes of Pembina Mountain could point to the fact that "farms on that plain are as hard to get and as valuable as our much-vaunted timber claims on the mountain."<sup>45</sup>

The first people to settle on the Pembina slopes arrived there in 1875.<sup>46</sup> and from then on the frontier moved rapidly

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4 <sup>42</sup> Dafoe, Op. cit., p.295.  
<sup>43</sup> M.M.Fahrni and W.L.Morton, Third Crossing, (Winnipeg 1946)  
<sup>44</sup> Dafoe, Loc. cit. p.11,  
<sup>45</sup> Jeff Gee, A Sketch of Both Sides of Manitoba, (Nelsonville)  
<sup>46</sup> Dafoe, Op. cit. p.296. 1881) p.107

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westward in the townships close to the International boundary. The Boundary Commission Trail served as the main artery for this movement, just as the Saskatchewan trails served for the western advance of settlement north of the Assiniboine. Forcing settlement westward in both areas was the fact that the country after 1875 experienced a succession of abnormally wet years.<sup>47</sup> Much of the flat land in the Red River Valley and south of Lake Manitoba was flooded until July, so that the settlers pushed forward to the higher lands on the second prairie level. Steamboat navigation was possible on the Assiniboine as far west as Fort Ellice,<sup>48</sup> so that many newcomers were able to transport their effects a considerable distance west by boat, rather than dragging them over the sticky "gumbo" trails. Settlement fanned out from the river, south to the Rock Lake district near the Commission trail, in 1878, and north to Rapid City and Shoal Lake, on the land sloping south and east of the Riding Mountains, in 1878 and '79.<sup>49</sup>

Another important reason why the frontier advanced in a pattern of thin fingers is found in the fact that large areas of land in Manitoba had been set aside by the Dominion government in reserves for various purposes and for specified groups of people. Almost 2½ million acres or 27% of the total area of the province were reserved for the half-breeds.<sup>50</sup> The Hudson's Bay reserves of one twentieth of the lands in the

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<sup>47</sup> Macoun, Manitoba and the Great North West. p.468.

<sup>48</sup> Morton, History of Prairie Settlement. p.58.

<sup>49</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p.49.

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fertile belt accounted for another 450,000 acres.<sup>51</sup> West of Emerson, nearly all of the Red River Valley was included in the Mennonite reserve of 17 townships, or close to 400,000 acres.<sup>52</sup> Near the north-west corner of this block was one of several reserves set aside for repatriated French-Canadians from the New England states.<sup>53</sup> Close to another 500,000 acres was reserved for various purposes, including descendants of Lord Selkirk's settlers and volunteers with the Wolseley expedition.<sup>54</sup>

Locking up so much land in reserves forced hundreds of intending settlers "to take lands outside of the Province, while at the same time they passed through much fertile land which was not occupied."<sup>55</sup> The worst feature of this situation was that many settlers finding no land available within "reasonable distance" of Winnipeg or Emerson,<sup>56</sup> and facing the prospect of struggling through miles of almost impassable muddy trails, remembered the offers which they had turned down during their passage through the United States, and turned south again to find homes on the American prairies which were served by railroads.

Even in the townships outside of the reserves the amount of land available for free homestead was relatively small. The Dominion Lands Act of 1872/ established the free homestead was

<sup>51</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p.54.

<sup>53</sup> Martin, Dominion Lands Policy, p.416

<sup>54</sup> Morton, Op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p.56, part of report by James Trow, M.P. chairman of special parliamentary commission on immigration, set up in 1875.

<sup>56</sup> Begg, History of the North-West, vol.2. p.386.

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policy which the American Congress had adopted in the Homestead Act of 1862.<sup>57</sup> The Canadian act reserved all the odd-numbered sections in each township for government purposes and threw the even-numbered sections open free to homesteaders. A settler could get title to a quarter-section of land by first paying a \$10 registration fee and then fulfilling certain residence and cultivation qualifications within three years. The Act placed no limit on the number of times a settler could register for homesteads, making it possible for him to register a quarter, obtain title for it within three years, sell the land, and move on to another.<sup>58</sup> In 1879 the act was amended to allow homesteaders to file a preferential claim or pre-emption entry, which would allow them to purchase a quarter-section each, adjacent to the homestead quarters, at a nominal price of \$1 an acre. The registration fee was also \$10.<sup>59</sup>

These provisions meant that the capacity of a single township to absorb homesteaders was strictly limited, and that settlement was widely dispersed within it. To start with, 18 sections<sup>of it</sup> were withheld from homestead for government purposes. Then sections 8 and 26 of the remainder were reserved for the Hudson's Bay Co. Of the remaining 16 sections, half of each was reserved for preemption, leaving an area of only 8 square miles in the township open to homestead.<sup>60</sup> Therefore only 32

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p.54.

<sup>58</sup> Morton, Prairie Settlement, p.53.

<sup>59</sup> Murchie and Grant, Unused Lands in Manitoba, p.60.

<sup>60</sup> C.Martin, Dominion Lands Policy, (Toronto, 1938), pp.408f.

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homesteaders could settle in a township of 36 square miles.

The value of the pre-emption is debatable. Dispersion of settlement meant that the cost of building and maintaining roads, bridges, and schools placed a heavier burden on the individual tax-paying homesteader.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, in the Turtle Mountain district and the Souris River Valley, where the drier climate made summerfallowing large portions of the improved lands essential to success, even 320 acres proved to be too small an area<sup>62</sup> to provide harvests sufficient to pay current expenses and to enable a farmer to lay aside sufficient money to provide for successive years of drought. In 1885-'86 the average farm holding was 286.35 acres (in Arthur Municipality<sup>63</sup>) while today, after almost seventy years of agricultural experience in that area, the average holding is close to 500 acres,<sup>farms 64</sup> being larger the further west from the mountain they are located.

The last reason, to be considered here, for the extension and dispersal of settlement, was the uncertainty prevailing during the decade with respect to railway land policy. This policy vacillated between the idea of setting aside large blocks of land for railway building purposes, and that of alternating railway-owned sections with homestead sections. It was finally crystallized in 1880, in the contract signed with the Canadian Pacific Railway,<sup>65</sup> in which the American precedent

<sup>61</sup> Murchie and Grant. Op. cit. p.60.

<sup>62</sup> J.B.HEDGES, Building the Canadian West. (New York, 1939) p.10.

<sup>63</sup> Census of Manitoba, 1885-86.

<sup>64</sup> An Stimate given by Professor S.Sinclair, University of Manitoba.

<sup>65</sup> Hedges, Building the Canadian West. p.16.

of alternate sections was followed. Meanwhile, in 1879, a charter was given to the Manitoba South-Western Colonization Railway Company, and all the odd-numbered sections in the townships along the boundary west of the boundary of the small province of Manitoba was placed in the Southwestern reserve.<sup>66</sup> The chartering of this road gave a further impetus to the movement along the Boundary Commission Trail, for it led the settlers to believe that a railway would not be long in following them.

The homesteaders looking for free land west of the Red River, had therefore to follow the Commission Trail for 50 miles before they were out of the Mennonite reserve. Nelsonville was founded in 1876,<sup>67</sup> at the foot of Pembina Mountain just outside the north-west corner of the Mennonite land. In rapid succession Darlingford, Ruttanville, Crystal City, and Clearwater were located along the Trail, each settlement serving as a stopping place on the way to the next.<sup>68</sup> Once beyond the bottleneck between the Mennonite reserve and the French Canadian reserve a few miles to the north-west of it, settlement fanned out north from the Trail to Swan Lake and Somerset, and south to Mowbray and Snowflake.<sup>69</sup> On the Trail, settlement, in 1879, was pushing "westward 100 miles to Turtle Mountain,"<sup>70</sup> from the Nelsonville district. An enterprising trader B.B.Lariviere had anticipated this advance of the frontier by establishing, in 1877, a

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p.59.

<sup>67</sup> Morton, Prairie Settlement, p.58.

<sup>68</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>69</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>70</sup> J. Gee, A Sketch of Both Sides of Manitoba, p.107

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trading post and stopping place at Wakopa,<sup>71</sup> just 30 miles short of the spot on the north slope of the Turtle Mountain, where, in 1879, the two Smiths, Oliver and Herb, built the first shanty to appear in Southwestern Manitoba.<sup>72</sup>

Canadian Authorities, therefore, in the first ten years that the new 'empire' was entrusted to their administration, had accomplished considerable toward preparing for the movement of the farmers' frontier into the western section of the Souris plains. The population of Manitoba increased from about 12000, in 1870, to 62,660, in 1880, thereby filling up much of the available land within the province and forcing new arrivals to seek homes further west. The land along the boundary was surveyed and ready for occupation. A homestead policy had been enacted into law, and had been merged with railway land policy. The Mennonites brought in had shown that open prairie land was as fertile and as suited to agricultural exploitation as land in the more wooded areas. A railway had been planned to go through the Turtle Mountain district. These accomplishments, in spite of the competition offered by free prairie land in the American states, carried the frontier from the western edge of the Mennonite reserve, in 1875, to the Turtle Mountain slopes and the Souris River Valley, by 1880.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Helen E. Cowan, "The Boundary Commission Trail", Deloraine Times, March 30, 1944.

<sup>72</sup> W.H. Tiernan, "Geographical Outline of Southwestern Manitoba", Deloraine Times, Mar. 30, 1944.

<sup>73</sup> McWilliams, Manitoba Milestones, p.125.

<sup>74</sup> "The Pioneer and Patriotic" edition of the Deloraine Times, and the Melita New Era, of Mar. 10, 1927, contain a great deal of information on early pioneers.



## CHAPTER 6

### THE PATTERN OF SETTLEMENT, 1879 to 1883.

"A back-yard full of logs and a front yard of open prairie awaiting the plow gave these pioneers a thrill which lasted a long time".<sup>1</sup>

The farmer's frontier moved over the region which now forms the Southwestern corner of Manitoba in much the same way that it had over the area lying between the Red River and the Pembina Mountain. The settlers from Ontario, in each case, passed over the treeless plains lying between the mountain and the river in their search for conditions resembling those in the counties from which they had come. In doing so they followed the precedent set during the 1840's and 1850's on the Great American Plain, where the frontier jumped 2,000 miles, from the Mississippi to the Oregon, leaving the plain between to be settled later.

The desire for the accustomed combination of wood, land, and water resulted in settlement appearing first in the semi-wooded ravines north of Turtle Mountain and in the wooded parts of the Souris River valley. The plain between them remained unoccupied for almost another two years, and it was comparatively thinly settled for another fifteen.

Oliver and Herb Smith are said to be the first two settlers to have constructed a dwelling-place on the land sloping from

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<sup>1</sup> Helen Cowan, "The Boundary Commission Trail", Deloraine Times, March 30, 1944.

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Turtle Mountain to Whitewater Lake. They had been employed with a survey party working in the district, and in 1879 they constructed a shanty on S.E.<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>. 17-2-22., not far from the Boundary Commission Trail.<sup>2</sup> They lived in this home during the winter of 1879-'80, but in the spring they went away, returning later to work in a sawmill on the mountain.

About the same time, in 1879, a small party proceeded west along the Commission Trail to the Souris River, 30 miles across the plain. It is not surprising that they decided to end their search for fertile land in the neighborhood of the Antler Creeks. W.F.Thomas, Alfred Gould, J.B.Elliott and David Elliott concluded their westward trek at Sourisford, where the Trail crosses the Souris River.<sup>3</sup> Although only the surveyors should have been ahead of them, they found one squatter already in the district, Charles West, who was living in a dug-out near the mouth of South Antler Creek. Very little is known of this early pioneer, but he had<sup>chosen</sup> a beautifully treed part of the valley, which ever since has been a favorite picnic ground.

The first settlers to reach the Turtle Mountain district and remain permanently on the land they selected seem to have been the Rentons and the Uries who arrived early in the spring of 1880.<sup>4</sup> John Renton had been through the country the year

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<sup>2</sup> J.P.Morrison, "A Short History of Old Deloraine"  
Deloraine Times. March 30, 1944.

<sup>3</sup> James Duncan, Annals of Melita" Melita New Era.  
March 10, 1927.

<sup>4</sup> Cowan. Op. cit.

before, while Will Urie had been with the North West Mounted Police in the Birtle district. Urie preferred the Turtle Mountain location because of the general belief that railroad connections with Winnipeg would be completed earlier here than in the Birtle area.<sup>5</sup> Both men were from the neighborhood of Hamilton, Ontario, and they had gone back for their families. The Uries stayed at Emerson for almost a year, and when the Rentons arrived, both families started along the Commission Trail which was to be the highway of settlement for Southwestern Manitoba until the C.P.R. reached Brandon late in 1881. They carried with them all their furniture, livestock, poultry and grain. They are said to have had good draft horses and excellent farming machinery. When they arrived at Range 22 they chose their homesteads in Township 2, fairly close to the fringe of the timbered Turtle Mountain. John Renton Sr. decided on taking land on 20-2-22, while John Jr. selected his on 16-2-22. Hugh and Will Urie both located on 18-2-22, while John Urie chose 24-2-23. Each took a homestead and a pre-emption quarter.<sup>6</sup> These holdings, of course, were separated by the odd-numbered sections reserved for sale and railway purposes by the government.

The following letter, appearing in a Winnipeg paper in August, and signed "Settler" was <sup>quite</sup> ~~most~~ likely written by one of these pioneers.

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<sup>5</sup> W.H.Tiernan, "Geographical Outline of the South-Western Manitoba Area" Deloraine Times March 30, 1944.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.,

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"We arrived the latter part of March, and stayed at Larivieres until our land was located....In ranges 19,20,21, 22 and 23<sup>7</sup> the land is beautiful and there is good timber for 20 miles. Two sawmills are in the course of erection.. Some propose a grist mill as soon as there is wheat to grind.....

Range 22 Township 2 is the range and township we are all settled in. We have a splendid view of the lake (Whitewater Lake). It is 15 miles long and 6 wide. The crops here look well. Potatoes are \$1.25 to \$1.50, wheat \$3 and flour is \$8 a hundred....We have no post office. The nearest is 75 miles away at Crystal City."<sup>7</sup>

By the end of 1880, at least fourteen homesteads with pre-emptions had been chosen in the second townships of Range 22 and 23. The assistant land officer P.V.Gauvreau places the number at seventeen.<sup>8</sup> These homesteads were strung out from east to west along the Trail, not only because it was the main road in the area, but no doubt on account of the many rumors abroad that a railway would be located along the first correction line. An engineer surveying for the Manitoba and South-Western maintained that this road would reach Rock Lake in two years and Turtle Mountain within three.<sup>9</sup> An early C.P.R. map shows a branch line projected west near the boundary from Rosenfeld.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Manitoba Free Press Wed. Aug. 4, 1880. p.1.

<sup>8</sup> Manitoba Free Press Jan. 19, 1881.

<sup>9</sup> Free Press Tues. Nov. 23, 1880.

<sup>10</sup> Map in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

FIRST HOMESTEADERS IN AREA IMMEDIATELY NORTH OF TURTLE MOUNTAIN.

RANGE 23

PRIOR TO AUGUST, 1880

RANGE 22

							J.P. MORRISON 1880						
31	32	33	34	35	36	31	32	33	34	35	36		
		R. Russell 1880						R. HOWAT 1880					
30	29	28	27	26	25	30	29	MORRISON'S 1881	28	27	26	25	
			J. King 1880		J. Urie. G. Smith 1880	Newcomb. D.L.O.	J. RENTON Sr 1880		DAWSON & TAYLOR			FLEMING BROS. 1880	
	BOUNDARY	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	TOWNSHIP 2.
		Lougheed 1880					H. URIE. W. URIE 1880	H. SMITH O. SMITH 1879	J. RENTON JR 1880				
18	17	16	15	14	13	18	17	16	15	14	13		
7	8	9	10	11	12	7	8	9	10	11	12		
6	5	4	3	2	1	6	5	4	3	2	1		

A memorandum signed by John A. Macdonald and dated April 13, 1880, shows that the Turtle Mountain district was attracting considerable interest among land buyers in Ontario even while the first homesteaders were beginning to arrive.

"From the extent to which attention is evidently being directed to the lands in the Turtle Mountain district and the interest evidenced therein as shown by the numerous applications for extensive purchases of lands in that vicinity, it is apparent at the outset at least, it will be necessary that our most <sup>11</sup> experienced officer should be there to supervise transactions."

Accordingly an Order-in-Council was passed the next day, appointing G.F. Newcombe as lands officer for Turtle Mountain and by a subsequent Order-in-Council dated July 19 his salary was set at \$1200.<sup>12</sup>

That Newcombe was overdue when he arrived at his new office is indicated in a line from the "Settlers" letter referred to above. "The long looked-for land officer has arrived but is not located yet."<sup>13</sup> Bits of correspondence appearing in the Manitoba Free Press during the summer of 1880 show that there was considerable confusion before he arrived late in July. One correspondent mentions that no one could leave his quarter-section over-night without someone coming in, squatting on it and claiming it.

Newcombe was accompanied by his wife and a family of three small children. His position made him a person of some importance

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<sup>11</sup> P.A.M. Orders-in Council, Dept. of Interior 1880.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Free Press, Wed. Aug. 4, 1880.

<sup>14</sup> Cowan. Op. cit.

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in the new community. He had a governess for his children and possessed the first piano in the district. He built his home and office on 19-2-22, which was a government section.<sup>14</sup> His son "Launie", born in February 1881, was the first child born in the community.<sup>15</sup>

Among other early arrivals was George Ashmore, with his wife, a son and a daughter. He chose the N $\frac{1}{2}$  16-2-22.<sup>16</sup> The Johnston brothers Phil and "Bing" selected 14-2-23, while J.P. Morrison and Robert Howat took 32-2-22 and 28-2-22, respectively.<sup>17</sup> Others close to the Trail were James and John Fleming, on 24-2-22, Robert Dawson and John Taylor, on 22-2-22, George B. Smith, on 24-2-23, John Loughheed on 16-2-23, James King, on 22-2-23 and Robert Russell, on 28-2-23.<sup>18</sup> All these people were from Ontario except the Flemings who came from Glasgow.<sup>19</sup>

Settlement also appeared elsewhere along the Trail. The three Rowe brothers, Philip, Nicholas, and a younger one, together with "one Tip Helliwell", proceeded west to Sourisford, and settled on 33-2-27.<sup>20</sup> Frank R. Fox selected land further east, on 8-2-19, and years later he remarked that in 1880 "there was not a house of any description on all this Southern

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<sup>14</sup> Cowan. op. cit.  
<sup>15</sup> Morrison. Op. cit.  
<sup>16</sup> Ibid.,  
<sup>17</sup> Ibid.,  
<sup>18</sup> Tiernan Op. cit.  
<sup>19</sup> Ibid.,  
<sup>20</sup> Duncan, Op. cit.

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prairie."<sup>21</sup> Russell Fox took 10-2-19, and later worked in a sawmill.<sup>22</sup>

The year 1881 was a good one for settlement, according to the Land Office records. Homestead entries in the Turtle Mountain Land District totalled 328,<sup>23</sup> and of these the large majority were for land on both sides of the trail in Ranges 20, 21, 22 and 23. ~~The~~ Most of the homesteaders who ventured so far from Emerson were bachelors, since referred to as being "least worried about the availability of educational facilities for children."<sup>24</sup>

During the year, the prospects of some railway line reaching the Turtle Mountain area in the near future seemed to be improving. The Manitoba and Southwestern,<sup>25</sup> while laying track very slowly, tried, like small railways elsewhere, to promote land sales by continually promising to speed up construction. The C.P.R. started surveying its Pembina Mountain branch from Rosenfeld through Manitoba City (Manitou) to Deloraine in Range 22. This company also announced plans to push a line south from the mainline, when it reached Kemnay, to the Souris coal field.<sup>26</sup> The Turtle Mountain and Rock Lake Railway Company was organized and received a charter from the 1881-82 session of the Manitoba

<sup>21</sup> Old Timers Book, an unpublished collection of reminiscences gathered by W.V. Udall, publisher of the Boissevain Recorder.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>23</sup> Sessional Papers Manitoba, 1882 "Report Minister of Agriculture 1881."

<sup>24</sup> A.S. Morton, History of Prairie Settlement, p.78.

<sup>25</sup> J.B. Hedges, Building the Canadian West, p.58.

<sup>26</sup> Morton, Op. cit. p.67.



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Legislature to run a line directly west from Emerson.<sup>27</sup> With all these projects being publicized, the settlers bound for the Turtle Mountain were confident that a railway would not be long in following them.

A notable event of 1881 was the extension of the western boundary of Manitoba to take in the Ranges of Townships up to and including Range 29. This action placed all the settlements on the western part of the Souris Plains within the Province of Manitoba, so from then on the area was the Southwest Corner.

Also important to the area was the rapid extension, during 1881, of the C.P.R. mainline across the prairie. This provided an alternate route to the Commission Trail for those making their way to the Turtle Mountain and the Souris River. John Graham, the first settler in Township 5, Range 20, arrived in April, having first travelled on the new railroad as far as Portage la Prairie, which was then the end of the steel. On his way to his new home, for which he chose land on 12-5-20, he passed through Milford, in Township 8, Range 16.<sup>28</sup> This settlement was later made famous by Mrs. Nellie McLung, whose family, the Mooneys, had settled in 1879, on 20-7-16.<sup>29</sup>

An important development within the Turtle Mountain district in 1881 was the rapid settlement of the lower townships in Range 20 and 21. The first two homesteaders in Township 3<sup>30</sup> Range 20, were James and W. Patterson, who came from Ontario.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> R.B.Hill, Manitoba, (Toronto, 1890), p. 510.

<sup>28</sup> Old Timers' Book.

<sup>29</sup> Mrs. Nellie McLung, Clearing in the West, p. 47.

<sup>30</sup> Old Timers' Book.

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John Brondgeest, from Toronto, settled with his large family on 4-3-21.<sup>31</sup> The most notable feature of the year in this district was the arrival of the first parties of a considerable number of Englishmen, under the auspices of the Anglican Church. An Anglican clergyman, the Reverend Bridges, conducted parties each year from England and these added considerably to the numbers settling near Turtle Mountain.<sup>31</sup>

Charles Sankey, one of them who now lives at Waskada, has listed those who arrived from "the Old Country" in 1881. Included are three couples with families, three couples without families, and fifteen bachelors. They formed a closely knit group, which centred around the home of Mr. and Mrs. Lovell, on 32-2-21.<sup>33</sup> Except for E.M.C. Sankey, who homesteaded 34-2-21, the locations of the others have not been determined. He describes his father as "Gentleman - stipendiary magistrate."<sup>34</sup>

South-east of the "British Settlement", E. Nicol erected a store on 16-2-20, and, because at nights he kept a beacon burning to guide those who might be wandering<sup>over</sup> the plains, this spot was called Wassewa, "Burning Light."<sup>35</sup>

Meanwhile more Ontario settlers were moving in on the second townships of Ranges 22 and 23. Andrew Morrison, his wife, and John Morrison, took the south half of 28-2-22, which was left

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Charles Sankey, The British Settlement, (An Unpublished mss in the Legislative Library), p.2

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p.7

<sup>34</sup> Old Timers' Book.

<sup>35</sup> This interpretation of Wassewa was given by Mr. Orris, of Boissevain and Mr. Sankey accepted it.

vacant when Robert Howat died.<sup>36</sup> Howat's funeral, May 12, 1881, was the first funeral in the area, and he was buried in a plot of ground reserved for a Presbyterian Church, right on the bank of Whitewater Creek on the S $\frac{1}{2}$  19-2-22.<sup>37</sup> R. Russell selected N $\frac{1}{2}$  28-2-22, Alex. Craig N.E. $\frac{1}{4}$  32-2-22, the Gages, Albert, Ham and Thomas, E. $\frac{1}{2}$  4-3-22 and all of 36-2-23, and Emerson Lampman W $\frac{1}{2}$  4-3-22. All these people were from Hamilton.<sup>38</sup> One Bera Finch took S $\frac{1}{2}$  6-1-22, right on the International Boundary, where he must have lived a lonely life in the forest.<sup>39</sup> Jack Musgrove arrived and opened a store near Brondgast's holding on 4-3-21,<sup>40</sup> three miles from the south-east shore of Whitewater Lake, and right in the British Settlement. This location was called Waubush.<sup>41</sup>

The year 1881 witnessed the beginnings of the first large scale farming operation, the Quinte farm, owned by Clute, Wright, Taylor and Co. of Belleville, Ont. and managed by M.D. Wright.<sup>41</sup> Wright came in by the Commission Trail and first located on 22-2-22, paying \$1900 for the rights of those he later said had "squatted" there. Then his company bought the railway sections adjoining this section so that their holdings totalled 5 sections. The company commenced operations in 1882.

<sup>36</sup> Tiernan, "Geog. Outline."

<sup>37</sup> Morrison, "Old Deloraine." (Morrison and Howat came out together from Oxford Co. Ontario.)

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>40</sup> Old Timers Book.

<sup>41</sup> Deloraine Times, Thurs. May 10. (The information re Quinte Farm is taken from a letter by Wright given in a special immigration edition).

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It was a mixed farming venture, which developed, in spite of "four years of famine prices and no railroad" to the stage in 1887 where the company had 800 acres under cultivation, which raised 14,000 bushels of wheat, and 3,000 of oats, while they had 65 head of cattle and 25 horses. They had "good buildings," an artesian well under the kitchen, a 40-foot tower windmill which would grind 20 bushels of grain an hour and pump water for livestock, a blacksmith shop, and an "underground" barn for 75 head of cattle. The total investment of cash involved is not given by Wright, but it must have been a considerable amount. The enterprise suffered a severe set-back from the crop failures of 1888 and 1889 and by 1896 Wright was bankrupt.<sup>42</sup>

To the west, along the Souris River and nine miles north of Sourisford, a new settlement was begun by three men who were later to distinguish themselves in local and provincial affairs. Two of them, A.M. Livingstone and Dr. Sinclair, located on 36-3-27, west of the river, while John Bobbyn chose his land two miles east, on the east side of the Souris.<sup>43</sup> At the same time Andrew Lyle went in between the Antler Creeks, near the present Lyleton in 1881.<sup>44</sup>

The pattern of settlement was further rounded out in 1882

<sup>42</sup> Deloraine Times, Sept. 18, 1896.

<sup>43</sup> Duncan - "Annals of Melita".

<sup>44</sup> Place Names of Manitoba. (Dept. of Interior, Ottawa 1933)

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by the arrival of homesteaders in the Waskada district, the treeless plains area lying between the mountain and the river, which had so far been passed over by land-seekers on their way to the Souris River. This district comprised the territory in the two lower townships of Ranges 25 & 26, <sup>45</sup> which the following year formed the larger part of the Rural Municipality of Medora. The name Waskada, according to a story often told by the late Dr. R.S. Thornton, one-time Minister of Education for Manitoba, is derived from an Indian expression, Wa-sta-daow, meaning "better further on". When homesteaders, seeking land near Turtle Mountain would ask the Indians about the land, they always replied, "Wa-sta-daow" in the hope that the land-seekers would go further on and leave them alone. <sup>46</sup>

Just why settlement went into the Waskada district at this particular time is difficult to determine from the records examined. John Spence, who selected N.E.  $\frac{1}{4}$  26-2-26 registered hid homestead before he saw it, or was within 20 miles of it. <sup>47</sup> His careful diary gives no ~~limit~~ <sup>hint</sup> of why he did this, unless his reasons are connected with the fact that he had met the Rowe brothers from Sourisford in Brandon, and had travelled with them back to the Turtle Mountain country. Spence's quarter lay right on the Commission Trail and the Sourisford men would

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<sup>45</sup> According to Jas. Smart, now residing at Salmon Arm B.C.

<sup>46</sup> Story obtained in conversation with Mr. Clare Ramsay of Waskada.

<sup>47</sup> John Spence Memorandum of Events.

know the land well. John Lee and Richard Wickham also came in with Spence and the Rowes, and took land nearby.<sup>48</sup> All three may have been influenced by the prospect of a railway being laid eventually right along the trail.

The Smart brothers, Jim and Jack, also arrived in 1882, Jack Smart registering his land in April, a month before Spence paid his fees on May 26. They took land on 22-1-26,<sup>49</sup> which Jim says was the first land to be broken in the Waskada District. Questioned as to why his brother chose to locate here, Jim said that he did not know, but he thought it might be because the homestead land near the Turtle Mountain was pretty well taken up. Another settler in 1882 was James Reid, who came in on 2-2-26, on which, in 1883, was located the post office of Waskada.<sup>50</sup>

Further east, on Range 24, two settlements were begun in 1882, Montefiore, on 20-2-24, and Lennox, right near a coal bed on 14-1-24. Coal could be had for \$ 2.00 a ton during the next year. Montefiore was on the Commission Trail.

Throughout the first part of that summer, settlers continued to arrive in fair numbers, filling out the settlements in many parts of the Southwestern corner of Manitoba. Some, like the Welshman, John Williams, who "entered for 14-3-27", on the 'Peninsular';\* a few miles south and east from Melita, walked in from Brandon, then served by the C.P.R. Others saved train fare, using

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> According to James Smart, in an interview held with him while he was at Waskada, in November, 1948. He came from Salmon Arm, B.C., to attend his brother Jack's Funeral.

<sup>50</sup> John Spence, Memorandum, and Melita Progress, Aug. 30, 1899.

<sup>51</sup> Henderson, North-West Gazette for 1884.

\* Melita Western Progress, July 19, 1899, ("John Williams")

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the old Commission Trail, which was being cut shorter, day by day, by the C.P.R., then pushing slowly westward its Pembina Mountain Branch from Rosenfeld. This reached Manitoba City, now Manitou, just before the end of the year.<sup>52</sup>

Waubeesh received another party of Englishmen, and at this settlement James Patterson raised the frame of a grist mill for John A. Brondgeest.<sup>53</sup> This mill was of the old grindstone type, and was practically a failure. Like later grindstone mills in the district, it lasted only until the <sup>railway</sup> brought flour from outside points.<sup>54</sup>

Outstanding among the ambitious ventures of the year 1882 was the Morton Dairy Farm project.

George Morton had been prominent in the cheese business in Ontario, where, before coming to Manitoba, he operated on a large scale. He exported, in 1874, \$480,000 worth of cheese to England, thereby earning the title "Cheese King of Canada".<sup>55</sup> Previous to this achievement, he was able to persuade the Macdonald administration to place a duty of 4¢ a pound on American cheese, an indication that he was a man of considerable influence in the Conservative party.<sup>56</sup> He turned his attention to the west, and sometime between 1878 and 1882, he became favorably impressed with the

<sup>52</sup> H.W. Innis, History of the Canadian Pacific Railway, (London, 1923.) p.140.

<sup>53</sup> Old Timers' Book.

<sup>54</sup> According to Sankey.

<sup>55</sup> Boissevain Globe, Dec. 31, 1891

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., in an obituary article on Morton.

possibilities of the hay lands in the vicinity of Whitewater Lake. He envisioned a large tract of this land covered with dairy herds and their owners receiving a substantial and steady income from the proceeds of cheese, produced in a factory which he would build near the shore of the lake. He approached the C.P.R., and they assured him they would run their branch line to the north of the lake in the very near future. On the strength of his promise, and through his political influence with the one-time Kingston lawyer, John A. Macdonald, he made contracts with the C.P.R., the Dominion government, and the Hudson's Bay Company by which two townships of land were placed at his disposal.<sup>57</sup>

Morton devised his plan with a great deal of care. He aimed at setting up a family on each quarter-section, equipped with good buildings and a sufficient stock of dairy cattle. To supply lumber for the needed barns and houses, he installed a sawmill near Lake Max on Turtle Mountain. To provide feed grain for his dairymen, he bought land on 2-20, near the Mountain, which had been proved to be good crop land. To ensure provisions for them, he built and operated a store at Wabeesh, and then to provide a town for his community, he laid out the townsite of Moberley on the north shore of Whitewater Lake. To provide for the daily collection of milk for his cheese, he planned to build

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<sup>57</sup> Sankey, The British Settlement, pp.6f.

(Much information in the paragraphs on Morton is compiled from articles in the Boissevain Globe and conversations with Mr. Sankey and Mr. Orris.)



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a narrow guage railway connecting his factory with the various farms.

The enterprising Morton thought, no doubt, that he had provided for every contingency, but there were at least two important factors he failed to take into account. One was the immediate extension of the railway to his property; the other was the climate. The Failure of the C.P.R. to fulfil its promise , and the rigorous winter weather, combined to defeat his project.

Without railway facilities it was a difficult task to bring in a large herd of dairy cattle over miles of prairie in which feed was scarce and expensive. A herd of 1,000 was sent in , some from Brandon and the remainder from Emerson. When these finally arrived, Morton made a fatal mistake. Instead<sup>of</sup> letting the cattle roam around during the winter to keep warm, he built corrals of swamp hay which closely confined them. The result was that the larger part of the herd froze to death, and had to be buried when the ground thawed out in the spring. This mistake turned out to be the death-blow to Morton's project, for in the spring the Land Commissioner at Winnipeg reported to Ottawa, " I went over the lands allotted to the Morton Dairy Farms. As far as actual work is concerned, little is being accomplished; operations are at a standstill, and everything in the way of cultivation and improvement is becoming valueless through neglect." <sup>58</sup> Although his

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cheese project actually failed before it was started, Morton remained in the country with his settlers. The story of his many contributions to the development of the area is reserved for later treatment.

Another interesting feature of 1882 was the intrusion into Southwestern Manitoba of the real-estate boom which the arrival of the C.P.R. had started in the West in 1881. On the Souris River Dr. Sinclair had part of his 36-3-27 surveyed as a townsite, while two miles east John Dobbyn laid out Dobbyn City.<sup>59</sup> Further south, a townsite was laid out at Sourisford.<sup>60</sup> Morton mapped out Moberley on 8-4-21, some lots of which were later a foot under the waters of Whitewater Lake.<sup>61</sup> Near Waubeesh John Brondgeest formed a company, which subdivided part of the Tregent homestead, S $\frac{1}{2}$  4-3-21, and of the Bottom homestead, N $\frac{1}{2}$  32-2-21.<sup>62</sup> They built a store and a hotel, and with Brondgeests mill close by, the settlement was given the name of Turtle Mountain City. Further west, James Cavers and A.P. Stuart built a store and laid out a townsite on 30-2-22, on the banks of Whitewater Creek. This was called Deloraine, after Cavers' old home in Scotland.<sup>63</sup> Lots of all these townsites were placed on

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<sup>59</sup> <sup>59</sup> Duncan, "Annals of Melita."

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> The plan of the Townsite is still kept at the Boissevain Land Title Office.

<sup>62</sup> Sankey *Op. cit.*, p.7.

<sup>63</sup> Tiernan, "Geog. Outline of S.W. Man."

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sale and sold to speculators in Winnipeg, and by friends of Brondgeest, to those in Toronto.<sup>64</sup>

Settlement proceeded at an accelerating rate from the summer of 1880, through 1881, and the first part of 1882. This was a reflection of the encouraging flood of immigrants who were pouring into the rest of the province. In 1882 the Dominion government alienated 2,699,145 acres of its western lands by homestead, pre-emption and sale, an amount which was  $2\frac{1}{2}$  times that of any previous year.<sup>65</sup>

Southwestern Manitoba, however, received a severe blow which cut short the acceleration of settlement it had been experiencing. On March 11, 1882, the Department of the Interior withdrew from homestead entry "all-even-numbered sections next to and along both sides of the Canadian Pacific Railway and its branches."<sup>66</sup> This directive was followed by another, dated July 5, 1882, "That since the lands between the said southern limit of the main-line belt of the C.P.R. and the International Boundary have attained a great value, the Minister therefore recommends that even-numbered sections.....be withdrawn from homestead and pre-emption entry and that he be authorized to offer the same for sale at public auction at the upset price of not less than \$2.50 per acre."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Sankey, *op. cit.*, p.8.

<sup>65</sup> J.W. Dafoe, "Economic History of the Prairie Provinces" *Canada and Its Provinces*, vol. 20, p.299.

<sup>66</sup> Hedges, *Building the Canadian West*, p.85.

<sup>67</sup> *Orders-in-Council*, Dept. of Interior, Ottawa, 1880.

This Order-in-Council was made effective immediately, without notice, so that many settlers proceeding to the Turtle Mountain Land Office, were caught unawares along the trail, with everything invested in the oxen, carts, and supplies they had with them.<sup>68</sup> When they arrived at Deloraine they found the office closed, and rather than face the long trip to homestead lands in the north-west, they turned south and took lands in nearby North Dakota. They were mostly from Ontario, but among them were a number of immigrants direct from Sweden.<sup>69</sup> The government's action therefore retarded the development of Southwestern Manitoba "more than it is possible to realize."<sup>70</sup> The homestead lands were thrown open again in November 29, 1883,<sup>71</sup> but by this time a great many permanent settlers were lost to the area, and for a time thereafter settlement was retarded by the fact that many land prospectors were given the idea that because so much land was uncultivated compared with that further east, it was unfit for cultivation.<sup>72</sup>

The first three years of settlement, up to July 1882, thus form a distinct period in the history of Southwestern Manitoba. Sufficient land had been broken, particularly in the townships north of Turtle Mountain and in the Souris Valley,

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<sup>68</sup> Manitoba Free Press, July 13, 1882.

<sup>69</sup> Information supplied by Sankey and Smart in conversations.

<sup>70</sup> Alexander Begg. The History of the North-West. vol. p.66

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p.67.

<sup>72</sup> Loc. cit.

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to make the Land District "well-known by reputation" to would-be settlers in other parts of Canada. Enough settlers had come in and spread through the area to set the pattern of settlement and to provide the nuclei for what were to become busy towns after the arrival of the railway. Farming operations, both on the small homestead basis and the large scale of the Quinte Farm and the Morton Dairy Farm projects, ~~were~~ <sup>in</sup> pointing out some of the pitfalls to be avoided and beginning to show that the methods used in farming in Ontario and Great Britain were not suited to the new environment.

Some settlers there were, who, like the three brothers at the "Bachelors' House", took land solely for the purpose of selling it as soon as possible after 'proving it up', and then moving on. Many from the "Old Country" found it impossible to adjust themselves to the comparatively harsh surroundings, and gave up their home-steads to move away to the growing towns and cities elsewhere in Manitoba and the North-West. Replacing those who came and left was to be a slow process, and a disappointing one to those who remained. Of these many were to establish themselves permanently and erect fine farm homes. How they came in and adapted themselves, their institutions, and their farming methods to an environment which, only a short time before, had been described more than once as much too rigorous to allow of any agricultural development whatever, will now be considered.

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<sup>73</sup> W.H.Barneby, Land and Labour in the Far, Far West,  
(London, 1884), p.305.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p.304.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE PROCESS OF ADJUSTMENT, 1880 to 1885.

© The settlers from Eastern Canada and the British Isles brought with them their household effects and their ideas of social organization."<sup>1</sup>

The three years, 1880 through 1882, were the years in which the broad outlines of the pattern of settlement were drawn, and in which the soil in the ravines north of the Turtle Mountain and in the Souris valley was broken sufficiently to prove it fertile. For those whose efforts made these developments possible they were years of considerable hardship, and yet they formed a period of bustling activity, in which hopes were high, and some ambitious schemes were promoted. By the midsummer of 1882, more land had been disposed of at the Land Office than was to be the case for the whole of the next nine years.<sup>2</sup>

From 1882 to the end of the century, development was to seem disappointingly slow, a matter of gradually filling in the pattern, extending it northward and westward, and adjusting it in places to conform to the location of the railway after it arrived. Religious, social, educational, and local governmental institutions had to be developed as well, but before the newcomers from Ontario and elsewhere could devote much of their time to them, they had to locate their land, to build homes on it, and to devise ways and means of wresting a living from it.

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<sup>1</sup> Cambridge History of the British Empire, vol. 6, p/ 521.

<sup>2</sup> See the table near the end of this chapter, p.114.

No account of this pioneer period is complete without some description of the hardships endured on the long Commission Trail. Those who came the 175 to 200 miles from Emerson in their sleighs and wagons had only the stopping-houses and the surveyors' camps ahead of them. Many spent the winters of 1879 or 1880 at Emerson and set out early in the spring to get on the land as soon as possible so they could grow some crop the first year.<sup>3</sup> Frequently they struggled through days of blizzard, and were forced at times to put up in crowded stopping-houses until the wind died down.<sup>4</sup> Along the trail, the snow was usually so deep that the women were unable to walk to keep warm, while at the same time the covered sleighs and wagons reeked with the smell of chickens and riding in them was unbearable. Riding on the open sleighs, which usually carried fuel or lumber, meant risking frozen feet and faces.<sup>5</sup>

Those who decided to wait until later in the spring were forced to struggle through the sticky gumbo of the Red River Valley and to ford the flooded Pembina creeks.<sup>6</sup> Small wonder that one pioneer explains that he and his party took homesteads near the Deloraine Land Office, not because they liked the land but because they were "too tired of it all to go any further."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Cowan - "B.C.Trail."

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>6</sup> Old Timers Book.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.,

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Once they had selected and moved on to their lands, the pioneers faced the problems of building homes and breaking sufficient land in time to produce crops enough to at least feed their stock through the first winter. Until stores were built at Waubeesh, Deloraine, and Wassewa, in 1881, the nearest available provisions were at Larivieres.<sup>8</sup> Many of the early settlers drove to Nelsonville and even to Emerson to buy sufficient supplies in the fall to last them all winter, thus saving the transportation charges which made up a large part of Lariviere's prices.<sup>9</sup> This trader still was able to do a good business, however, for he is reported to have bought 2,000 bags of flour, in November, 1880, at Nelsonville for \$1.75 a bag,<sup>10</sup> which was probably the price he paid for that he sold <sup>to</sup> "Settler" the previous spring for \$8.00.

The more enterprising of the earlier settlers soon discovered ways of making money. John Renton Sr., arriving early in 1880, established a stopping house which did a flourishing business for a few years.<sup>11</sup> Those who broke enough land to produce a surplus found a ready market for it at good prices, during the first three years, in supplying the needs of those who were coming in. "Bing" Johnston grew 40 bushels of oats in 1881, but he sold 500 bushels, which he freighted in from Clearwater or Crystal City. Prospectors for land had to pay a

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<sup>8</sup> Cowan. Op. cit.

<sup>9</sup> Manitoba Free Press, Nov. 23, 1880, "Badger Creek."

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Cowan, Op. cit.



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high price for oats to feed their horses. Phil Johnston "would consent to part with a little but only if the stranger wanted each bushel more than he wanted \$2.50." The oats cost the Johnstons 40¢ for sacking, but there still remained a good profit.<sup>12</sup>

Tradesmen soon found a ready demand for their services. James Patterson was kept busy as a carpenter, for 1881 was a year of good demand for buildings.<sup>13</sup> The Sankeys were always called upon to lay the crown-plates and the ridgepoles on log buildings for they were sailors and were considered more surefooted than their neighbors.<sup>14</sup> Mrs. Graham, on 12-5-20, received a steady income by baking bread for neighbor bachelors at \$1 per 100 lbs. of flour, the <sup>men</sup> supplying the flour.<sup>15</sup>

Housing was a major problem and it was solved in different ways by different settlers. Most settlers, those with families as well as those without, lived in tents during the first summer while some land was broken and dwellings were built.<sup>16</sup> Bachelors often boarded with neighbors until their own homes were finished. Most of the early homes on the plains were built of sawn lumber from Turtle Mountain, but many were built of logs and others made of sod. A traveller from England, who drove from Brandon to Manitou in 1883, noted that most houses, both on the Brandon trail and on the Commission Trail were frame "mostly 24'x18'"

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Old Timers' Book.

<sup>14</sup> From interview with C. Sankey.

<sup>15</sup> Old Timers' Book.

<sup>16</sup> Spence, "Memorandum."

while a few were sod.<sup>17</sup>

The sod houses remained a feature of the landscape in some localities until at least the end of the century.<sup>18</sup> The best sods for building were taken from the sloughs and hollows where the sod was tough, with longer and tougher roots than sod on the flat plain. They were turned with a walking plow and cut into 30 inch lengths. The walls of the house were two sods thick or 24 inches, and they were raised to a height of about 7 feet. Then a log ridgepole was placed down the centre to provide the roof with a slope of about 1 inch to the foot. Logs were run from the ridgepole to the sidewalls, and covered with sods and hay. The interior of the walls was often faced with mortar which was whitewashed to improve the general appearance. The windows were placed as high as possible on account of the winter snow, and until glass could be attained, they consisted in summer of the reliable "cheesecloth" with which every household was supplied.

A big problem was to keep out the moisture. This was solved in some cases by tacking cotton below the pole-rafters of the roof, and then giving the cotton two or three thick coats of whitewash. When the water collected on the cloth, the weight forced it to sag, and when the load of water threatened to tear the cotton from the rafters some one punched a hole in it, and carried out the water in a tub. Another problem, which no amount of ingenuity seemed to solve, was the attraction of sod

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<sup>17</sup> W.H.Barneby, Land and Labour in the Far<sup>Far</sup> West. p.307.  
<sup>18</sup> Sod house construction described in conversation by Mr. Strang, who homesteaded on 4-1-26 in 1897.

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walls for fleas and bed-bugs.

In the winter it was a common thing on the open plains near the boundary for the sod-homes to be completely covered over with snow. When this happened, the sod-dwellers dug a short narrow passage with steps leading to the top of the drift, and placed a trap door at the top to keep out the snow during subsequent storms.

Supplementary to building a house was the problem of furnishing it. Those who had sold out their land holdings in Ontario and who brought their families with them, usually carried down the Commission Trail a complete equipment of furniture, cooking utensils, and even family pets.<sup>19</sup> Others purchased their supplies at Emerson, while those who were handy with tools made their own chairs, tables, beds and "sideboards" from the oak and birch of Turtle Mountain.<sup>20</sup> Everyone brought in a plentiful supply of "Chicago chicken", salty pork sidemeat, which cost 22¢<sup>21</sup> a pound. This was the main course for breakfast, dinner and supper, particularly with bachelors.

The careful Hohn Spence recorded the outlay needed for a bachelor to begin homesteading in first a tent and then a sod-house.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Cowan. Op. cit.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Sankey.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with James Smart.

<sup>22</sup> Spence Memorandum.

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House material	\$38.75.
Plow	23.00.
Stove	10.00.
Pipes	2.00.
Blankets	5.00.
Quilts	3.60.
Dishes	3.50.
Can of coal oil	.75.
Pork	14.00.
Flour	2.85.
Potatoes (6 bus.)	66.00.
Seed potatoes	1.00.
Total	<u>\$110.45.</u>

While building a house and furnishing it occupied much of the pioneer settler's time and attention, the chief concern of bachelor and family man alike was to get some land under cultivation as quickly as possible. Wheat for seed and oxen for plowing, during the early years, were brought in from the Mennonite settlement near Nelsonville.<sup>23</sup> The grain was sown broadcast by hand.<sup>24</sup> Red Fyfe was the wheat crop and it was cut with the cradle and tied with straw.<sup>25</sup> In 1880 the crops were threshed with flails but in 1881 threshing machines were brought in, the first one being very likely that owned by the Porritt brothers at Waubeesh. They had this machine freighted in as far as Milford, on the Souris River, on a flat-boat, and the first grain they threshed was that on Jim Patterson's farm.<sup>26</sup> Porritt's outfit is said to have been powered with a wood-burning portable steam engine which was drawn about the country by

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<sup>23</sup> A.A. Titus, "Deloraine's Early Wheat" Del. Times,  
March 30, 1944.

<sup>24</sup> Old Timers Book.

<sup>25</sup> Titus, Op. cit.

<sup>26</sup> Old Timers Book, (in a paper prepared by C. Bjarneson).

4 oxen. The beasts were killed for beef as soon as threshing was over. R. Sankey and F. Blankenback, two men from England, had a horse-powered outfit in 1882.<sup>27</sup> Harvest wages at the time were \$1.25 a day, and were paid in wheat at \$1 a bushel.<sup>28</sup> No wheat was exported in 1881 and very little in 1882, for it was all needed for feed and seed by those who grew it and by newer arrivals.

Once the harvest was over, those with families laid in a stock of supplies, and settled down for the long winter months, but the resourceful bachelors from Ontario made their way to farms further east where they gired out until spring. Some went on to Winnipeg, to Port Arthur, or even as far east as Wisconsin and Indiana, where they worked with railway construction gangs in lumber camps.

The way in which a bachelor could establish a homestead, get his land broken, and at the same time earn money for future expansion of operations, is well described by John Spence.<sup>29</sup>

Spence left his home in Kent county, Ontario, in the fall of 1881. He worked all winter in the "lumber woods" in Ohio, and proceeded to Emerson in the spring. Taking no chances he made sure of a job and a home by hiring with a farmer at Manitoba City (Manitou) for \$25 a month and then paid a man to substitute for him while he went looking for land. After he

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>28</sup> Titus, Op. cit.

<sup>29</sup> These paragraphs based on Spence's Memorandum.

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had selected and entered his homestead in the Waskada district, he hired two men to break 5 acres for him at \$5 an acre, and then returned to Mountain City. Here he worked until February, and earned \$182. Collecting this, he started out for his homestead, stopping to earn another \$20 by working for a month at Montefiore. Reaching his land on April 3, he stayed with a neighbor, Wickham, while he started in to build his sod house. For cutting and hauling the sod, he "borrowed Wickham's bulls."

After helping Wickham to sow his crop, he sowed "2½ bu. wheat and 6 bu. oats for self," on May 6, 1883. He planted potatoes on May 21 which were frozen badly on July 31. Then in August he hired out at \$22 a month, and in September he joined a threshing gang for \$25. Wickham cut Spence's crop, which amounted to "40 bushels of wheat and 120 bushels of oats." "They keep the grain for which they break 5 acres for me in 1884."

That winter he went to Peabody, Indiana, where he "worked for various men" until March, when he "bought ticket home for \$28." He became a full-fledged land-holder on the he "paid taxes Medora, \$2991," and from then on he stayed home for he was no longer an itinerant labourer.

Like Spence, the large majority of the early settlers were from Ontario, except for those at Waubeesh, or "Turtle Mountain City." Here settled the "British Bachelors" who first arrived in 1881.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> The paragraphs on the Waubeesh settlement are based on conversations with C. Sankey, and on the mss. he forwarded to the Provincial Librarian.

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This settlement provided an interesting example of the problems of mutual adjustment of Canadians and Britishers to each others' ways.

At first they did not mingle freely, not because there was any antagonism between them, but rather on account of subtle differences in "manners" and in ways of doing things. The Canadians played baseball, while the Englishmen stuck to their cricket. When, on Christmas Eve 1883, the Englishmen decided to entertain their neighbors at the "Batchelor's Ball" the affair was only a partial success, for the Canadians knew only their square dances while the Britishers preferred the waltz.

The Canadians were the more resourceful, for they had had farming experience in Ontario, where, on the rough bush farms each man had to solve his own difficulties as they arose. With them they brought the pioneer traditions of the "bee" for building and other purposes, and of frequent neighborhood picnics. Their chief aim, except for men like Morton and M.D.Wright, was to break the land and produce as much wheat as possible in the shortest time. Among the English, however, were those like Lovell, Thompson, Chas. Forbes, Captain Whitlaw and A.S.Barton, who tried sheep and cattle. Forbes had previously engaged in sheep-ranching in Australia. However the chief difficulty with raising sheep near Turtle Mountain was interference from the wolves. The English tried to cope with these in true English fashion for, from somewhere, they collected a pack of "Hounds"; and Captain Whitlaw was appointed "Master of the Hounds".

John Brondgeest from Toronto, the real *entrepreneur* of the district, did much to break down the barriers which existed between the two groups. He brought a number of the Englishmen into his scheme to found a town. Not only that, he kept a few racing horses, and these, together with his large family of attractive girls, brought Englishmen and Canadians together on Sunday afternoons, when they became better acquainted.

Factors which did much to assimilate English and Canadian, were eventual intermarriage, and the practice of exchanging work at house-building, barn-raising and threshing. Perhaps the best indication of cooperative effort is shown in the events which took place in the community in 1887. John A. Brondgeest died suddenly from an attack of appendicitis. Just prior to this he had met with several financial reverses; his mill had failed and when the C.P.R. passed north of his townsite in 1885-'86, he was left with a number of worthless town lots on his hands. To make a fresh start, he gave up the townsite and built a new home on S.E. 15-3-21, right on the railway line. He had only just moved when he died, and left his wife and family without financial means and short of food and fuel in a very stormy winter. His neighbors, mostly Englishmen, worked together, furnished the new home and provided everything needed for the bereaved family. "We just had to get behind them and take care of them."<sup>31</sup> They approached the C.P.R. and the Dominion Government, with the result that the railway company gave Mrs. Brondgeest

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<sup>31</sup> Sankey's expression.



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the deed to the quarter section on which her husband had only paid the first down-payment, while the Department of the Interior allowed her to homestead a hay quarter on the lake shore without her having to meet the usual homestead qualifications. In the spring the whole community turned out to a plowing bee, and 27 teams plowed 35 acres of which they sowed 17, "A very sensible way of showing good neighborly feeling and evidencing the respect in which the family is held."<sup>32</sup> A year or so later the British bachelors formed a school district, the Strathallan, on the Drummond homestead, so that the Brondgeest children would be given a chance to obtain some education.

For the most part, Englishmen and Canadians attended different church services. The Ontario people were mostly Presbyterian, except those at Hernefield, who were Methodist.<sup>33</sup> The English clung to the Church of England. They built a church on S.W<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> 6-3-20, Mrs. Sankey's farm, and after much discussion over the dedicating of it to a saint, they named it "All Saints."<sup>34</sup>

One curious feature of the whole area is that Britishers and Canadians took opposite sides in politics. Most Ontario people were "Presbyterian Grits" from the Canada West frontier, and, as one Englishman expresses it, they brought to the new country "all the prejudices and antagonisms" of the old.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Deloraine Times.

<sup>33</sup> Morrison "Old Deloraine" and conversation with James Smart.

<sup>34</sup> Sankey, see n.30

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

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Those from the British Isles, almost without exception, were followers of John A. Macdonald. One reason for this is said to be the fact that J.P. Alexander, a Scot<sup>5</sup>man who came to Waubeesh with the Englishmen in 1881, stopped at Ottawa and interviewed the prime minister. He came away very much impressed with the ability of the affable Macdonald, and was soon the Conservative "king-pin" of the district. In November he was elected to the Manitoba legislature,<sup>36</sup> and when he was defeated in 1883, the Norquay government appointed him Registrar for the county of Souris.<sup>37</sup> In 1886, he resigned and contested and won the seat for the new riding of Souris.<sup>38</sup> Through his influence a large number of Britishers received appointments as justices of the peace,<sup>39</sup> probably because the Ontario people eligible for these positions were Liberals. William Lovell, of Waubeesh, was appointed to the Provincial Board of Agriculture in 1883, only two years after he arrived from England.

The Ontario people brought with them the idea of farmers organizing for political purposes. J.S. Thompson, a pioneer of the Waskada district was the most prominent man in farmers' movements, for he had been an old Granger before coming west. He played a prominent part, both in the Farmer's Union of the early '80's and in the Patron movement of the middle '90's.\*

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<sup>36</sup> Canadian Parliamentary Companion and Annual Register, 1885

<sup>37</sup> Manitoba Gazette #39, Sept. 29, 1883, & #28, July 14.

<sup>38</sup> Parliamentary Companion 1887.

<sup>39</sup> A number of these appear in the Manitoba Gazettes of 1883.

\* See ch. 10.

The British people, however, "took no stock" at all in these movements, for they considered them to be "foreign" importations from the American states.<sup>40</sup>

A predominant feature of the early years of settlement, and no doubt a depressing one to British and Canadian bachelors alike, was the lack of women in all the new communities. At the "Bachelor's Ball," there were only half a dozen women to dance with over forty men. Two of these, Mrs Lovell and Mrs. Whitlaw, chaperoned the other four.<sup>41</sup> At a dance at Old Deloraine, in the fall of 1882, twenty seven men had to be content with four girls for partners, Alice Renton, Annie and Lily Newcombe, and Miss A.E. Abbot,<sup>42</sup> who appears to have been at that time the Newcombe governess. These were chaperoned by Mrs. Russell and Mrs. Gage. Some men drove to the dance from as far away as Napinka, some 25 miles further west.

That women were scarce is corroborated by Henderson's Gazette for 1884, and the Manitoba census returns for 1885-'86. The Gazette credits Deloraine with a population of 50, of which 32 are men engaged in business of one kind or another leaving only 18 to account for women and children of all ages.<sup>43</sup> The Census gives a total of 3,415 males and 2211 females in the eight municipalities of the Southwest Corner. Men

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<sup>40</sup> This information from James Smart.

<sup>41</sup> Sankey, British Settlement.

<sup>42</sup> Titus, "Old Time Dances." Del. Times, March 30, 1944.

<sup>43</sup> Henderson's Directory and North West Gazette, 1884.

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between the ages of 18 and 40 total 1350, while women of the same ages number 782.<sup>44</sup> Of these 576 men and 635 women were married, leaving 774 single men with only 147 single women to choose from, a ratio of over 5 to 1. In the two sparsely settled municipalities of Arthur and Brenda the proportion of single men to single women was still greater, 188 to 25, or almost 8 to 1. The early newspapers are full of humorous references to the keen competition resulting among the men, stories which point up the old saying, "all's fair in love as in war."

However, in these as in other communities, the proportion of men to women was brought into better adjustment by both English and Ontario men sending home for fiancées or going home and persuading girls to come back with them as brides. James Patterson went home to Wingham, Ontario, for a wife, as early as 1884,<sup>45</sup> but the canny John Spence delayed until 1896.<sup>46</sup>

Once the excitement of building a house and moving in was over, men and women alike settled into a fairly monotonous existence. The monotony was broken for the early settlers by the almost daily arrival of newcomers, and at least once a year for the British Settlers by the arrival of "new chums" carrying a wad of newspapers and bearing stories of events taking place in the Old Country.<sup>47</sup> The weather, as it does to

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<sup>44</sup> Census of Manitoba, 1885-86.

<sup>45</sup> Old Timers Book.

<sup>46</sup> Spence, Memorandum.

<sup>47</sup> Sankey, British Settlement.

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this day, alternately inspired the settlers with hope and filled them with despair. As for the children, the main event in their lives was the occasional bag of store candy, which was bought at the nearest settlement for 5¢ a pound.<sup>48</sup>

Neither Canadians nor Britishers could be expected to master immediately the farming technique required to cultivate the land successfully in their new environment. The farmers tried to farm as they had in the more humid climate of Ontario, while the latter knew little or nothing about farming of any kind. Nor did they have any warning of drought or early frost for these had not appeared during the last half of the preceding decade.<sup>49</sup>

The feature which puzzled and discouraged the newcomers most was the fact that after one or two crops were taken off, the land seemed to "lose heart" and produce much smaller yields. An English "expert" driving through the country in 1883, noticed that the crops of wheat and oats of those who had come in in 1882 were good, while those on lands which had been broken earlier were backward and dirty with weeds. He blamed this condition, not on the fact that no rain had fallen in May, June, or the first two weeks in July, but chiefly on "lack of manure", giving shallow plowing and lack of summerfallow as supplementary factors. "In my opinion" he wrote "the land is being ruined by men of small means,

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<sup>48</sup> Interview with W. Strang.

<sup>49</sup> Morton, Prairie Settlement. p.68

and there is too little of the real farming element about."<sup>50</sup>

This harsh opinion of the early pioneers is scarcely warranted in the majority of cases. They had been on the land for not more than three years, during which moisture conditions were more favorable. They were faced with a problem no amount of farming experience in Ontario or in the United Kingdom could help them solve. Not for some years were they to realize that the land "lost heart", not because its fertility was soon depleted, but because the moisture within it had been drawn off by successive cropping. Fallowing was needed, not so much to kill weeds, as to restore moisture. This was particularly true of the hard dry soil of the till plains. That moisture, and not fertility, was the determining factor was shown later, when in 1897 R.M.Graham of Melita reported receiving 17 bushels of wheat to the acre on land which was yielding its fourth consecutive crop.<sup>51</sup>

One factor which made the early crops particularly susceptible to drought was the practise of sowing grain broadcast by hand. This was done for some years in the area, for it seems that the first press-drill to be operated in the Turtle Mountain area was one imported by George Morton in 1888, and used on his Wassewa farm.<sup>52</sup> Some settlers in the meantime developed the practice of giving the land a

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<sup>50</sup> Barneby, Land and Labour. p.314.

<sup>51</sup> Melita Enterprise.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Mr. Orris of Boissevain.

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shallow ploughing after the wheat was sown, to place the seed deeper where moisture was retained the longest.<sup>53</sup>

Reliable estimates regarding the crop yields prior to 1884 are missing, and the records left by the pioneers themselves are confusing. The Report of the Department of Agriculture for 1883 shows <sup>wheat</sup> yields ranging down from 35 bushels to the acre in the South Antler district to only 18 bushels near Whitewater Lake.<sup>54</sup> The same fall, an early settler reports seeing whole fields of wheat "standing frozen and worthless in the northern townships of the area."<sup>55</sup> John Spence received 40 bushels of wheat and 120 of oats from five acres of new breaking. If he sowed 2 acres in wheat and 3 in oats ("2½ bu. wheat and 6 bu. oats") the yields would be 20 bushels to the acre and 40 to the acre respectively, which seems a reasonable estimate.<sup>56</sup> Letters written to the Deloraine Times in 1887, by M.D.Wright, of the Quinte Farm, J.P.Morrison and John Renton, all claim their first seven or eight crops were good ones. They do not mention the frost of 1883, although Wright states that the wheat was "froze" but yield extra good" in 1885.<sup>57</sup> The omission from these letters of any references to frost or drought no doubt arises from the fact that the editor had solicited them for a special immigration edition to be distributed

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<sup>53</sup> P.A.M., Sessional Papers, Manitoba 1884 Report of Dept. of Agriculture for 1883.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Titus, "Early Wheat."

<sup>56</sup> Spence, Memorandum.

<sup>57</sup> Deloraine Times, Thurs., May 10, 1888.

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in the East.

Perhaps more discouraging to the settlers than periodic low yields were the prices they received. These remained low until 189<sup>58</sup>, but the pre-railway settlers were more seriously affected. A local market at good prices no longer existed in the communities after 1882, and the grain had to be marketed elsewhere. The Brandon public market was opened in 1883,<sup>59</sup> but the hardships involved in the long trip to that point were severe. John Spence writes of getting lost with his oxen in a blizzard on the return journey and there were many who suffered the same experience.<sup>60</sup> The price at Brandon was 43¢ for the best wheat,<sup>61</sup> a poor return for travelling 60 to 80 miles and paying the cost of putting up in stopping places along the way.

Distance from the railway not only cut down the net receipts from wheat, but it added considerably to the prices of the provisions, clothing, and equipment the settlers had to buy. When Cavers and Stuart opened their store in Deloraine in 1881, they had to freight their stock of goods in from Brandon.<sup>62</sup> The same was true of general merchants who began business in other communities of the area. Goods for Montefiore and Lennox, near the boundary were transported from Brandon to Deloraine, and then taken to their eventual destination by a regular weekly stage.<sup>63</sup> With lack of a railway reducing

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<sup>58</sup> See table of wheat prices and yields, Ch.11, Appendix.

<sup>59</sup> Titus, "Early Wheat".

<sup>60</sup> Spence, Memorandum.

<sup>61</sup> Titus, Op. cit.

<sup>62</sup> Morrison "Old Deloraine".

<sup>63</sup> Henderson's Gazette, 1884.



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the returns from crops and increasing the cost of growing them it is little wonder that one pioneer vividly remembers "the shout of joy and the speech Hohn Williams made on hearing the first whistle of the construction train near Naples on the night of October 8, 1886."<sup>64</sup>

By the time the railway arrived, a creditable amount of progress had been made in spite of the fact that newcomers arrived at a disappointingly low rate after 1882. The total population of Turtle Mountain and Souris River Counties in 1885 was 5626,<sup>65</sup> the greater number being settled in the former. Of the total, 3,099 were born in Ontario, 674 in Manitoba, 306 elsewhere in Canada, 89 in the United States and a few in Holland and Scandinavia. Those born in the British Isles numbered 1081, but many had lived in eastern Canada before coming to the West. Thus the Ontario influence was the predominant one, and has remained so. Local lodges of the Orange Order were soon organized,<sup>66</sup> and so were branches of the W.T.C.U.<sup>67</sup> for the Ontario people brought with them, among other things, an evangelistic fervor for prohibition.

In 1885 the total amount of land sowed to wheat was 32,790 acres, while even more land was sowed to oats. The wheat yield was 688,966 bushels, an average of 21 bushels per acre,<sup>68</sup> but much of it was low grade on account of frost. It was marketed in Boissavain where the best wheat brought 43¢ a

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<sup>64</sup> Morrison, Op. cit.

<sup>65</sup> Census of Manitoba, 1885-'86.

<sup>66</sup> Duncan, Annals of Melita.

<sup>67</sup> Melita Enterprise.

<sup>68</sup> Census of Manitoba, 1885-'86.

bushel.<sup>69</sup> The average individual land holding was 272.4 acres of which 35 were cultivated.<sup>70</sup>

The slump in immigration after 1882 is illustrated in the following table of homestead entries, pre-emption claims, and sales, registered at the Dominion Lands Office at Deloraine.<sup>71</sup>

	<u>Homesteads</u>	<u>Pre-emptions</u>	<u>Sales</u>		
1881	328 Entries	301 Claims	1 Sale	320 ac.	
1882	1641 "	1404 "	36 "	16560 "	
1883	223 "	203 "	51 "	17534 "	
1884	366 "	345 "			
1885	122 "	92 "			
1886	186 "	121 "			
1887	158 "	100 "			
1888	288 "	82 "			
1889	159 "	126 "			
1890	168 "	32 "	139 "		
1891	235 "	abolished	126 "		
1892	331 "	"	43 "		
1893	189 "	(five months only)	5 "		

The picture is completed by taking into account the number of homestead cancellations. These amounted to 371 in 1883, 136 in 1884, and 248 in 1885.<sup>72</sup> This means that of the total number of homesteads registered from 1881 through 1885, only 1905 were actually occupied at the end of the period, a number small smaller than the number of registrations during 1881 and 1882.\*\*

Various reasons are given from year to year for the decline. The drop in 1883 is explained by the reaction from the collapse of the boom. The small number of registrations

<sup>69</sup> Titus, "Early Wheat".

<sup>70</sup> Census of Manitoba, 1885-'86.

<sup>71</sup> Compiled from Reports of Dept. of the Interior, Sessional Papers of Canada, 1882 to 1884 incl.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

\*\* This estimate applies to all of Turtle Mountain Land District, comprising the first five townships in Ranges 15 to 34, inclusive. (See Ch. 8, p. 118.)

in 1884 is credited to the adverse publicity given the country by the work of "agitators", probably a reference to the Farmers' Union. The very low figure for 1885 is attributed to a fear of the spread of the Saskatchewan rebellion.<sup>73</sup>

During the period more Britishers followed those who arrived in 1881 at Wakopa and Waubeesh, and many went to communities elsewhere in the area. Notable among these were Dr. R.S.Thornton, later Minister of Education with the Norris government, and George and Mrs. Hunter. These went to Deloraine.<sup>74</sup> A group of young Englishmen went to the South Antler region, on Range 29, and established an Anglican church, the first church to appear west of the Souris River.<sup>75</sup> Many Britishers however, were "not suited to farming" and lost no time in selling their homesteads when they could and moving elsewhere to engage in other occupations.<sup>76</sup>

The chief communities before 1885 were Deloraine and Waubeesh. In 1883-84 Deloraine had two agricultural implement dealers, one general store, the Lands Office, a grist mill, two blacksmiths, two ministers, six agents of various kinds, a law office and a school.<sup>77</sup> Waubeesh had a flour mill, an Anglican church, three general stores, a blacksmith shop, and a saw-plane and shingle mill.<sup>78</sup> Manchester, re-named Melita

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Sankey, British Settlement.

<sup>75</sup> Duncan, "Annals of Melita."

<sup>76</sup> Sankey, Op. cit.

<sup>77</sup> Henderson's Gazette 1884.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

by the Post Office Department,<sup>79</sup> had a store, while Menota, on the old site of Dobbyn City, four miles east, had a general store, a blacksmith shop and a carpenter shop. All these communities had post offices, together with Fairburn on 4-3-19, Hernefield on 22-1-25, Lennox on 34-1-24, Melgund on 36-5-24, Montefiore on 20- 2-24, Napinka on 24-4-25, Sourisford, which also had a registry office, and West Hall on 4-5-22.<sup>80</sup> These received their mail once a week, from Brandon.<sup>81</sup>

Such was the development of settlement in the Southwest corner of Manitoba up to the time the railway arrived. Many people had come and gone by that time, but those who remained had established communities, had tried some ambitious ventures, and had made a beginning at solving the problems involved in cultivating the soil in so rigorous a climatic environment. This much progress achieved, they turned their attention to developing the municipal, educational, economic and social institutions which in most cases had just begun to appear between 1882 and 1885.

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<sup>79</sup> Duncan, "Annals of Melita."

<sup>80</sup> Henderson's Gazette, 1884.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 8

### MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT IN DIFFICULT TIMES.

"Many grievances there are and always will be in the front of a new country, regarding the benefits derived from taxes paid to support municipal affairs."<sup>1</sup>

Of all the institutions required by a community of people imbued with Canadian and Anglo-Saxon ideas of social organization, perhaps the one in Southwestern Manitoba most profoundly affected by "the four creative elements distinctive to the life of the prairie"<sup>2</sup> was the rural municipality. Even the most ordinary municipal activities were made complex by the handicaps of distance, the ravages of drought, the dispersion of population over large areas, and the difficulty of persuading farmers to accept a common policy devised to meet their common problems. These elements combined frequently to force the local administration into making large extraordinary expenditures to meet emergencies, while at the same time they made the financing of them more difficult. Municipal administration was therefore an arduous and often exasperating undertaking.

The very first administrative unit with which the settlers had to deal in the district was hampered in its effective operation

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<sup>1</sup> Councillor Gale, R.M. of Arthur, Deloraine Times, Mar 29, 1888.

<sup>2</sup> E.H. Oliver, "The Institutionalizing of the Prairies", Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, Series iii, vol. 24, sec. 2.p.20.

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by its isolation from outside authority. This was the Turtle Mountain Land District, provided for by Order-in-Council on April 14, 1880. It extended from Range 15 w. to Range 34 w. and included the first five rows of townships north of the International boundary.<sup>3</sup> It was administered as previously indicated, from the Lands Office at Old Deloraine, on 19-2-22. The official duties of the lands officer consisted simply of registering homestead entries and pre-emption claims and collecting fees and the proceeds of land sales. But not even these simple duties were performed in a manner satisfactory to the settlers. This was not the fault of the lands officer, who was a popular man and a well-respected citizen, whose advice on various matters was often sought.

The main source of concern to the early settlers was the status of their claims to the lands they had chosen. By June 1881 nearly all the even-numbered sections between Turtle Mountain and Whitewater Lake were occupied by squatters, "anxious to know what the action of the government will be respecting their settlement."<sup>4</sup> Because the government delayed nearly two years in giving him definite instructions, the only assurance Newcombe could give the uneasy settlers was that he had forwarded their papers to Ottawa but could do nothing further until he received a reply.<sup>5</sup> At the same time

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<sup>3</sup> P.A.M. Orders-in-Council, Dept. of the Interior, 1880.

<sup>4</sup> Man. Free Press June 7, 1881, ("Zulu" Correspondent).

<sup>5</sup> Man. Free Press July 28, 1881; ("Zulu" Correspondent).

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the settlers complained that because the Manitoba and South-western Railway Co. were holding their lands at too high a price, newcomers, finding the homestead lands all taken up, were forced to go to the Dakotas for cheap land.<sup>6</sup>

Before the settlers were sure of their lands, the area was transferred to the Province of Manitoba. The prospect of coming under the jurisdiction of Manitoba was viewed with mixed feelings however. During the time the district was included in the North-West Territories, the sale of intoxicating liquors was prohibited, a state of affairs against which some settlers complained bitterly. The majority, however were like "Clear Grit" who wrote "there are many who do not hail with joy the tidings of annexation to Manitoba, apprehending that the sale of intoxicating liquors will follow the extension of boundaries and we will be subjected to its dreadful results."<sup>7</sup> This prohibition sentiment was later to prove a powerful factor in the life of the community.

The settlers in the annexed territory had no say in the matter of determining either the framework or the functions of the instrument of self-government which they were to operate, for these had been decided by the Manitoba Municipal Act of 1880. This act embodied the results of ten years administrative experience in the small province. The Manitoba legislators had at first left the formation of local self-governing units

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<sup>6</sup> Man. Free Press, June 22, 1881, (Whitewater Correspondent).

<sup>7</sup> Man. Free Press, May 23, 1881, (Zulu Correspondent).

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to local initiative, but this principle had failed to produce more than four municipalities in ten years. Realizing the necessity of general municipal organization throughout the province, the Norquay government, by the Act of 1880, introduced the principle of compulsion.<sup>8</sup> Thereafter the boundaries of municipalities were defined by provincial legislation and the residents in each were ordered to elect reeves and councillors forthwith.

No time was lost in applying this principle to the territory added to the province in 1881, for in May of that year, an act was passed "to divide the added territory to the Province into Municipalities."<sup>9</sup> Section IX of the Act established Rural Municipality No. 30, or Souris River, and Section X the Rural Municipality of Turtle Mountain, No. 31. Souris River was to take in the first six rows of townships in Ranges 23 to 29, and Turtle Mountain the first six rows in Ranges 17 to 22.

Looking forward to a continued rapid increase in the population of the more eastern municipality, the legislature amended the Act in the following <sup>year</sup> to provide for the division, effective January 1, 1883, of Turtle Mountain into three smaller units, the municipalities of Turtle Mountain, Riverside, and Deloraine.<sup>10</sup>  
 Each of the new municipalities was to be obliged to pay its

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<sup>8</sup> Phillips, A.T., Development of Municipal Institutions in Manitoba to 1886. (Unpublished thesis, University of Manitoba, 1948.) p.168.

<sup>9</sup> Statutes of Manitoba, 1881, ch. 13, 44 vic.

<sup>10</sup> Statutes of Manitoba, 1881, Amendment to ch. 13, 44 vic.



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"just share in proportion" of all liabilities incurred by the old larger unit.

The attempt to institute in Manitoba a system of county government for inter-municipal activities is reflected in a second act, passed in May, 1881.<sup>11</sup> This divided the added southwestern territory into two counties, Turtle Mountain and Souris River. Until the size of population warranted separate county administration, these two were to be grouped with Brandon and Dennis counties for county purposes, the whole to be known as Brandon county. A third act placed this large county within the Western Judicial District for judicial purposes.<sup>12</sup>

The area included within the boundaries of Turtle Mountain municipality in 1881 seems to have proved too large for the warden and his six councillors to administer directly, for during 1882 the council at various times sub-divided the municipality into districts for specific purposes, such as assessments, road beats, and tax collections.<sup>13</sup> Apparently the difficulty of administering a large area where communications were poor was soon recognized by the government for not very long after the division proposed in 1881 was put into effect, the county of Turtle<sup>Mountain</sup> was divided into more and smaller units. An act of July, 1883, created four, instead of three new municipalities, and at the same time set up four municipalities

<sup>11</sup> Statutes of Manitoba, 1881, Ch. 14, 44 vic.

<sup>12</sup> Statutes of Manitoba, 1881, Ch. 18, 44 vic.

<sup>13</sup> Phillips, Op. cit., p.246.

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in the County of Souris River. <sup>14</sup>

The new municipalities in the eastern county were Turtle Mountain, Riverside, Deloraine, and Whitewater, while those in Souris River were Medora, Arthur, Brenda, and Inchiquin. Six of these contained nine townships each, while Deloraine and Whitewater each had twelve. (See Map) Elections were held immediately in all of them except Inchiquin, which never did become organized. The first reeves elected were : Brenda, H. Pollock, of Napinka; Medora, E. Attridge, of Deloraine; Arthur, James Downie, Menota P.O.; Whitewater, George Forster, Deloraine P.O.; Turtle Mountain, W. Ryan, of Desford; Riverside, H. McMillan of Langvale; Deloraine, James Fleming, of Deloraine. <sup>15</sup> Pollock was formerly warden for Souris River.

The new councils found themselves responsible for carry-  
out  
ing/the duties enumerated in the Municipal Act. Among these duties were building and maintaining roads and bridges, establishing and supporting school districts, and collecting municipal and school taxes. There was also a miscellaneous collection of smaller items, such as weed control, health inspection, relief, and stray animals. To enable them to carry out their duties, the councils could raise money by a direct tax on real and personal property, and by levying licenses, ranging from business taxes to

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<sup>14</sup> Statutes of Manitoba, (Revised, 1883). Ch.1, 46 & 47 vic.  
<sup>15</sup> P.A.M., Sessional Papers, Manitoba, 1882, "Report of the Minister of Public Works for 1881" 2

T.6														
T.5	RURAL MUNICIPALITY.							RURAL MUNICIPALITY.						
T.4	NO.30							NO.30.						
T.3	SOURIS RIVER.							TURTLE MOUNTAIN.						
T.2														
T.1														
	R.29.	R.28.	R.27.	R.26.	R.25.	R.24.	R.23.	R.22.	R.21.	R.20.	R.19.	R.18.	R.17.	

MUNICIPALITIES AND THEIR BOUNDARIES. Ch.13, 44 Vic. May 25, 1891.

T.6								R.M. OF RIVERSIDE.						
T.5	RURAL MUNICIPALITY													
T.4	OF													
T.3	SOURIS RIVER							R.M. OF				R.M. OF		
T.2								DELORAINÉ.				TURTLE MOUNTAIN.		
T.1														
	R.29.	R.28.	R.27.	R.26.	R.25.	R.24.	R.23.	R.22.	R.21.	R.20.	R.19.	R.18.	R.17.	

SUBDIVISION OF R.M. OF TURTLE MOUNTAIN TO BE EFFECTIVE  
 JAN. 1, 1883 BY SECTIONS 1-4 OF AMENDMENTS TO Ch13, 44 Vic

dog taxes. To enforce payment of taxes they could seize and sell land and property in arrears.<sup>17</sup>

Among other provisions the Act ~~of~~ 1883 further defined the right given in 1880 to ~~home~~<sup>bonus</sup> industries and railways by cash donations and by tax exemptions for any number of years. Councils could subscribe for any number of shares of stock in payment of any sum borrowed by an incorporated railway, could endorse or guarantee the debentures of a railway company, could issue debentures for stipulated purposes, could grant loans in aid of railways and issue debentures to provide them, and could encourage total industries by granting bonuses or exemption from taxation.<sup>18</sup> In a special section the amount of assistance to railways was limited to 25¢ an acre on all the land within a municipality actually alienated from the crown.<sup>19</sup> None of the municipalities under consideration seem to have become involved in railway assistance, but they did ~~bonus~~<sup>\*</sup> grist mills, and after some years of trying to finance expensive improvements by special levy they resorted to issuing long term debentures for permanent public works.<sup>20</sup>

All the new municipalities were alike in that they were able to make use of the services of men who had had some experience in municipal work in Ontario, but there was a marked difference in the circumstances under which they operated. Those in Turtle

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<sup>17</sup> Phillips, *Op. cit.* pp. 168f.

<sup>18</sup> Statutes of Manitoba, 1883. ch.1 46& 47 vic. section 124

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* Section 125.

<sup>20</sup> See below, ch. 9.

\* See below, ch. 9.

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Mountain County were more thickly settled, and soon took on the appearance of well-established communities, while those in the west, particularly Arthur, retained for a long period the characteristics peculiar to a frontier community. In the eastern municipalities, municipal affairs seem to have been conducted well and quietly, with acclamations occurring frequently, whereas in Arthur there were always spirited contests, in which both press and platform were used continuously to further the chances of the various aspirants to municipal office and to deprecate in no mild terms the abilities of their respective opponents.

Expenditures on roads and bridges formed a large part of the budgets of the municipalities in Turtle Mountain County on account of the ravined character of much of the land. Some 19 bridges were provided for by Deloraine council in 1883, its first year, at a cost of \$744.75 while another \$186.00<sup>q</sup> was spent on road grading, whereas Brenda and Medora, situated on the gently undulating plain, spent no money at all for those purposes. <sup>21</sup> On the other hand the municipalities in Souris River County were much more sparsely populated, and they found their revenues much more uncertain for they were situated on land which was more susceptible to drought. They very soon were forced to carry a heavy burden of debt, incurred for the provision of seed grain in 1889 and 1890. <sup>22</sup> That crop failures

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<sup>21</sup> P.A.M. Sessional Papers, Manitoba 1882 Dept. of Public Works.

<sup>22</sup> See below pp. 129f.

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also cut heavily into tax collections of all the municipalities is shown by the petitions presented to Riverside council, in the spring of 1889, by a number of taxpayers asking to have their 1888 taxes foregone because their crops had been frozen. <sup>23</sup>

Problems common to all the councils in the area are reflected on the minutes of their meetings. Resolutions were passed protesting against the railways' practice of holding their lands for sale at \$5 to \$10 an acre. <sup>24</sup> Others advocated amending the Railway Aid Act of 1885 which exempted railway lands from taxation. <sup>25</sup> One resolution from Deloraine council advocated that from the 3% the province received of the gross earnings of railway companies, a sum be granted to each municipality equal to the amount that would be derived from railway lands were they taxable. <sup>26</sup>

All the municipalities at different times expressed their resentment at the size of the Municipal Commissioner's levy, and particularly that part of it designed to contribute to the construction and maintenance of the county court buildings at Brandon. Riverside council demanded in 1888 that the Municipal Commissioner <sup>send</sup> a detailed account of the purposes for which his levy was to be spent. With this demand went one to the effect that county and district levies paid on part of the Canada North-West lands be refunded as the taxes were not collected. <sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Deloraine Times, Jan. 8, 1889.

<sup>24</sup> Deloraine Times, Jan. 12, 1888.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Deloraine Times, Mar. 29, 1888.

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Deloraine very early advocated that the cost of building bridges be borne entirely by Provincial Public Works Department appropriations, because the drain on local tax resources was too great. This Council recommended at the same time that the Municipal Act be amended to allow councils to abolish statute labor if they so wished, and to have its monetary equivalent levied on property.<sup>28</sup> Reeve Somerville of Brenda, in November 1888, was sent to interview the provincial government with respect to Brenda's share of the 3% the Province received from railway earnings. He was promised, and shortly thereafter received, a windfall of from \$1200 to \$1500, which was applied to debt reduction and to meeting the demands of school districts. The local press congratulated him for "securing promise of this payment which for some time has been a sore point with some municipalities".<sup>29</sup>

The problem of raising funds in all these municipalities was complicated by the fact that when the Canada North West Land Company was formed in 1882, the lands it was to receive from the C.P.R. were not formally transferred to it until a buyer had been found for each specific parcel.<sup>30</sup> This meant that property really belonging to the Land Company but nominally to the C.P.R. could not be taxed. Even more exasperating was the fact that when a purchaser of these lands abandoned them and moved elsewhere, the taxes he left unpaid could not be collected

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<sup>28</sup> Deloraine Times, Dec. 6, 1888.

<sup>29</sup> Deloraine Times, Nov. 29, 1888.

<sup>30</sup> Hedges, Building the Canadian West. p.74.

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from the Land Company, for the land was usually reverted to the railway.<sup>31</sup>

A matter of considerable concern to the Councils, and a source of keen disappointment to the settlers who elected them was the continued existence, until nearly the close of the century, of large areas of unoccupied land. This condition complicated municipal problems in the whole of the area, but the municipalities in the western sections were more severely affected by it. The slower rate at which the townships in these received and retained settlers is illustrated in the following table: (D/T = density per township).

Municipality	Size	1885-'86 <sup>32</sup>		1890-'91 <sup>33</sup>	
		Population	D/T	Population	D/T
Inchiquin	9t'p's	99	11.0	408	45.3
Arthur	9 "	448	59.3	6666	74.0
Medora	9 "	757	84.1	794	88.2
Brenda	9 "	352	39.1	1016	112.9
Totals	36 "	1656	46.0	2884	80.1
Deloraine	12 "	962	80.2	1928	160.9
Whitewater	12 "	997	93.1	1727	143.9
Turtle M't'n	9 "	894	99.3	1572	175.7
Riverside	9 "	828	92.0	1338	148.5
Totals	42 "	3681	87.6	6565	156.3

During the five year period, therefore, the population of the four municipalities in Souris River County increased by only 1228 compared to 2884 in those in Turtle Mountain County.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p.82.

<sup>32</sup> Census of Manitoba, 1885-'86.

<sup>33</sup> Census of Canada, 1890-'91.



At the end of the period the western area was only half as densely populated as the eastern.

Anxious to speed up the rate of immigration if possible, all the municipalities took special steps to encourage settlement of their vacant lands, and these all involved the spending of money. In 1888<sup>34</sup> Deloraine council "recognizing the importance of securing a larger number of settlers," expressed a desire to cooperate with the Provincial government" in any scheme which has such for its object" and appointed J.J.Cochrane and Dr. Cornell to act as immigration agents in Winnipeg in conjunction with Provincial agents.<sup>34</sup> Shortly after this they dismissed the advisability of sending these agents to Ontario but decided against it "for the present."<sup>35</sup> The Deloraine Times suggested that all the municipalities cooperate and share the expense of sending one delegate to act in the interest of all, but this proposal does not seem to have been accepted.<sup>36</sup> The following winter, in January 1889, Deloraine Council, after negotiating successfully with the C.P.R. for a free pass, authorized Reeve Renton to take leave of absence and proceed to Ontario to promote immigration.<sup>37</sup> The Times suggested that all other municipalities follow these examples and proposed further that the councils commute all statute labor and apply the proceeds

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34 34 Deloraine Times. Jan. 12, 1888.  
 35 35 Deloraine Times. Mar. 6, 1888.  
 36 36 Deloraine Times. April 21, 1888.  
 37 37 Deloraine Times. Jan. 17, 1889

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to immigration purposes.<sup>38</sup> Medora made a grant of \$75 toward  
 the appointment of a Winnipeg man to act<sup>as</sup> agent to deflect  
 immigration into Turtle Mountain and Souris River Counties.<sup>39</sup>

On March 15, 1889, Mr. Daubney of the Times appeared before  
 the Deloraine Council to suggest that the council order 100  
 copies of his paper to be distributed in Ontario, and the Council  
 did so.<sup>40</sup> The same year Arthur Municipality had Daubney print  
 5,000 copies of an immigration circular which was distributed  
 in Ontario, and Reeve Gale repeated the order in 1890. With  
 a possible eye to business, the good editor suggested in his  
 paper that "it would be well if other municipalities would  
 take this matter up and each do what they can to settle up  
 their vacant lands."<sup>41</sup>

A problem of greater concern and demanding much heavier  
 expenses than that of inducing immigration was the periodic  
 provision of seed grain to those whose crops had been destroyed  
 by drought, frost, grasshoppers, gophers and hail. The  
 complete crop failure of 1888 resulted in a serious situation  
 in the winter of 1888 and 1889. Extensive demands were made on  
 the municipalities for seed grain and at the same time for relief  
 from payment of the 1888 taxes. Some farmers found themselves  
 in such dire straits that J.P. Alexander, M.P.P. for Souris, made  
 arrangements for many of them to secure employment in the wood

<sup>38</sup> Deloraine Times, Mar. 7, 1889.

<sup>39</sup> Deloraine Times, Mar. 21, 1889.

<sup>40</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>41</sup> Deloraine Times, Mar. 6, 1890.

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camps north and east of Winnipeg. Superintendent Whyte of the C.P.R. cooperated by supplying them with free railway passes.<sup>42</sup> "This is to the credit of the C.P.R. and should be noted," commented the Times.

The crop failure that year was general throughout the province and it was soon clear to the government that something was needed to meet the emergency. In November, 1888, the government presented a bill to empower the Provincial Treasurer to make loans to municipalities for the purchase of seed grain.<sup>43</sup> These were not to exceed \$5,000 to any one council and were to be secured by notes made payable to the Province. The notes carried 6% interest and were payable "at such time or times as the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council shall direct."<sup>44</sup> To protect the Province, the Treasurer was given the power to bring suit against municipalities for payment of their notes, and in turn the councils could secure their advances to farmers by promissory notes and were authorized to create liens on crops to enforce payment.<sup>45</sup> The advance to each farmer was limited to \$75 and severe penalties were provided to prevent the grain from being used for other purposes.<sup>46</sup>

At their first meeting in 1889 the Whitewater Council instructed the reeve and the clerk to negotiate a loan of \$1,000

<sup>42</sup> Deloraine Times, Jan. 3, 1889.

<sup>43</sup> Statutes of Manitoba 1888, ch.10, 52 vic. sec.1.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. sec.3.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. sec.16.

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under this act.<sup>47</sup> Sometimes during the next month Medora Council borrowed the \$5,000 maximum allowable for distribution.<sup>48</sup>

Whitewater's initial loan seems to have been inadequate for the Provincial treasurer's accounts for the year show that \$3471.40 was loaned to that municipality under the Seed Grain Act.

The following table shows the total amounts loaned in 1889 to the municipalities in the Southwest Corner for Seed Grain.<sup>49</sup>

Arthur -	\$4420.00
Brenda -	2000.00
Medora -	5000.00
Whitewater-	3700.00
Deloraine -	1500.00
Turtle Mt.-	75.00
Riverside -	00.00
	<u>\$16,695.00</u>

This table clearly illustrates the fact that the municipalities of Souris River County were much more affected by adverse crop conditions than those further east. While the crop failure was no doubt just as severe in Turtle Mountain County, since it resulted more from early frost than from drought, these municipalities were more thickly settled, and the settlers were more firmly established so that they were much better prepared to meet the emergency with their own resources. Furthermore, Turtle Mountain, which required only \$75.00 and Riverside, which asked for no money at all, were municipalities which had made some progress in mixed farming, for much of the land contained in them was more suitable for the purpose than that further west.

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<sup>47</sup> Deloraine Times, Jan. 8, 1889.

<sup>48</sup> Deloraine Times, Feb. 14, 1889.

<sup>49</sup> P.A.M. Public Accounts 1889. Treasury Expenditures.

The 1889 crop was almost as poor as the previous one in Southwestern Manitoba. This year drought was the cause, and not frost, and the area was much more seriously affected than was the rest of the province, the official report giving yields of 3.4 bushels to the acre of wheat, and 4.2 of oats in Souris River County while the respective yields for the province were 12.4 and 16.8.<sup>50</sup> John Spence reported "a very poor year. Drouth and gophers destroy our crop. Have 188 bu. wheat off 52 acres and 56 of barley off 15 acres. Hardly any water in river so water and feed scarce,"<sup>51</sup> the last remark giving a good reason why mixed farming never became popular in this part of the district.

The municipal councils were again flooded with requests for seed grain assistance for the next spring, and they again went for help to the provincial government. In the meantime, the senior authority had found that the Act of 1888 did not prove satisfactory. The province had experienced difficulty in obtaining repayment of its advances to the municipalities, who in turn found collections from farmers impossible in many cases. Of its large loan Brenda had only repaid \$156.55 by the end of 1889, and Deloraine and Whitewater had repaid only \$105.00 and \$228.60 respectively.<sup>52</sup> The other municipalities had paid nothing at all on their notes. It was clear that some other method was needed than that of meeting these obligations by a special levy and that the government took some time in coming to a decision is indicated

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<sup>50</sup> P.A.M., Sessional Papers, Canada, 1890, 53 vic. #14 p.14.

<sup>51</sup> Spence, Memorandum.

<sup>52</sup> P.A.M., Public Accounts, Treasury Receipts.

in the minutes of the Turtle Mountain Council meeting of Feb. 15, 1890. "31 seed grain applications were laid on the table and deferred for future consideration in view of the present undefined legislation with regard to seed grain requirements."<sup>53</sup>

A new Seed Grain Act was devised, and passed on March 12, 1890,<sup>54</sup> a date which in the opinion of many, was too late in the spring to be of much assistance. This Act introduced three important changes of policy. The municipalities could now raise money for seed grain purposes by issuing debentures which would be sold at par to the Provincial Treasurer,<sup>55</sup> a provision which overcame the necessity of raising the money for repayment by special levy. At the same time the maximum amount allowed to a Council for seed grain was raised from \$5,000 to \$10,000 in any one year.<sup>56</sup> The maximum advance to each farmer was maintained at \$75.00, as were the penalties, \$50 to \$100 fine, or three months in jail, for using the grain for other purposes than seed.<sup>57</sup> The third change resulted from the suspicion that farmers were not the only ones liable to misuse the funds. A provision was inserted extending these penalties to "any municipal officer who votes for any resolution to spend the proceeds of seed grain debentures for any other purposes."<sup>58</sup> Stringent provisions were also included

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<sup>53</sup> Deloraine Times, Feb. 15, 1890.

<sup>54</sup> Statutes of Manitoba, 1890, ch. 50, 53 vic.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., section 1.

<sup>56</sup> Loc. citlo

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., Section 14.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., Section 15.

regarding the keeping and auditing of seed grain accounts, and the power of the municipality to collect their seed grain notes,

While many farmers may have made other arrangements for seed by the time the Act was passed, all the municipalities made extensive use of it, according to the Provincial Treasurer's statement of 1890, summarized in the following table:<sup>59</sup>

Arthur	-	\$5800.00
Medora	-	7500.00
Brenda	-	2500.00
Whitewater	-	5500.00
Deloraine	-	2641.65
Riverside	-	4000.00
Turtle Mt.	-	3000.00

Why Turtle Mountain and Riverside now required substantial amounts may be explained by the fact that the debenture policy appealed more to them than the policy of 1888, but it is more than likely that two successive crop failures had made it impossible for some farmers to rely upon their own resources any longer. In 1891 the new R.M. of Morton had to issue debentures for \$2,000.00 to meet 30 applications from farmers hailed out in 1890.<sup>60</sup>

The collection of money on seed grain notes taken in 1889 and 1890 plagued the various councils for most of the remainder of the century. In January, 1892, the treasurer of the municipality of Morton was authorized to seize the crop on N $\frac{1}{2}$ 10-3-20 "to pay the seed grain note for \$75.00 and interest."<sup>61</sup> A year later all

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<sup>59</sup> P.A.M. Public Accounts 1890, Treasury Expenditures.

<sup>60</sup> Boissevain Globe, Oct. 2, 1890.

<sup>61</sup> Boissevain Globe, Jan. 7, 1892.

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seed grain note defaulters were asked to appear before this Council and show cause for not paying off their debt.<sup>62</sup> In August, 1895, Arthur Council turned over all seed grain notes to the town solicitor for collection.<sup>63</sup> In 1896 the Provincial Treasurer informed the Legislature that of the \$5800 borrowed in 1890, this municipality still owed the province \$2,495.40 in principal and unpaid interest, while the debentures issued at the same time by the other municipalities in the area were all paid off in full.<sup>64</sup>

Greater than the problem of financing seed grain assistance was that of establishing and financing school districts, and the weight of this responsibility was realized very early for, by 1885, there were 20 schools open in Turtle Mountain County and 4 in Souris River.<sup>65</sup>

One of the principles which Manitoba had adopted from Ontario in founding a school system was expressed as follows:

"In accordance with the spirit of free institutions, the extent to which the provisions made for establishing schools shall be taken advantage of is left to the people themselves to decide, through municipal councils elected by them, and the limit of the burden they are willing to bear for the support of the schools is likewise determined through Trustees chosen by them at annual meetings."<sup>66</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Boissevain Globe, Jan. 5, 1893.

<sup>63</sup> Melita Enterprise, Aug. 22, 1895.

<sup>64</sup> P.A.M., Sessional Papers, 1896. Return re seed grain liabilities

<sup>65</sup> P.A.M., Sessional Papers, Manitoba, 1886, "Report of

<sup>66</sup> Inspector of Protestant Schools for 1885. p.9.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., pp.10f.



With this principle was adopted another, that "the whole Province was interested in and should bear a portion thereof of the cost of education."<sup>67</sup> The practical application of these principles has resulted in the situation that one body of elected representatives, the school board, determines the amount to be expended, another, the municipal council, assumes the responsibility for collecting the taxes required to meet these expenditures, while a third, the Provincial Legislature, helps out with grants. Consequently a struggle developed very early between school boards and municipalities, and between the latter and the Provincial government over the amount of expenditures and the division of the financial burden.

In 1885 the sources of school revenues were divided as follows: a legislative grant of \$10 for each full month the school is open; a municipal grant of \$20 for each such month; and the balance from a special school levy on all lands within the boundaries of the school district.<sup>68</sup> Financing the construction of school buildings was allowed for by authorizing the separate districts to sell debentures.<sup>69</sup> Of the districts formed in 1884, these amounts varied from \$400 for Verona S.D. near Waskada, to \$800 for Brenda,<sup>70</sup> a characteristic variation which led Reeve Dodds of Arthur, in 1895, to charge many school districts with extravagant use of funds.<sup>71</sup> Teachers salaries also varied in 1885 from \$25 to

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<sup>67</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>68</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>69</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>70</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>71</sup> Melita Enterprise, July 18, 1895.

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\$45 a month.

There are many evidences to show that the Municipal Councils in Southwestern Manitoba found the financing of schools a heavy burden. When Brenda's Reeve Somerville interviewed the provincial government in 1888 regarding this Council's share of the province's railway revenues, his strongest argument was the difficulty of collecting the taxes needed to meet the school demands in his municipality.<sup>72</sup> A petition to Whitewater Council to form a school district of lands taken from Mountain Side S.D. and Strathallan S.D. was accompanied by another from these two asking Council to defer the formation of the new district because at the time they would not afford to lose the revenue from these lands.<sup>73</sup> In February, 1890, Turtle Mountain Council resolved "that this council forthwith petition the Hon. legislative assembly to re-enact the school law of Manitoba now, more particularly that part respecting general municipal aid to schools, thus thereby reducing the grant per month of \$20 to \$15, and that copies of the said petition be transmitted to the Hon. Att'y-General for Manitoba, and Finlay M.Young M.P.P. for due presentation to the Hon. House."<sup>74</sup> In 1895 the "one and only" Dodds of Arthur, of whom more will be said later, put pressure on the school boards in that municipality to close their schools in the spring and fall months when attendance was low, and to pay the teachers only the \$10 legislative grant until taxes came in in December and January!<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Deloraine Times, Nov.29 1888.

<sup>73</sup> Boissevain Globe, Apr. 2, 1891.

<sup>74</sup> Deloraine Times, Feb.15, 1890.

<sup>75</sup> Melita Enterprise, Jan.30, 1895.

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Though baffled at times by the problem of financing , with widely fluctuating revenues , schools, immigration promotion, and the provision of seed grain, the municipal councils in Southwestern Manitoba found the means to encourage local industry. Deloraine council, in February, 1889, voted \$ 2,000 to be raised by debentures to bonus a grist mill in Boissevain.<sup>76</sup> In 1892, Arthur council submitted a bylaw to the ratepayers to grant \$2,000 and exemption from taxes for twenty years to a flour mill in Melita.<sup>77</sup> Winchester granted \$ 4,000 in 1896 for a mill in Deloraine.<sup>78</sup> Some residents suggested that grain elevators be bonussed as well, but as the grain-buying fraternity was not particularly popular, these suggestions were not well received. Reeve Dodds proposed that the provincial<sup>government</sup> be approached to amend the Municipal Act to allow municipalities to construct and operate grain elevators.<sup>79</sup>

Other municipal activities were many and varied, and they all required money. Brenda was at times seriously infested with gophers . Reeve Somerville, in March 1888, was authorized to spend \$ 150 for strychnine and to distribute it to farmers asking for it.<sup>80</sup> Drinking-water was a big problem in the towns, and at the final council meeting of the old Deloraine municipality, which was a noisy one, a debenture bylaw was passed to raise \$ 5,000 to help finance a drilled well in Deloraine.\*The clerk,

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<sup>76</sup> Deloraine Times, Feb. 21, 1889.

<sup>77</sup> Melita Enterprise, Nov. 12, 1892.

<sup>78</sup> Deloraine Times, June 5, 1896.

<sup>79</sup> Melita Enterprise, Mar. 13, 1896.

<sup>80</sup> Deloraine Times, Mar. 22, 1888.

\* See below, Ch.13, pp.233f.

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J. Rae, refused to sign a note for this purpose until he was sure the Municipal Commissioner would authorize the expenditure.<sup>81</sup>

During the 1890's Arthur Municipality assisted farmers to have wells drilled by a government well-boring machine which operated at cost.<sup>82</sup> Relief for the indigent appears often in the minutes of the Councils, for example, Morton, in March 1891 authorized a payment of \$20 and one load of firewood to "A. King's children,"<sup>83</sup> and two years earlier the Medora clerk was authorized to settle an account of \$24.60 paid for clothing supplied to "the lunatic, MacDonald at Selkirk."<sup>84</sup> Among other items were grants to first the Winnipeg General Hospital and then to the hospital at Brandon, the size of which may indicate the financial positions of the respective municipalities. In March, 1888, Deloraine Council gave \$50<sup>85</sup> to the Winnipeg hospital, while Medora granted only \$10.<sup>86</sup> A month earlier Arthur Council flatly refused to make any grant at all.<sup>87</sup> In 1892 Morton council granted \$200 to Brandon Hospital, an amount which aroused the ire of the editor of the Globe who suggested that \$50 would be more in order and that the balance would be better spent in clearing up the town of Boissevain to prevent sickness.<sup>88</sup>

As time went on, the expansion of municipal activities to cope with the problems of drouth, lack of water, unoccupied lands and frost, gophers and hail, resulted in a gradual increase in

<sup>81</sup> Deloraine Times, Jan. 10, 1889.

<sup>82</sup> Melita Enterprise, Jan. 23, 1895. (\$10,000 debentures)

<sup>83</sup> Boissevain Globe, Jan. 1, 1891.

<sup>84</sup> Deloraine Times, June 21, 1888.

<sup>85</sup> Deloraine Times, Mar. 6, 1888.

<sup>86</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>87</sup> Deloraine Times, Feb. 6, 1888.

<sup>88</sup> Boissevain Globe, Mar. 31, 1892.

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tax rates. This in turn led to a deluge of letters to the press explaining why tax rates were high, suggesting ways of lowering them, or simply complaining. One writer states bluntly "We all left Ontario on account of heavy taxes, and if matters do not mend soon we shall have to leave Manitoba for the same cause."<sup>89</sup> By present day standards the rates remained attractively low, but the persistence of low prices throughout the period, combined with the crop failures of 1889 and 1890, made it very difficult for the taxpayers of the Southwest Corner to scrape up enough cash to pay the collector. John Spence paid \$2.91 on his quarter section to Medora Municipality in 1885 and \$1.85 in 1886. In 1888 he expanded his holdings by taking out a claim on 25-5-26, in Brenda, and by 1893 his taxes, paid to Arthur, had jumped to \$8.50 on the half-section.<sup>90</sup> Taxes in 1890 in Deloraine S.D. were made up as follows.

Municipal rate @ $1\frac{1}{2}$ mills	\$0.60	
General school @ 6 "	2.40	
Special school @ $6\frac{1}{2}$ "	2.60	
Total on a quarter section	\$5.60	<u>91</u>

One explanation given for the rise in tax rates was that the area had been divided into too many municipalities. G.L. Dodds, who had arrived in Melita the year before, suggested that the four in Souris County be combined into one, thus cutting down the multiplicity of councillors and paid municipal officers.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Melita Enterprise, Nov. 17, 1892.

<sup>90</sup> Spence, Memorandum.

<sup>91</sup> Deloraine Times, Pioneer Edition, Mar. 30, 1944.

<sup>92</sup> Deloraine Times, Mar. 8, 1888.

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Councillor Gale, a veteran of some years experience in municipal affairs maintained that this would not be necessary, and that the "true source of high taxes" was that part of the municipal commissioners levy required to pay for the maintenance of the Brandon Court House and to readjust the affairs of the old judicial board. If this levy was removed, "Our taxes may yet be brought below their present amount, viz., \$3.35 on the half-section."<sup>93</sup> In his opinion Dodd's suggestion was not practicable, for the eastern and western sections of the proposed unit did not have similar interests. The eastern part being closer to rail communication and having a greater concentration of population would, he feared, be in a better position to ask for and obtain improvements for which the west would have to foot the bill.<sup>94</sup> This argument is an interesting illustration of the age-old hostility between frontier and settled area which had been so prominent in the advance of settlement across North America.

By an Act of 1890 the provincial legislature either by accident or intent, put Dodd's theory to the test by reducing the number of municipalities in the two southwestern counties from eight to four. Brenda, Medora, Deloraine, Inchiquin, Whitewater and Riverside disappeared, two new municipalities were created, and Turtle Mountain and Arthur were enlarged.<sup>95</sup> The readjustment moved Turtle Mountain further east, removing it from the area under consideration. The R.M. of Morton was

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( <sup>93</sup> Deloraine Times Mar. 29, 1888.

<sup>94</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>95</sup> Statutes of Manitoba 1890. ch.55, 53vic.

## Chapter eight

created to comprise townships 1 to 6, inclusive, in Ranges 19, 20, and 21, and Winchester was set up to include the same number of townships in Ranges 22, 23, 24 and 25. Arthur was enlarged so that it was not much smaller than Dodd's proposed municipality, for it now included the six rows of townships in Ranges 26 to 29 inclusive. These boundaries remained in effect until 1896, when the two most northern rows of townships were taken from Morton to form the R.M. of Whitewater, and townships 5 and 6 from Winchester to create the R.M. of Cameron.<sup>96</sup> Arthur remained a large municipality until 1905.

The readjustment of 1890 did solve some problems. The old Deloraine had enjoyed the distinction of containing two ambitious towns, Deloraine and Boissevain, within its boundaries. Each was jealous of any claim the other put forward for local improvements, and each was determined to see that it received its proper share. When, for example, the Council was debating the propriety of raising \$5,000 to dig a well in the town of Deloraine, its citizens threatened to withdraw from the municipality and incorporate as a village if the project was turned down.<sup>97</sup> On the other hand, neither Brenda nor Medora had possessed a settlement large enough to function as a real municipal centre.

After the realignment of boundaries, each of the municipalities had the character of a principality, with its metropolis

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<sup>96</sup> Statutes of Manitoba, 1896, ch.18,59 vic.

<sup>97</sup> Deloraine Times, Jan. 10, 1889.

T.6													
	R.M. OF			R.M. OF			R.M. OF			R.M. OF			
T.5	INCHIQUIN.			BRENDA.			WHITEWATER.			RIVERSIDE.			
T.4													
T.3													
	R.M. OF			R.M. OF			R.M. OF			R.M. OF			
T.2	ARTHUR.			MEDORA.			DELORAINÉ.			TURTLE MOUNTAIN			
T.1													
	R.29.	R.28.	R.27.	R.26.	R.25.	R.24.	R.23.	R.22.	R.21.	R.20.	R.19.	R.18.	R.17.

MUNICIPALITIES AS SET OUT BY Ch. 46+47 Vic. JULY 7, 1883.

T.6													
	R.M. OF			R.M. OF			R.M. OF			R.M. OF TURTLE MOUNTAIN		WESTERN TOWNSHIPS.	
T.5													
T.4													
T.3	ARTHUR.			WINCHESTER.			MORTON.			R.M. OF TURTLE MOUNTAIN		WESTERN TOWNSHIPS.	
T.2													
T.1													
	R.29.	R.28.	R.27.	R.26.	R.25.	R.24.	R.23.	R.22.	R.21.	R.20.	R.19.	R.18.	R.17.

MUNICIPALITIES AS SET OUT IN Ch. 55, 53 Vic. 1890.



## Chapter eight

drawing on its own hinterland. Boissevain was the "capital" of Morton, Deloraine of Winchester, and Melita of Arthur. Killarney was thereafter the metropolis for Turtle Mountain.

Readjustment incidentally solved a vexatious problem for the School District of Melita. When this district was organized in 1886, the Province decided to build the school on S.E.2-4-27, which was in the unorganized territory of Inchiquin. The school district included land from both Inchiquin and Arthur, and in the former there was no municipal authority to see that the special school taxes were paid. Very often they were not, and the deficit was made up by private subscription.<sup>98</sup> With the whole district in one municipality after 1890, this difficulty disappeared.

Those ratepayers in Arthur who believed that enlargement would solve the problem of increasing tax rates were soon disillusioned, for a letter appearing in the fall of 1892 in the new Melita Enterprise complains about the increase which took place after 1890.<sup>99</sup> A year later, one H.Cooke suggested that taxes were high because council persisted in paying for permanent improvements out of current revenues. This practice, he maintained, thrust too heavy a burden on the pioneer, and he suggested that those arriving in the area in the future should pay their share of present improvements. He therefore proposed that such expenditures be provided for by issuing long term debentures.<sup>100</sup> The editor commended this suggestion to the council, and not long

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<sup>98</sup> Melita Enterprise, Aug. 9, 1893.

<sup>99</sup> Melita Enterprise, Nov. 17, 1892.

<sup>100</sup> Melita Enterprise, Aug. 2, 1893.

## Chapter eight

afterward this body moved to present a bylaw to be voted on to authorize the sale of debentures amounting to \$5,000 for the construction of roads and bridges, although the same council had resolved earlier to postpone the building of all bridges "owing to the part failure of crops in Arthur."<sup>102</sup> The ratepayers, however, were suspicious of the motives of the promoters of this innovation, and the bylaw was defeated at the poles.

Contests for office, particularly in the far western municipality brought out other factors than crop failures and sparsity of population as causes of difficulty in municipal administration. Taxes were not declared sufficiently early in the fall to enable the settlers to pay them before their creditors, the storekeepers and implement dealers,<sup>103</sup> descended upon them. Clerks were slack and kept land on the assessment rolls which long since had been abandoned, or had been reverted to the C.P.R.<sup>104</sup> The councillors were farmers themselves and hesitated to use stringent measures to enforce tax collections from their neighbors, so that when they were forced finally to collect arrears, their action often came at a time when it imposed the most hardship.<sup>105</sup> Ratepayers demanded roads and bridges while at the same time they refused to endorse the business-like method of issuing debentures to provide for the cost of construction.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Melita Enterprise, Aug. 23, 1893.

<sup>103</sup> Melita Enterprise, Dec. 12, 1894. (R.M. Graham's "Appeal to the Electors of Arthur").

<sup>104</sup> Boissevain Globe, Nov. 24, 1892.

<sup>105</sup> Melita Enterprise, Dec. 12, 1894.

<sup>106</sup> Loc. cit. (G.L. Dodds' "Appeal to the electors of Arthur")

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Typical frontier reaction to the difficulties confronting the exasperated settlers is reflected in the way they responded to various proposals put forward for their relief. In 1894, G.L.Dodds contested the reeveship of Arthur, and won the election by promising to cut taxes by half. <sup>107</sup> He proposed to strike out the special levy for public works and to call in one-half the arrears in taxes. <sup>108</sup> In his inaugural address to the Council he announced his intention to restore statute labor which had long since been abolished. He proposed that schools be held open only six months in the year and that teachers receive only the legislative grant until all the annual taxes were collected. He opposed the granting of any funds, either to the Electoral District Agricultural Society or to any hospitals. What really won support for him from many ratepayers short of ready money was his astonishing proposal to borrow \$10,000 through the sale of debentures and distribute \$5,000 of it in cash to the settlers because in his opinion it had been taken unnecessarily from them during the previous four years. <sup>109</sup>

Dodds insisted that his programme would serve two purposes. To begin with it would result in an immediate reduction of taxes. Then, with the reduction widely advertised, the municipality would receive hundreds of settlers who were seeking to escape high taxes elsewhere. <sup>110</sup> He did succeed in lowering the tax rate

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107 Loc. cit.

108 Loc. cit.

109 Melita Enterprise, Jan.16,1895.

110 Loc. cit.

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by 25% during his first year in office, mainly by making a drive to collect arrears. So elated was he after this success that he wrote to all his fellow-reeves in the province, suggesting that they meet in Winnipeg, where "I will be pleased to tell how I reduced taxes in Arthur."<sup>111</sup> Once he had squeezed all he could from the backlog of arrears, however, the tax-rate rose again, and, succumbing to the pressure exerted by better grain prices & an insistent demand for public improvements, Dodds was forced, in 1898, to set a rate double that of the highest previous year. The ratepayers thereupon decided to try a new man with new methods, and replaced Dodds in December, 1898, by R.J.Dobbyn.<sup>112</sup>

A typical distribution of finances for various municipal purposes during the hard times period is shown in the statement for Morton Municipality for 1891.

Schools	\$ 3,543.66	
Roads and bridges	1,205.06	
Salaries	928.00	
Printing and postage	276.21	
Grants	205.21	
Miscellaneous	3,623.11	<u>113</u>
Total	\$ 9,781.25	

Among Miscellaneous items the largest is the Municipal Commissioner's levy, \$ 1,264.00. Another is \$ 493.00 for principal and interest payments on seed grain debentures. Among the grants are \$ 50.00 relief to A.Gillies, \$ 5.00 to the 'indigent', J.Trew, and \$ 33.33 to J. Thompson in compensation for the destruction of

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<sup>111</sup> Melita Enterprise, Feb. 17, 1895.  
<sup>112</sup> Melita Enterprise, Dec. 23, 1898.  
<sup>113</sup> Boissevain Globe, Mar. 17, 1892.

T.6				R.M. OF		R.M. OF			RIVERSIDE.	WESTERN TOWNSHIPS OF
T.5	R.M. OF			CAMERON.		WHITEWATER			R.M. OF	WESTERN TOWNSHIPS OF
T.4									TURTLE MOUNTAIN.	WESTERN TOWNSHIPS OF
T.3	ARTHUR.			R.M. OF		R.M. OF			R.M. OF	WESTERN TOWNSHIPS OF
T.2				WINCHESTER.		MORTON.			R.M. OF	WESTERN TOWNSHIPS OF
T.1	R.29. R.28.	R.27.	R.26.	R.25. R.24.	R.23.	R.22.	R.21. R.20.	R.19.	R.18.	R.17.

MUNICIPALITIES AS DEFINED IN Ch. 18, 59 Vic. MARCH 19, 1896.

T.6	R.M. OF ALBERT.			R.M. OF CAMERON.			R.M. OF			RIVERSIDE	WESTERN TOWNSHIPS OF
T.5							WHITEWATER.			R.M. OF	WESTERN TOWNSHIPS OF
T.4										TURTLE MOUNTAIN.	WESTERN TOWNSHIPS OF
T.3	R.M. OF	R.M. OF	R.M. OF	R.M. OF	R.M. OF	R.M. OF				R.M. OF	WESTERN TOWNSHIPS OF
T.2	EDWARD.	ARTHUR.	BRENDA.	WINCHESTER	MORTON.				R.M. OF	WESTERN TOWNSHIPS OF	
T.1	R.29. R.28.	R.27.	R.26.	R.25. R.24.	R.23.	R.22.	R.21. R.20.	R.19.	R.18.	R.17.	

MUNICIPALITIES AS THEY ARE TODAY.

## CHAPTER 9

### THE ARRIVAL AND EXTENSION OF THE RAILWAY.

"The inhabitants of the Prairie Provinces, like the inhabitants of other inland plains, is peculiarly dependent upon railways.....What the birch bark canoe was to the fur trade, the railway is to the farmers of Western Canada."<sup>1</sup>

Railways and the various projects <sup>put</sup> ~~just~~ forward for their extension into Southwestern Manitoba were subjects of absorbing interest to the settlers of the region, from the arrival of the first homesteader in 1880, to the last days of the 19th century. The pioneers came to the district because, among other reasons, they were confident that a railway would not be long in following them along the Boundary Commission Trail.<sup>2</sup> The serious setback given to settlement by the Order-in-Council of July 1882, was the direct result of the uncertainty in government circles regarding the location of the line which was to extend into the district, and the action was defended by the Minister of the Interior on the ground that it was necessary to prevent speculation in railway townsites.<sup>3</sup> Because all the odd-numbered sections in the district formed part of the Manitoba Southwestern Land Reserves, the policies adopted by the Canadian Pacific and its subsidiary, the Canada North-West Land Company, added immeasurably to the difficulties of financing municipal

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<sup>1</sup> W.A.McIntosh, Prairie Settlement, the Geographical Setting.

<sup>2</sup> See ch.6.

p.57.

<sup>3</sup> See ch.6.

## Chapter nine

administration.<sup>4</sup> The whole area fell within the railway monopoly created by Clause 15 of the C.P.R. Syndicate's contract,<sup>5</sup> so that railway development depended entirely on the whims of the company. Since therefore they did not have to fear the intrusion of competing lines until at least after 1888, they proceeded with their extensions at a slow rate which produced exasperation and resentment in the minds of farmers and business men throughout the district.

The pioneers, faced with the necessity of hauling their grain to Brandon after 1882, waited eagerly for either the Manitoba Southwestern or the Pembina Mountain Branch of the C.P.R. to come into the area. As it happened, the latter arrived first, but not until five years after the first settlers came to the slopes of Turtle Mountain, and it took another year to extend it to the vicinity of the old settlement on Township 2, Range 22. Six more years passed by before Melita received railway communication, and it came, not from the east but from the north, as a result of the construction of the Souris Branch from the mainline at Kemnay.. No regular train reached Waskada, on the plain near the boundary, until New Years' Day, 1900.

The early settlers looked forward to the coming of the railway, not only because it would relieve them of the long winter trips to Brandon to sell their grain but because they felt

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<sup>4</sup> See ch. 8, p. 126 .

<sup>5</sup> Morton, History of Prairie settlement, p.67.

## Chapter nine

certain that the railway would bring with it the resumption of the rapid rate of settlement which had been suspended after 1882. While the Pembina Mountain Branch was approaching Cherry Creek from Manitou, during 1885, immigration did improve, but only for a very brief period. Early in the spring of that year, Dave Butchard and W.E.Cowan came down to Deloraine from Rapid City, where, they said, "half a town expected to move out" and follow them.<sup>6</sup> But in 1886 the Manitoba and Northwestern pushed a branch to that ambitious town,<sup>7</sup> whereupon the half inclined to move changed its mind.

When the long-looked for railway finally came into the South-West corner, in the fall of 1885, the line, as it had done at places further east, missed the townsites laid out by the pioneer promoters of 1882, and ran a mile or two further north of the correction line. This policy was explained by the expressed desire to avoid the deeper ravines lying closer to the mountain,<sup>8</sup> but it also enabled the C.P.R. to locate townsites on its own land and thereby profit from the sale of lots. When it became known that the railway station and pump-house would be built at Cherry Creek, stores and buildings were moved to it from across the prairie, leaving deserted the sites of the old "dream cities". George Morton, who had purchased the Brondgeest and Hunter store at Waubeesh in 1883, and had built another at Wassewa, tore down the first one and moved the second some seven

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<sup>6</sup> Deloraine Times, Mar.30,1944 (item by G.Rickard.)

<sup>7</sup> Morton, Op. cit.p.68.

<sup>8</sup> According to Sankey and other pioneers.



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miles to the new town, getting it there just ahead of the railway.<sup>9</sup> John Morrow built the first house, which still stands.<sup>10</sup> Robert Musgrave, a blacksmith who had opened a shop at Waubeesh in 1883, and had moved to practice his trade at Fairburn in 1884 and 85, moved his shop in from Fairburn, six miles east of the new railway terminal.<sup>11</sup> Others soon did the same, coming in from the west and the east, and it was not long before the new village grew to a respectable size. The first train arrived on November 23,<sup>12</sup> and the following spring, in 1886, the C.P.R., grateful to a noble Belgian financier who had just loaned the company some badly-needed funds, changed the name of the town from Cherry Creek to Boissevain.<sup>13</sup>

Until churches were either pulled in across the prairie or newly-built, Sunday services were held in the railway coaches which remained in Boissevain over the weekend, during the year that the new town was the terminal of the line.<sup>14</sup>

Boissevain prospered during the summer and fall of 1886. The crop that fall was an average one, 15.6 bushels to the acre,<sup>15</sup> but the grain-buyers in the town had the whole territory west of them to draw from. In anticipation of the flood of wheat which was to come in the fall, the enterprising Morton built a

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<sup>9</sup> Boissevain Globe, Dec.31,1891.

<sup>10</sup> According to Mr. Orris and Mr. E.I.Dow of Boissevain.

<sup>11</sup> Old Timers' Book.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Place Names of Manitoba (Ottawa, 1933) p.7.

<sup>14</sup> Old Timers' Book.

<sup>15</sup> Ellis, Manitoba Agriculture and P.F.R.A. p.40

## Chapter nine

flat warehouse and added grain-buying to his many activities.<sup>16</sup>

E.B. Tatchell, formerly Morton's chief clerk and agent, did the same.<sup>17</sup> Two more grain warehouses were built and thus by the time threshing commenced, four flat warehouses were completed and their owners ready to do business.<sup>18</sup>

During the year, the C.P.R. slowly extended its line, until, on Nov. 8, 1886, the first mixed train reached what was to be a new Deloraine,<sup>19</sup> located some twenty miles west and two miles north of Boissevain. This site was located five miles west and two miles north of the well-established old Deloraine, so the merchants, the implement dealers, the blacksmiths and the millers, like those in the settlements to east, all moved in to take lots on the new townsite.<sup>20</sup> They left only the stone vault of Cavers and Stuarts store behind them, to mark the site of a once thriving community. As it turned out, the early settlers were wiser in their choice of a townsite than were the C.P.R. officials, for they had picked a site on the banks of Whitewater Creek where water was plentiful. On the new site the water problem has plagued the citizens of Deloraine ever since they moved to it.<sup>21</sup>

Deloraine immediately replaced Boissevain as the grain shipping centre of the Southwestern Plains, receiving wheat for

<sup>16</sup> Boissevain Globe, Dec. 31, 1891.

<sup>17</sup> Old Timers' Book.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Tiernan, "Geographical Outline."

<sup>20</sup> Deloraine Times, Pioneer Edition, Mar. 30, 1944.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter nine

the next four years from as far west as Carnduff, in the Territory of Assiniboia.<sup>22</sup> This development was hailed with delight by the editor of the Times, who reported early in December, 1887, "Lots of wheat coming in. Price 52¢. As we write we can see huge piles of wheat in bags on the buyer's platform."<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately for the buyers, the farmers, and the merchants who had extended credit to both, what has ever since been referred to as "The Great Grain Blockade of 1888" soon developed. The crop of 1887 was the heaviest on record throughout South-western Manitoba<sup>24</sup> and the nearby Assiniboia, and the newly-threshed grain began pouring in in a great flood. By the first of February the buyers were refusing to take it as it came in, for their warehouses were full and their platforms loaded to capacity.<sup>25</sup> Farmers, rather than hauling the grain home again, in some cases over 90 miles, piled the grain in the streets and along the railway track. The Times estimated that at that time over 40,000 bushels were held in store in elevators, flat-warehouses, and merchant's back rooms, while another 9,650 bushels was piled up in bags on the street. At the same time there were no grain cars to take it away, and the C.P.R. would promise none.<sup>26</sup> The town was still plugged with wheat in the middle of March, with 10,000 bushels piled on platforms placed on the snow along the railway. When the snow began to thaw, these leaned dangerously close to the railway, and in one case, a moving freight train tore the ends out of the bags, spilling

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<sup>22</sup> Deloraine Times.

<sup>23</sup> Deloraine Times, Dec. 8, 1887.

<sup>24</sup> Ellis, Loc. cit.

<sup>25</sup> Deloraine Times, Feb. 2, 1888

<sup>26</sup> Loc. cit.

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the grain into the slush. Other piles sank into the water and the wheat was ruined.<sup>27</sup>

The car shortage was a matter of grave concern to the farmers, and of considerable inconvenience to the merchants, and the municipal administration of the area. "The grain is lying at home and should be handed out, to provide funds for pressing debts. But what is the use of hauling it to town to have it stacked in the streets?"<sup>28</sup> Among their debts were taxes, and Whitewater Council, among others, resolved that "owing to the inability to market grain, the payment of taxes at par be extended from March 1st, to June 15th to all resident Taxpayers."<sup>29</sup>

The blockade was still in effect during the first week in April. Assistant superintendent Murray of the C.P.R. arrived on April 3 because "he had heard rumors of a car shortage in Deloraine."<sup>30</sup> He did not stay more than an hour or so, the Times remarking, "perhaps he was not desirous of facing the complaints of incensed grain buyers."<sup>31</sup> However, cars soon began to arrive and by April 12 the editor was able to report that "The piles of wheat are a thing of the past."<sup>32</sup> He went on to state that up to the day before, 566,015 bushels of wheat had been shipped and 35,000 bushels remained in storage. The price was 52¢ and 120,000 bushels still remained to be threshed.

Though the piles of wheat disappeared within a week, the

<sup>27</sup> Deloraine Times, Mar. 15, 1888.

<sup>28</sup> Deloraine Times, Feb. 16, 1888.

<sup>29</sup> Deloraine Times, Mar. 26, 1888.

<sup>30</sup> Deloraine Times, Apr. 5, 1888.

<sup>31</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>32</sup> Deloraine Times, Apr. 12, 1888.

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resentment aroused by the negligence of the C.P.R. remained, to be increased by a long delay in extending the Pembina Mountain Branch to the west and to the south-west from Deloraine. Not entirely by accident did the demands of municipal councils that the "Manitoba Shylock"<sup>33</sup> be forced to pay its share of local improvement expenditures coincide with the wheat blockade.

Situated where they were, the residents of Southwestern Manitoba watched with keen interest the course of the dispute between the province and the Dominion over the question of disallowing provincial railway legislation. The railway charters disallowed, like that of the famous Red River Valley line, in 1885,<sup>34</sup> were for railways that would pass through their district, or close to it. Disallowance of these charters came to an end in 1888, when Clause 15 of the C.P.R. contract was cancelled in return for certain financial considerations offered to the company by the Dominion government.<sup>35</sup> This was a matter between Ottawa and the C.P.R., but, as far as the people of Manitoba were concerned, Premier Greenway and Attorney-General Martin were responsible for the arrangement.<sup>36</sup>

The public's attitude toward the C.P.R. is reflected in the following excerpts from an editorial in the Deloraine Times. "The evils entailed by the farmer (through disallowance) will live long after its death; the inconveniences and suffering

<sup>33</sup> Deloraine Times, Mar. 22, 1888.

<sup>34</sup> Morton, History of Prairie Settlement, p.67.

<sup>35</sup> Morton, loc. cit.

<sup>36</sup> Deloraine Times, Apr. 5, 1888.

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caused by the selfish and mistaken policy of the C.P.R. will be felt for years to come....The company could neglect this district because there was no competition -they have done it. Storekeepers, farmers, and the general public have alike suffered. Goods are shunted into sidings to suit the convenience of the company... freight and passenger rates are exorbitant....Mr. Greenway should not stop where he has begun....let him go forward and smite down the monopoly in land as he has smitten the monopoly in railroads."<sup>37</sup> The editor further pointed out that both the C.P.R. and the Hudson's Bay Company contributed nothing to the public treasury for the lands they owned, while at the same time, by "exorbitant" land prices, they kept the country "poor in farmers, poor in production and rich in taxation."

The editorial ends by asking, "Is there not a GREEN WAY to reach and destroy this house that JACK built?"<sup>38</sup>

Many people in the district hoped, like the Times editor, that "competition in railways (would) mean reduced freight rates... and leave a little more money in the hands of the farmers,"<sup>39</sup> but to their dismay "free trade in railways"<sup>40</sup> did not immediately follow the end of disallowance, although there was a scramble for charters for roads intended to compete with the C.P.R. for the carrying trade of the South-West corner.

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<sup>37</sup> Deloraine Times, Apr. 19, 1888.

<sup>38</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>39</sup> Deloraine Times, Mar. 29, 1888.

<sup>40</sup> Deloraine Times, Apr. 12, 1888.

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In May, 1888, the Brandon, Souris, and Turtle Mountain Railway Company was incorporated and given a charter by the Legislature to build a road from the city of Brandon to the Turtle Mountain, and then along the International Boundary to the Saskatchewan boundary.<sup>41</sup> At the same time, the Turtle Mountain and Manitoba Railway Company was incorporated to run a line from "a point on the 49th parallel within Ranges 24 and 25" to Melita and then on to the Saskatchewan boundary," and to operate a branch line to within one mile of Virden.<sup>42</sup> The Brandon and South Eastern Railway gave notice in the Winnipeg papers of its intention to ask for a charter authorizing construction of a road running from Brandon, crossing the Souris River at Souris City, then extending east to Morris.<sup>43</sup> This company made way for the Northern Pacific and Manitoba Company which took over the Red River Valley charter, and was allowed by a Bill of February, 1889, to build from Morris to Greenway and then north through Wawanesa to Brandon.<sup>44</sup> In 1893, the Provincial Legislature passed "An Act to Incorporate the Melita Northern Railway Company," with a group of real pioneers of Arthur Municipality for directors, who intended to run a line" from some point on the boundary line in Township 1, Range 24 or 25, to a point on the C.P.R. between Ranges 25 and the west boundary of the Province."<sup>45</sup> The capital check was set at \$500,000 and the line was to be built within two years.

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<sup>41</sup> Statutes of Manitoba, 1888. ch.5. 52 vic.

<sup>42</sup> Statutes of Manitoba, 1888. ch.52, 52 vic.

<sup>43</sup> Deloraine Times, Apr. 19, 1888.

<sup>44</sup> Morton, Op. cit. p.67.

<sup>45</sup> Statutes of Manitoba, 1893, ch.45, 56 vic.

While the Times expressed the general satisfaction with the prospect of competition with the C.P.R. within the territory, the paper warned the government, at the same time, that "it is to be hoped that the greatest care will be taken to grant charters only to those parties who possess means enough to build the railways," for "The country has suffered enough already from Charters being granted to parties who had not the slightest idea of building."<sup>46</sup> Of all the railroads chartered in Southwestern Manitoba from 1888 to the end of the century, only one line, the N.P. & M from Morris to Brandon, was completed. (in 1890).<sup>47</sup>

The potential competition created by the end of disallowance did prod the C.P.R. into exhibiting some activity. Farmers living in the northern townships had long been exasperated by the dilatoriness displayed by the company in extending the Manitoba Southwestern's line which it had leased in perpetuity in 1884. Glenboro, in Township 7, Range 14, remained the terminus for five years, before the line was extended westward in 1891, <sup>48</sup> to Nesbitt, in Range 18, and still in Township 7, a source of keen disappointment to the settlers in the South-West corner who had expected it to turn southward and come their way. "Is not the C.P.R. bound by its charter and by its oft-repeated promises to extend the M.&S.W. to this part of the Province?"<sup>49</sup> asked the Times.

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<sup>46</sup> Deloraine Times, Apr. 19, 1888.

<sup>47</sup> Morton, Loc. cit.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>49</sup> Deloraine Times, May 24, 1888.



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The long delay in extending the Pembina Mountain Branch westward from Deloraine brought particular hardship to those settlers living west of the Souris River. In the early days a great deal of threshing was done during the winter and in the late spring. Spring floods made fording the river impossible until often as late as the middle of July. The farmers were forced to wait until midsummer to receive the proceeds from the grain that was not hauled to Deloraine before the ice went in the spring. <sup>50</sup>

In December, 1887, J.P. Alexander, the Conservative member of the Legislature for Souris, assured his constituents that the Deloraine extension would reach Melita by the following September. <sup>51</sup> This was too late to be of any help in moving the heavy crop of 1887, so, in the spring of 1888, the merchants of Deloraine and Melita, the municipalities of Brenda, Arthur, and Medora, and the farmers living along the Commission Trail on both sides of the river, contributed to a fund to finance the building of a ferry at Melita. A committee was appointed in March, and instructed to buy material and begin construction immediately. An experienced boat-builder was hired to do the job, and on July 19, the first loads of grain were ferried over. <sup>52</sup>

Meanwhile the C.P.R. gave no sign of beginning its promised

<sup>50</sup> Deloraine Times, Mar. 22, 1887.

<sup>51</sup> Deloraine Times, Dec. 3, 1887.

<sup>52</sup> Deloraine Times, Mar. 22, 1888.

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extension, and Alexander felt the wrath of his constituents when he was defeated at the polls the same month.<sup>53</sup> A letter dated September 24 which appeared in the Times, explains why, "The first of September has come and gone and who has seen the cars or heard the whistle on that 50 miles west of Deloraine which the C.P.R. was bound to build and operate by the end of this month."<sup>54</sup>

When the country west of the river finally secured railway communication, it appeared from a direction not foreseen in 1888. The Souris Branch of the C.P.R., intended to connect the mainline at Kemnay with the coal fields in Assiniboia, reached Hartney in 1890, and was eventually extended to Melita in 1892.<sup>55</sup> The long-promised extension from Deloraine never did come to "the Rising City of the West,"<sup>56</sup> but turned northward to Napinka, where it connected with the Souris Branch,<sup>57</sup> much to the chagrin of the ambitious citizens of Melita, who, not much more than a year before, had been convinced that only pressure from Deloraine merchants was preventing the C.P.R. from proceeding west.<sup>58</sup>

With the completion of the Souris Branch to Melita and on to the Saskatchewan boundary, and of the Deloraine extension to Napinka, the more northern townships of Southwestern

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<sup>53</sup> Canadian Parliamentary Companion, 1889.

<sup>54</sup> Deloraine Times, Sept. 27, 1888.

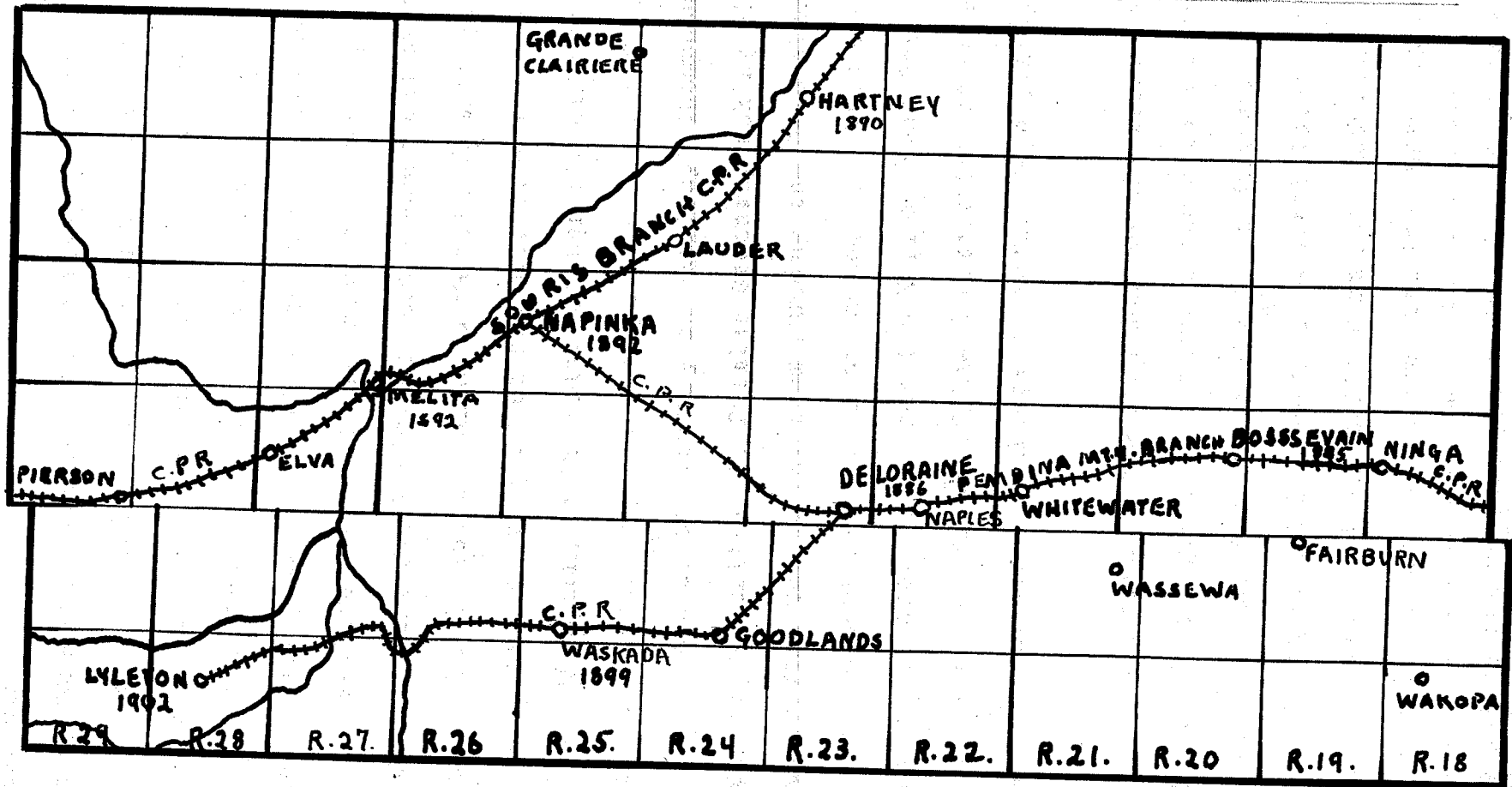
<sup>55</sup> Morton, History of Prairie Settlement, p. 99.

<sup>56</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>57</sup> Boissevain Globe, June 25, 1891.

<sup>58</sup> Boissevain Globe, Oct. 2, 1890.

# RAILWAY EXTENSION 1885 TO 1902.



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a subsidy of \$1750 per mile if either of the American railways would proceed with a line.<sup>62</sup>

A short time later, a Patron's Lodge was formed at Waskada, and Thompson was elected its first president.<sup>63</sup> The lodge immediately went to work on the railway question. The following year an exchange of letters between Thompson and J.J.Hill of the Great Northern indicated that a deadlock had developed between Hill and Greenway. The premier blamed Hill for the delay, pointing out that he had promised a subsidy of \$1750 a mile. Hill replied that he was anxious to build, but that he would sign no contract until the money was definitely provided for in the provincial government's estimates. "Who will move first?"<sup>64</sup> wondered the Enterprise.

A letter from Greenway to A.M.Campbell, the local member for Souris, seems to provide some justification for Hill's reluctance to proceed without first making sure of the subsidy.

"considering the responsibilities already undertaken by the government in railway matters and the portions of the province that are yet without railway facilities, I do not think the government will feel like offering a bonus for the line to which you refer."<sup>65</sup>

Greenway is careful not to mention the line by name, but there is

<sup>62</sup> Melita Enterprise, Feb. 9, 1893.

<sup>63</sup> Melita Enterprise, Apr. 5, 1894.

<sup>64</sup> Melita Enterprise, Jan. 11, 1894.

<sup>65</sup> P.A.M. Letters, #777 $\frac{3}{4}$  a. Greenway to Campbell, d. Jan. 19, 1893.

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no reason to believe that it was not the line Thompson was advocating.

When the tariff commissioner visited Melita in December 1894, Thompson was on hand with statistics to show why he was anxious for an American railway to come in and compete with the C.P.R. The freight rate from Melita to Montreal, a distance of 1613 miles via the C.P.R., was 48¢ a hundred pounds. Via the Soo Line, from Minneapolis to New York, a distance of 1601 miles, the rate was only 35¢ a hundred pounds. He argued that the C.P.R. was discriminating against the Southwestern Manitoba farmers, for they had to pay 12¢ a bushel on grain shipped from Melita to Brandon, 66 miles, while Ontario farmers could ship grain from Napanee to Prescott, 85 miles, for 7¢ a bushel.<sup>66</sup>

After some years of trying to get an American road into his district, Thompson persuaded a group of his neighbors to form a company and seek a charter to build their own road. In March, 1898, he went to Ottawa to see what the Dominion government would do regarding a grant.<sup>67</sup> His trip to Ottawa apparently met with no success, except that "the C.P.R. has lost nothing by Thompson's energies as (the trip) resulted in a number of land sales in the Waskada district."<sup>68</sup>

Thompson persisted in his efforts and in January 1899 he went to St. Paul to seek financial support for his road.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Melita Enterprise, Dec. 12, 1894.

<sup>67</sup> Melita Enterprise, Mar. 11, 1898.

<sup>68</sup> Melita Enterprise, Apr. 3, 1898.

<sup>69</sup> Melita Enterprise, Jan. 7, 1899.

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What he accomplished during his stay in that city can only be surmised, but later events seem to indicate that he contacted C.Mellen, president of the Northern Pacific, and interested him in building the Waskada line.

Finally, in July, he received a charter to build "from some point in Township 1, Range 24, thence to Waskada," and west to the Saskatchewan boundary. The "Waskada and North-eastern Railway" with Thompson and other local residents as directors, was capitalized at \$500,000.<sup>70</sup> On the same day, the lieutenant-governor assented to a bill which authorized the C.P.R. to build a branch line "from a point adjacent to the Deloraine extension at Deloraine, southwesterly and westerly in Townships one, two, or three, to the west boundary of the province."<sup>71</sup> As a matter of fact, the C.P.R. began to build the line even before the bill was passed, which suggests that Greenway and the Canadian company had previously come to an agreement.

The negotiations that took place between Greenway and the C.P.R., between Mellen and Greenway, between Thompson and Mellen, and between Thompson and Greenway, before the charters were granted, remained a highly controversial political question for some time thereafter. Thompson insisted that, "In the Stone hotel at Melita, Mr. Greenway promised me the usual grant of

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<sup>70</sup> Statutes of Manitoba, 1899, ch.55, 62 & 63 vic.

<sup>71</sup> Statutes of Manitoba, 1899, ch.45, 62 & 63 vic.

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\$1750 per mile if I could get any company to build in there. At no time has this offer been withdrawn.....the same aid has been promised....in the presence of the member for Souris."<sup>72</sup> Thompson also implied that his negotiations with the N.P. were so far completed that it seemed almost a certainty that they would build a road.<sup>73</sup> Substantiating Thompson's claims were the statements made by members of a delegation of farmers and local business men on their return from an interview held with Greenway shortly after Thompson received his charter. They maintained that Greenway had led them to believe that because the C.P.R. had offered to build without the subsidy, the N.P. would receive aid on only half their proposed line, to be exact, that part between Elgin, on their existing line, to Deloraine. "There was rejoicing over this assurance which was intensified when N.P. surveyors appeared on the scene and began their work."<sup>74</sup>

Greenway just as emphatically denied these assertions. In answer to a question, during the brief debate in the legislature on the C.P.R. bill, (July 21), he insisted that he had never heard of any proposal made by the N.P. company.<sup>75</sup> He denied giving any assurance to the Deloraine delegation regarding the Elgin Waskada road. A telegram was produced by Mr. Fisher, member for Russell, in which Mellen stated he told Greenway that he was prepared to build the road as agreed on with Thompson, but only if no charter was granted to the C.P.R. Greenway denied that Mellen "had ever so stated."<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Deloraine Advertiser, Nov. 23, 1899.

<sup>73</sup> Deloraine Advertiser, Aug. 10, 1899. (Editorial)

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

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Later that fall, Mellen wrote to the Enterprise and explained why his company did not build the Waskada line. The Northern Pacific, he said, wanted \$1750 per mile, while the C.P.R. offered to build the line without the subsidy, whereupon Mr. Greenway declared to Mellen that he could not pay a subsidy to one company if another was willing to build without it.<sup>77</sup>

During the provincial election campaign that fall, Greenway explained that the reason he did not subsidize the N.P. road was because the C.P.R. was building this road "without it costing the country one dollar."<sup>78</sup> This explanation was repeated by the Liberal members who were seeking reelection, A.M. Campbell, of Souris, and C.A. Young, of Deloraine.<sup>79</sup> Thompson, who regularly attended the campaign meetings of both, persistently argued that, railway-hungry as his Waskada neighbors were, they did not approve the government's decision to keep out American competition. He maintained that, with competition, the people of Southwestern Manitoba would be saved the amount of the subsidy many times over.

Campbell, perhaps in an unguarded moment, declared that he approved Greenway's decision because in his opinion the farmers would be better served by a road operated by the C.P.R.<sup>80</sup> At the election held on December 8, 1899, Campbell, who had

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<sup>77</sup> Melita Enterprise, Nov. 24, 1899.

<sup>78</sup> Deloraine Advertiser, Nov. 23, 1899.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Melita Enterprise, Nov. 24, 1899.



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represented Souris since he had defeated Alexander in 1888 on the railway question, lost his seat to Allan Thompson by a margin of 9 votes.<sup>81</sup> This result was forecast some months before, when it was reported that in the Waskada district, there was "considerable talk hostile to the Greenway government caused by the government not aiding the N.P."<sup>82</sup> Thompson and his friends had the pleasure of seeing the Greenway government defeated by a margin of 22 seats to 16.<sup>83</sup>

The sequel to these events happened shortly after H.J. Macdonald formed the new government early in the new year of 1900. It was then disclosed that "the C.P.R. did get the subsidy for the Waskada road in spite of Greenway's assurances to the contrary,"<sup>84</sup> "All the time when he (Mr. Greenway) and his colleagues and candidates were repeating these falsehoods.... the government were already, and had been for months, pledged to the C.P.R. to grant them a subsidy of \$1750 per mile."<sup>85</sup> Said Thompson, "I cannot see how the C.P.R. can claim the aid, for, when they refused it for two years, they had no charter to build, but when another company comes forward to build they secure the aid and charter. A royal commission would bring out the facts."<sup>86</sup>

The disclosure that the C.P.R. did receive the subsidy placed C.A.Young, who was reelected for Deloraine, in an awkward

81 Melita Enterprise, Dec.15,1899.

82 Melita Western Progress, Aug. 2,1899.

83 Melita Enterprise, Dec.15,1899,

84 Napinka Standard, Feb.2, 1900.

85 Deloraine Advertiser, Feb.8, 1900.

86 Ibid. (Letter)

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situation. Declaring he had won his seat under false pretences, he wrote to the Deloraine Liberal Association asking them to allow him to resign.<sup>87</sup> This they refused to do.

The first regularly scheduled C.P.R. train pulled into Waskada on New Year's Day, 1900, but not until 1902 was the line extended to Lyleton, west of the Souris River.<sup>88</sup> To this day it has not reached "the west boundary of the province."

The end of the century, therefore, found Southwestern Manitoba fairly well provided with railway service, but, in spite of the high hopes expressed in 1888 for "free trade in railways" the region was still the private preserve of the C.P.R. The negligence, real and imagined, of that company while it was under the protection of disallowance, the exasperating slowness with which it extended its lines thereafter, and the political scandal which accompanied the building of the Waskada road, all combined to make the company, in the minds of many, the primary member of what they term an unholy trinity - the C.P.R., the grain exchange, and the mortgage company.

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<sup>87</sup> Napinka Standard, Feb. 9, 1900.

<sup>88</sup> H.A. Innis, History of the C.P.R., (London, 1923) p.141.

## CHAPTER 10

### PIONEER FARM MOVEMENTS AND POLITICS.

"We shall band together for self-protection and for obtaining our portion of the advantage now enjoyed exclusively by the financial, commercial, and manufacturing classes, who, by combines and monopolies, extract from us an undue share of the fruits of our toil."<sup>1</sup>

At the end of 1883, the Inspector of Dominion Land Agencies at Winnipeg reported to the Minister of the Interior that "there is no disguising the fact that the country is passing through a hard times phase."<sup>2</sup> Exactly ten years later the Napinka correspondent of the Melita Enterprise reported that "Wheat is low, flour is high, and potatoes are small,"<sup>3</sup> and the paper stated that the market price for "No.1 Hard" in Melita was 38¢. The same day, a letter from "One Who Knows" appeared in the Boissevain Globe. "For years farmers of this settlement have had to struggle with failure after failure, each year hoping that the next would prove better, until a great many are almost dismayed with hard work and no returns,"<sup>4</sup> and a week later "Murmurings" from Margaret wrote that "the bailiffs seem to be doing a rushing business this fall and all at the expense of the farmer."<sup>5</sup> The following summer "Patronism" spread like fire over the prairies

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<sup>1</sup> Boissevain Globe, Nov. 19, 1891

<sup>2</sup> Sessional Papers Canada, 1884.

<sup>3</sup> Melita Enterprise, Nov. 16, 1893.

<sup>4</sup> Boissevain Globe, Nov. 16, 1893.

<sup>5</sup> Boissevain Globe, Nov. 23, 1893.

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of Southwestern Manitoba, and like a prairie fire soon died down, having burned itself out completely almost two years before the Enterprise in 1898 reported in headlines "WHEAT \$1.36. HIGHEST EVER PAID IN MELITA."<sup>6</sup> The Land Officers' "hard times phase," had come to an end less than a year before.

The combination of crop failures and low prices seems to have taken some time to produce an organized movement of protest among the farmers of Southwestern Manitoba. When a political movement did develop, the ground was prepared for it by an organization -The Farmers Institute,- which, strangely enough, did not originate from local discontent, but was promoted by an outside authority and supported from public funds.

The first society devoted exclusively to the solution of farmers' difficulties, to appear in the area was the Electoral Division Agricultural Society of Turtle Mountain, which was organized in 1883 to serve the four municipalities existing in Southwestern Manitoba at that time, Turtle Mountain, Deloraine, Riverside, and Souris River.<sup>7</sup> Electoral Division Societies were provided for by legislation, and <sup>as</sup> more Electoral Divisions were created, the number of Societies increased in proportion. Their chief function was to encourage the improvement "of breed and seed" and they operated mainly through the medium of agricultural fairs, although they did hold meetings in the larger centres of the constituencies where farming practices were discussed.

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<sup>6</sup> Melita Enterprise, May 13, 1898.

<sup>7</sup> Manitoba Gazette, vol.12, #13. Mar.13, 1883.

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However, each society covered a large area, and the average farmer had little to say in matters of policy. The local editors frequently scolded the farmers for their poor attendance at the few meetings which were held, an indication that ~~that~~ they were not particularly interested.

In 1890 the provincial <sup>government</sup> sought to remedy this defect by providing for local Farmer's Institutes. The legislature passed an act authorizing committees to form Institutes on the presentation to the Minister of Agriculture of a petition signed by at least 25 persons who had paid a membership of 50¢. To encourage the formation of Institutes throughout the province, the legislation made provision for an annual grant to each of 50¢ for each paid-up member.<sup>9</sup>

The objective of the Farmer's Institute Act was "to encourage improvement in agriculture, horticulture, manufactures, and the useful arts." Means suggested to attain this objective were (A) holding meetings for "the discussion of and hearing lectures on theory and practice", (B) the circulation of periodicals; the importation and introduction of "seeds, plants, and animals of new and valuable kinds", and (C) offering prizes for Essays.<sup>10</sup>

The Farmers' Institutes were not intended to replace the Electoral District Agricultural Societies but to supplement them. However, the idea of local Institutes proved popular

<sup>8</sup> Melita Enterprise, Dec. 24, 1896.

<sup>9</sup> Statutes of Manitoba, 1890, Ch. 35, 53 vic.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

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in Southwestern Manitoba, for a number of them appeared during the next five years. In December, 1891, the Enterprise urged the formation of a Farmers' Institute, <sup>11</sup> in Melita, and within a few weeks the Souris Institute was organized, which at the end of the year, <sup>12</sup> received a legislative grant of \$16.00. "Railway" Thompson of Waskada was the first president, and remained in office until he was replaced in 1893 by W.J. Underhill. <sup>13</sup> Late in June, Underhill and John Williams attended the Central Institute at Brandon, an organization set up by the government to coordinate the work of the local units. <sup>14</sup> Institutes appeared in Deloraine and Boissevain in 1893, for grants to them appear in the Public Accounts of 1894, <sup>15</sup> and in March, 1894, the Napinka Institute was formed with Major Cates as chairman and A.A. Titus as secretary. <sup>16</sup>

The farmers listened attentively to lectures given by S.A. Bedford, of the Brandon Experimental Farm, and other farming experts sent out by the Department of Agriculture. Local members also prepared papers and read them. However, they soon showed that they were not entirely convinced that tree-planting, summerfallow, and mixed farming could alone bring about prosperity

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<sup>11</sup> Melita Enterprise, Dec. 24, 1891.

<sup>12</sup> P.A.M. Public Accounts, 1892.

<sup>13</sup> Melita Enterprise, June 5, 1893.

<sup>14</sup> Melita Enterprise, June 26, 1893.

<sup>15</sup> P.A.M. Public Accounts, 1894.

<sup>16</sup> Melita Enterprise, March 1894.

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in Southwestern Manitoba. James Downie read a paper on the causes of depression, chief of which he claimed were not faulty farming practices, nor yet the climate, but "the great production of wheat in foreign countries and excessive freight rates in Canada."<sup>17</sup> Under the leadership of Thompson, Williams, Underhill and others, the Souris Institute very early began to demand better service from the C.P.R. and to invite American rail-ways interests to construct roads in the area in order to break the C.P.R. monopoly.<sup>18</sup> The Institute asked Ottawa to begin immediately the construction of the Hudsons Bay Railway, and to remove the duty on farm implements and coal oil.<sup>19</sup> Resolutions were sent to the Manitoba government protesting against the lowering of taxes on unoccupied land,<sup>20</sup> and the practice of railways giving free passes to legislators.<sup>21</sup>

Protests against the high tariffs of National Policy and against the slow rate at which people were coming into the region, appeared almost simultaneously in Southwestern Manitoba, for the two were closely connected in the minds of the farmers. In the spring of 1888, the Times reported "Seven car-loads of stock and effects came to Deloraine Monday night and three are going over the land to Dakota, together with seventeen people." The editor blamed the exodus on government policy.<sup>22</sup> "A considerable number of immigrants are arriving in the province, and a fair

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<sup>17</sup> Melita Enterprise, Jan. 5, 1893.

<sup>18</sup> See ch. 9. p. 161.

<sup>19</sup> Melita Enterprise, Feb. 23, 1893.

<sup>20</sup> Melita Enterprise, Feb. 22, 1894.

<sup>21</sup> Melita Enterprise, Feb. 21, 1896.

<sup>22</sup> Deloraine Times, April 5, 1888.

number reaching Deloraine , but dislike<sup>it</sup> as we may, it cannot be denied that a fair portion are continuing their journey and going over into Dakota....On Sunday Mr. Atkinson and family from Huron County went to Bottineau from here....The policy of reserves for every class except a Canadian, who has to rustle land for himself seems to act for Uncle Sam's benefit, as he gets....quite a number of the best class of immigrants."<sup>23</sup>

Even more exasperating<sup>to</sup> the farmers in the area than the fact that newcomers were going on through, was the fact that many of their old neighbors were abandoning their farms and moving across the line. In May of 1888 the Waskada correspondent of the Times referred to the fact that G.Fletcher of 14-1-26 had moved out and went on to say, "We still have nine settlers in this township which was taken up and settled in 1882. All have got their patents and many are away to Uncle Sam's , thanks to Sir John's <sup>24</sup>Government." What really made the editor explode was the clipping from the Bottineau Pioneer which the Waskada writer enclosed with his item:

"MANITOBA ON WHEELS."

Neighbor George Fletcher has succeeded in getting an order from the U.S.Treasury Department, whereby he is enabled to bring the house in which he lived, in Manitoba, over to Dakota duty free. This is nuts to our Dominion friends, and very encouraging to our Manitoba neighbors who can now bring their homes with them."

The exodus seems to have continued for some years after 1888 for the Souris Farmer's Institute in 1896, passed a resolution regarding an Immigration Convention at Winnipeg.<sup>25</sup> Hearing of this,

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Deloraine Times, May 3, 1888.

<sup>25</sup> Melita Enterprise, Feb. 21, 1896.



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a settler in the Princess District near Waskada, suggested to the Institute that they turn their thoughts to making the present settlers more comfortable instead of bringing more "foreigners" in. "Standing in my doorway, on 32-1-25, I counted ten vacant homes once occupied by industrious farmers, and there is a like condition in Township 1 & 2, Ranges 26 & 27."<sup>26</sup> For this situation he went on to place the blame on expensive debt collections, doctors' fees, millers' charges, elevator monopoly and "wheat rings," and finally, high freight rates, "e.g. \$30 for drawing \$20 worth of coal less than 100 miles."

It was only natural for the farmers living so close to the boundary to see a connection between high tariffs and freight rates on the one hand, and exodus and slow immigration on the other, and when the Hon. C. Foster, Minister of Finance, with the Hon. F. Angers, federal Minister of Agriculture, visited Melita in the fall of 1893, they were met by a delegation of Institute members well-briefed for an interview.<sup>27</sup> R.M. Graham pointed out to these gentlemen that the region was losing settlers because, among other good reasons, coal oil cost 35¢-40¢ a gallon in Melita while it sold for only 18¢ to 20¢ in towns across the border not more than 40 miles away. Others pointed out that North Dakota had competition in railways while Southwestern Manitoba was subjected to a monopoly. In reply, the Finance Minister ~~only~~ said he could not understand why coal-oil was so dear,

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Melita Enterprise, Oct. 19, 1893.

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and he explained that the tariff had been reduced as far as compatible with the cost of running the country, \$36,000,000 a year. In Boissevain a day or two later, he heard again the complaint about the high duty on coal oil, and confounded his interviewers by asking them if they had considered using candles. That meeting closed with three cheers for Laurier!<sup>28</sup>

The inauguration of Farmers' Institutes coincided with the introduction of the Patrons of Industry into Manitoba, but Patronism did not reach Southwestern Manitoba for some time after the Institutes. When Lodges eventually appeared in the area they spread through it very quickly and there is good reason to believe that the government sponsored Institutes had done much to prepare the way for the organization which was to contest government held seats in the legislature.

The Patrons first organized in Manitoba at Portage la Prairie, in June 1891.<sup>29</sup> For some little time the Institutes in Southern Manitoba regarded Patronism with little more than an interested curiosity. The newspapers in the area published the Patron six-point platform, commented favorably on it, and referred briefly to the progress the movement was making elsewhere. However, Patronism was discussed at Institute meetings, for the Patrons were advocating many of the things about which Institute members had been thinking.

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<sup>28</sup> Boissevain Globe, Oct. 19, 1893.

<sup>29</sup> Boissevain Globe, Nov. 19, 1891.

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In March 1892, a Patrons' Lodge was organized at Boissevain,, and the new Patrons began immediately to circulate petitions asking that coal oil, twine and "all iron products" be placed on the free list.<sup>30</sup> The records examined do not show exactly when Patronism appeared in Deloraine, and during the remainder of 1892 and all of 1893 the movement does not seem to have made much progress, except at Boissevain where the Patrons opened a 40,000 bushel elevator in November, 1892.<sup>31</sup> The members of the Farmers' Institute at Melita were content with merely passing a resolution commending the Patrons for their stand on the duties on twine and on freight rates.

However, in January, 1894, the Patrons of Industry announced that they were contesting 30 provincial ridings in Ontario, and that they were intending to contest enough federal seats in the next general election to assure them of holding the balance of power.<sup>33</sup> Later that month, James Downie closed his paper on the causes of depression by suggesting to his fellow-members of the Souris Institute that they support Patron candidates pledged to the farmers' interests.<sup>34</sup> A few days before, the Patrons in convention at Brandon announced a programme demanding, among other things, a maximum interest of 8% on land mortgages and 12% on chattels, freight rate reductions, abolition of preferential rates and rebates, tariff reform, and the payment of county court officials by salaries instead of fees.<sup>35</sup> Apparently they had

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<sup>30</sup> Boissevain Globe, Mar. 3, 1892.

<sup>31</sup> Boissevain Globe, Mar. 16, 1893.

<sup>32</sup> Melita Enterprise, Feb. 23, 1893.

<sup>33</sup> Melita Enterprise, Jan. 18, 1894.

<sup>34</sup> Melita Enterprise, Jan. 25, 1894.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

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abandoned their original policy of " non- sectarian and non-political " activity for they urged the nomination and support of Patron candidates. Three months later, G. Braithwaite, president of the Manitoba Patrons, spoke before the Institute at Melita, urging the members to form Patron Lodges, and to assist in nominating candidates for federal and provincial seats.<sup>36</sup>

Braithwaite may have been an effective speaker, or the prospect of direct political action may have appealed to the farmers around Melita, for, within a week, Lodges were formed at Medora, between Deloraine and Melita, at Princess school, near Waskada, and at Purple Hill.<sup>37</sup> Within two weeks, a Patron Lodge was organized in Melita, with U.P. Underhill as secretary,<sup>38</sup> and J.S. Thompson became secretary of a new Lodge at Waskada.<sup>39</sup> Soon there seemed to be as many Patron Lodges as there were school districts, and in May they sent delegates to Brandon to choose a candidate to oppose the Honourable T. Mayne Daly, Minister of the Interior. Thompson was nominated but he declined to stand, and Postlewaite, a man from Dennis county, was selected.<sup>40</sup>

The following January the Manitoba Patrons met again in Brandon, and, after much discussion, placed in their platform a 'Prohibition Plank.'<sup>41</sup> Within three months the Patrons had candidates nominated for each rural federal riding in Manitoba.<sup>42</sup>

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- 36 Melita Enterprise, Mar. 15, 1894 .
  - 37 Melita Enterprise, Mar. 22, 1894.
  - 38 Melita Enterprise, Mar. 29, 1894.
  - 39 Melita Enterprise, Apr. 5, 1894.
  - 40 Melita Enterprise, May 17, 1894.
  - 41 Melita Enterprise, Jan. 23, 1895.
  - 42 Melita Enterprise, Mar. 8, 1895.

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In December, 1895, a provincial general election was announced for January 16.<sup>43</sup> The Patrons contested seven rural seats, but in spite of the number of Lodges formed in 1894, they won only two.<sup>44</sup>

At some time between the summer of 1894 and the election of January, 1896, the Patrons began losing support. One reason may have been a lack of diplomacy on the part of some of the higher provincial officers. As early as June, 1893, the Enterprise, which had previously expressed some sympathy with the movement, strongly criticized Clay, the editor of the Patron's Advocate, for maintaining that rural editors were not in sympathy with farmers' movements.<sup>45</sup> Some Temperance minded people of Southwestern Manitoba also disapproved of the reluctance with which the Patrons endorsed prohibition. At any rate, when the Liberals held a nomination meeting at Brandon, in February, 1895, to choose a candidate for the federal seat, the delegation included James Downie,<sup>46</sup> from Melita, who only a year before was urging Institute members to support Patron candidates. At that convention, moreover, W.J. Underhill, one of the most prominent men in the Melita farm organizations, was offered the nomination, but he retired in favor of C.J. Speers, of Brandon.<sup>47</sup>

The federal election of 1896 proved to be the Waterloo of

<sup>43</sup> Melita Enterprise, Dec. 20, 1895.

<sup>44</sup> Melita Enterprise, Jan. 17, 1896.

<sup>45</sup> Melita Enterprise, Jun. 7, 1893.

<sup>46</sup> Melita Enterprise, Feb. 15, 1895.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

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the Patrons' movement in Southwestern Manitoba, as well as in the rest of the province. Sealing the doom of the Patrons in Brandon constituency was the appearance of Dalton McCarthy as an Independent. McCarthy's defection from the Conservative ranks in 1893 had caught the attention of the local editors, and thereafter they followed his career very closely.<sup>48</sup> His championing of "National Schools", and his animosity towards Roman Catholicism generally, appealed to many former Ontarians in the area, who formed a local 'McCarthyite' movement. When the general election was proclaimed in 1896, a constituency convention of the movement met at Souris, on May 5.<sup>49</sup> G.L. Dodds had been considered as the prospective candidate, but in the meantime he and other McCarthyites had invited McCarthy himself to contest the seat. McCarthy accepted, and attended the Souris meeting, which unanimously endorsed him.<sup>50</sup> One week later the Conservatives met at the same town and nominated W.A. McDonald to oppose McCarthy. There were now four candidates in the field, McCarthy, Speers, McDonald, and the Patron, Postlewaite.<sup>51</sup>

McCarthy appealed to the Protestant settlers with the slogan, "National Schools and Tariff Reform". On May 22, Speers, the Liberal candidate, withdrew in favor of McCarthy.<sup>52</sup> At a meeting held in Melita, a few days later, the Hon Clifford Sifton sat on the platform with McCarthy, and pledged Liberal support to him.<sup>53</sup> Dodds, Underhill, James Downie, and many other prominent men who

<sup>48</sup> Editorials re McCarthy appear in many issues of the local papers, especially in those of the summer of 1893.

<sup>49</sup> Melita Enterprise, May 1, 1896.

<sup>50</sup> Melita Enterprise, May 8, 1896.

<sup>51</sup> Melita Enterprise, May 15, 1896.

<sup>52</sup> Melita Enterprise, May 22, 1896.

<sup>53</sup> Melita Enterprise, May 29, 1896.

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had formerly been sympathetic with the Patrons, did the same, and urged all farmers not to waste their votes on the Patron candidate. The next week letters from Patrons appeared in the Enterprise urging Postlewaite to be "as magnanimous as Speers," and withdraw in favor of McCarthy.<sup>54</sup> In spite of their resentment against high tariffs, railway monopolies and elevator combines, the farmers of Southwestern Manitoba succumbed to the appeal of "National Schools," proving that the old resentments they brought with them from Ontario were still strong.

Patrons' candidates in some other constituencies dropped out of the race after Sifton's Melita announcement, and when the Lisgar Patron withdrew, the Enterprise described the position of the Patrons by saying that his action was "an indication that that organization, once flourishing, has gone from decay to utter ruin."<sup>55</sup> Reports of Postlewaite's meetings seem to confirm this statement as far as Southwestern Manitoba is concerned, for at Pierson "out of 41 present 30 were for McCarthy,"<sup>56</sup> and at Melita, where staunch "Railway" Thompson was in the chair, "the meeting closed with three cheers for McCarthy."<sup>57</sup> Postlewaite, however, declared there was to be no compromise with the forces of monopoly,<sup>58</sup> and continued campaigning to the bitter end.

When the polls were closed on June 26, McCarthy led the field by a majority of 372. In the polls in Arthur constituency,

<sup>54</sup> Melita Enterprise, June 5, 1896.

<sup>55</sup> Melita Enterprise, June 19, 1896.

<sup>56</sup> Melita Enterprise, June 19, 1896.

<sup>57</sup> Melita Enterprise, June 5, 1896.

<sup>58</sup> Melita Enterprise, June 12, 1896 also Mar. 22, 1895.

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where voters of Irish descent outnumbered either English or Scotch, he led his nearest opponent by 178 votes.<sup>59</sup> Pestlewaite was a very poor third. For a while after the votes were counted, the election was in doubt. McDonald, McCarthy's leading opponent claimed that it should be nullified, for three polls had been closed for a time on account of a shortage of ballots. Also, "the returning officer was drunk at Glenboro."<sup>60</sup> Nothing came of the protest, and McCarthy had two seats at his disposal, Brandon, and North Simcoe, which he won with a majority of 1004. The Conservatives took four seats in Manitoba, the Liberals two, and the Patrons none.<sup>61</sup>

Subsequent events demonstrated conclusively that Patronism had lost its appeal to the farmers of Southwestern Manitoba. McCarthy resigned his seat in August. Dodds was suggested as a replacement, in the belief that he could combine Independents and Patrons and draw enough votes away from the two old parties to elect him. Then Sifton was given the Ministry of the Interior, and a Liberal convention at Souris unanimously endorsed him for the Brandon seat. Dodds thereupon decided to stay with municipal politics. Not even J.S. Thompson could be persuaded to run in the Patron interest. Sifton took the seat by acclamation.

Patronism disappeared, therefore, as a political force in Southwestern Manitoba, in 1896. However the Patrons of Industry, and the Farmers' Institutes as well, had accomplished a great deal

<sup>59</sup> Melita Enterprise, June 26, and July 2, 1896.

<sup>60</sup> Melita Enterprise, July 2, 1896.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Melita Enterprise, July 17, 1896.

<sup>63</sup> Melita Enterprise, Oct. 30, 1896.



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developing the idea that farmers could combine their resources to help themselves. The Patron elevator, in its first year, per-  
 declared a dividend of  $6\frac{1}{2}\%$ <sup>64</sup>, proving that farmer owned and  
 operated grain elevators could be profitable ventures. Members  
 of the Farmers' Institute at Melita, in 1894, formed a joint  
 stock company, capital \$2,000 in shares of \$10 each, to build  
 and operate a cheese factory.<sup>65</sup> Farmers and business men in  
 Deloraine organized a company in that year to establish a cheese  
 factory in that district.<sup>66</sup>

These were only beginnings. During the 1920s more than a score of cooperative elevators were constructed in the area, and today, no section of Manitoba can boast of a wider variety of cooperative business and recreational enterprises than can the Southwestern corner.

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<sup>64</sup> Boissevain Globe, Mar. 16, 1893.

<sup>65</sup> Melita Enterprise, Mar. 15, 1894.

<sup>66</sup> Deloraine Times, Mar. 30, 1944, and Manitoba Gazette, 1894,  
 p. 181.

## CHAPTER 11

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DURING HARD TIMES.

"When it is remembered that it was not until 1891 that a railway came within a reasonable distance, I think the showing made is very creditable.....fortune is only beginning to smile upon us. So mote it be, we deserve all the smiles she has to bestow."<sup>1</sup>

To a large degree, the depression experienced in South-western Manitoba from 1883 to 1896 was a local manifestation of an economic condition which existed in a large part of the western world during the period.

In Canada, one evidence of depression was the disappointingly slow rate of increase of population. Various factors were responsible, one of them the attraction, until 1890, of unexploited fertile lands on the American prairies. The result was a slow rate of immigration into Canada which was combined with a large rate of exodus to the neighboring states of both immigrants and native-born Canadians. Instead of doubling her population within twenty-five years, which Malthus maintained was to be expected in a new country with large areas of vacant fertile land,<sup>2</sup> Canada succeeding only in increasing it from close to 4½ million in 1881 to little more than 5½ million in 1901.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Melita Western Progress, July 19, 1899. ("John Williams")

<sup>2</sup> Thos. Malthus, Essay on Population, (London, 1914) p.81.

<sup>3</sup> A.R.M. Lower, Colony to Nation, p.404.

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Had all the immigrants and native-born remained in the country, the population would have increased to close to eight million during the period. It has been estimated that there was an apparent loss of over two million to the United States.<sup>4</sup>

Other general characteristics of the period 1883 to 1896 include low world prices to producers for wheat and other staples exports from North America, unemployment and industrial unrest in many urban centres, and protests from agriculturalists against the hardships imposed on them.

In Southwestern Manitoba, as in the new Canadian North-West generally, the depression set in after the collapse of the "land boom" of 1882. Its effects were accentuated by a succession of crops, most of which ranged from below normal to one complete failure. Low prices for small crop yields added considerably to the hardships involved in establishing and maintaining an agricultural economy in the area, hardships aggravated by the railway and tariff policies of the government at Ottawa.

The year 1896 is usually considered as the year in which depression was replaced by a fair degree of prosperity in Western Canada. In Southwestern Manitoba, a change for the better resulted from the large crop of wheat harvested in the fall of 1895, 27.3 bushels to the acre.<sup>5</sup> It did not result from increased prices, for the prices of wheat during the crop year 1895 to '96 ranged from only 39¢ to 45¢ a bushel in the local markets.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 405.

<sup>5</sup> Ellis, Manitoba Agriculture and P.F.R.A., p.40.

<sup>6</sup> See Table at the end of the chapter.

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However, in spite of low crop yields and low prices, there were factors operating in the region during the hard times which enabled the inhabitants of Southwestern Manitoba to take better advantage of the improved conditions after 1896. These were, the reversal of the movement of population across the international boundary, the steady increase in population, the increase in the amount of land annually sown to crop by the settlers, and, to some extent, the gradual adoption of farming practices suited to the environment.

The movement of settlers and immigrants from and through the Southwestern municipalities to the Dakotas exasperated those who remained. The exodus took place largely during the years 1886 to 1890. Those who remained were, for the most part, those who were more resourceful in meeting the conditions imposed upon them by the new environment. The exodus was therefore not without some advantages. Moreover, much of the land vacated by those who came and left was later taken up by newcomers who were familiar with dry-farming techniques.

As early as in the spring of 1888, when local protests against the movement to the Dakotas were loudest,<sup>7</sup> there are indications of a reversal of the movement. For example, the Boissevain agent for the Canada North-West Land Company sold the N.W. $\frac{1}{4}$  21-5-19 to a Mr. Baird, a farmer from Nebraska, who declared this country "far ahead of Nebraska."<sup>8</sup> In August of the

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<sup>7</sup> See above, chapter 8.

<sup>8</sup> Deloraine Times, Mar. 28, 1888.

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same year, a merchant from Ellendale, North Dakota, while visiting Toronto, was asked where Dakotan farmers were going. "Almost entirely to the Canadian North-west," was his reply. "Hundreds of our people will go there this fall....north of the international boundary crops are good, in many cases phenomenal, and this has a great attraction."<sup>9</sup> He probably had in mind the heavy crop of 1887. The complete crop failure of 1888 and the light crop of 1889 seem to have postponed this migration until 1891.

The writer who quoted the Dakotan merchant blames the earlier exodus from Manitoba to the Dakotas, not on the lack of railways or of railway competition, nor on the tariff, but on two other factors. The first of these was the belief that water was everywhere plentiful, particularly in South Dakota, and the second was the repetition of exaggerated reports of the fertility of the land in the prairie states. He quotes comparative wheat yields for 1890 to show he believed that Americans would soon move to western Canada in large numbers. These were, 9 bushels to the acre in the Dakotas, 12 bushels in Minnesota, and  $12\frac{1}{2}$  bushels in Wisconsin, while the average yield in Manitoba that year was  $\frac{10}{24.6}$  bushels to the acre.

The northward migration began even while the book quoted above was in the process of publication. In the fall of 1890,

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<sup>9</sup> A.O.Legge, *Sunny Manitoba*, p.243.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.242.

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and again in the spring of 1891, the Boissevain Globe was drawing attention to the growing movement of Dakota people to Manitoba.<sup>11</sup>

The Melita Enterprise, in November, 1891, reported that 160 homesteads were taken up by Dakotans in the Sheho Lake area, 50 miles north-west of Yorkton.<sup>\*12</sup> The following June, a correspondent from the Gould district, in 5-26, informed the Enterprise that "Great bands of immigrants, with their stock and implements, passed through our district en route for Yorkton. They informed us they had had no crops in ten years."<sup>13</sup>

Among the Americans proceeding to Yorkton in 1892 were the Ramseys, from Charles Nix County, South Dakota.<sup>14</sup> Because, after spending seven weeks and three days in a covered wagon, "the old man was sick of driving," they moved in on an abandoned farm near Montefiore, a settlement just north of the present Goodlands, and right on the old Commission Trail. Whether other Dakotans cut short their trip to Yorkton is not certain, but it is more than likely that some did.

The Dakotans, unlike the settlers from Ontario and overseas, were accustomed to farming in an environment similar to that of Southwestern Manitoba. The land Ramsey selected had been abandoned by two English bachelors, Walter and Robert Gifford, because they found it "heavy" and hard to work. They had moved to the sandier

<sup>11</sup> Boissevain Globe, Oct. 30, 1890, and Jan. 15, 1891.

<sup>13</sup> Melita Enterprise, June 30, 1892.

<sup>14</sup> Information supplied by Mr. Clare Ramsey, who was about nine years old at the time.

<sup>\*12</sup> Melita Enterprise, Nov. 12 1891.

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soil near Melita. The Ramseys, three generations of them, have raised crops on the hard dry soil of the till plains, until 1895 at Montefiore, and thereafter south-west of Waskada. Fred Ramsey is now farming land first broken by James Smart in 1882.

Statistics available are too meagre to provide an accurate estimate of the number of Americans who settled in Southwestern Manitoba before the end of the century. The Census of Manitoba for 1885-'86 gives 89 persons born in the United States living in the counties of Turtle Mountain and Souris River,<sup>15</sup> but does not give the number of Canadian or British born who may have come to these counties after residing south of the border. The Census report for 1890-91 shows that 786 American born were living in Selkirk Constituency, of which these counties formed only a small part.<sup>16</sup> No statistics are available for 1896. The Census Report for 1901 shows 766 as the number of American born in Brandon Constituency.<sup>17</sup> The southwestern municipalities formed only about one-quarter of the area of Brandon. The Census of 1906 shows 866 American born living in Souris Constituency,<sup>18</sup> the area of which the six southwestern municipalities formed exactly 11/18 or little more than one-half. It is reasonable to conclude that at least 400 of these lived in Ranges 19 to 29. Since the rate of increase of population between 1901 and 1906 was quite small

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<sup>15</sup> Census of Manitoba for 1885-'86, p.

<sup>16</sup> Census of Canada, 1890-'91, vol. I

<sup>17</sup> Census of Canada, 1901, vol. I.

<sup>18</sup> Census of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, 1906.

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compared to that between 1896 and 1901, it is just as reasonable to conclude that the large majority of the 400 were in Southwestern Manitoba before 1901. There would also be many Canadians and Europeans who came to the area from the United States.

One economic historian has given his opinion that between 1892 and 1901, over 50,000 people came from the American states to Manitoba and the North-West Territories. "These settlers.... brought with them about fifty years experience in prairie farming, and by example they have taught improved farming methods."<sup>19</sup>

Valuable as the American contribution was to Southwestern Manitoba as well as to the Canadian North-West, their number was small compared to the total number of newcomers to the area after 1885.

The extent of the total increase in population between 1885 and 1901 is illustrated by the following census statistics.

	<u>1885-'86</u>	<u>1890-91(a)</u>	<u>1890-91(b)</u>	<u>1896</u> <sup>20</sup>	<u>1901</u>
Arthur	429	666	1677	2408	3495
Brenda	352	1016	—	—	1697
Cameron	—	—	—	—	2195
Deloraine	<u>962</u>	<u>1928</u>	—	—	—
Inchiquin	97	408	—	—	—
Medora	757	794	—	—	—
Morton	—	—	<u>2798</u>	<u>3525</u>	<u>2173</u>
Boissevain	—	—	—	—	898
Whitewater	<u>997</u>	<u>1727</u>	—	—	1613
Winchester	—	—	<u>3034</u>	<u>4656</u>	<u>2187</u>
	<u>3594</u>	<u>6539</u>	<u>7509</u>	<u>10589</u>	<u>14258</u>

<sup>19</sup> J.W.Dafoe, "Economic History of the Prairie Provinces." Canada and Its Provinces, vol. 20 (Toronto 1914)

<sup>20</sup> The Statistics for 1896 are taken from a copy in the population file, Legislative Library, the copy certified by the Dominion Statistician,



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(two sets of statistics, (a) and (b) are given for 1890-91 because of the change in municipal boundaries which took place in 1890. The larger population in (b) is accounted for by the creation of Morton, which extended the boundaries of the area 6 miles further to the east. In 1896 Cameron was created and Whitewater reappeared. Boissevain was incorporated as a town in 1898;)<sup>21</sup>

A more accurate indication of the number of settlers who actually came in during the period 1890 to 1901 may be made by comparing the average number of families per township in the area at the beginning of the decade with the average at the end. The necessary statistics for 1896 are not available, or it would be possible to compare the progress made in the depression half of the decade with the more prosperous half.

The total number of families in the municipalities of 1890-91 was 1741,<sup>22</sup> and the total in 1901 was 3131.<sup>\*</sup> The average numbers per township were 29.0 and 47.4 respectively, an increase of 63.5% in the number of families as compared with an increase of 97.0% in the total population. Actually, therefore, immigration of families into the area accounted for close to two-thirds (65.4%) of the total increase in population while the increase in the size of the family accounted for the remainder. Applying

<sup>21</sup> Manitoba Gazette 1898.

<sup>22</sup> Census of Canada, 1890-91 vol. 1.

\* <sup>22</sup> Census of Canada, 1901, vol. 1.

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this fraction (65.4%) to the absolute increase 1890-91 to 1901, it is reasonable to assume that the number of immigrants during the decade was in the neighborhood of 4,000 (65.4% of 6749, or 4413.8).

During the early years of settlement, 1880-'85, South-western Manitoba was populated almost entirely of people claiming British nationality. There were, in 1885-'86, 698 who were born in the British Isles, 75 born in the Maritimes, 84 in the Province of Quebec and 446 in Manitoba. 2210 were born in Ontario, or 63.1% of the 3513 British subjects in the area.<sup>23</sup>

It is difficult to estimate how many of the immigrants who arrived thereafter were from Ontario, or from parts of Canada outside of Manitoba, for as in the case of the American born, census statistics apply only to federal constituencies. There is reason to believe, however, that the proportion of newcomers from Ontario decreased somewhat during the last decade of the century.

Census statistics for 1901 for the federal constituency of Brandon, divide the number claiming British nationality as follows:

Total born in Canada	30,731.
Born in Manitoba	12,581.
Born in the British Isles	5,729. <sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Census of Manitoba, 1885-'86.

<sup>24</sup> Census of Canada, 1901.

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Hence 18,141 were born in parts of Canada other than Manitoba, and of these it can be assumed that over 90% or over 16,000 were from Ontario. Added to these may be some born in Britain who resided in Ontario before coming west. The population of Ontario born to the total population would be somewhere between 40% and 45%, as compared to 63.5% in Southwestern Manitoba in 1885-'86.

There is no question, however, that regardless of birth-place, the area remained predominantly English, Irish, and Scotch in racial origin.

1901 <sup>25</sup>	<u>Eng.-Ir.-Sc.</u>	<u>French</u>	<u>German</u>	<u>Dutch</u>	<u>Scand.</u>	<u>Belg.</u>
	12,624	262	608	103	206	170
1885-86 <sup>26</sup>	<u>3,420</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>95</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>0</u>
Increases	9,194	236	513	79	190	170

The first invasion of the area by people other than Anglo-Saxons or Irish, occurred in 1888 when a French and Belgian colony of "180 settlers, population 500" was established at La Grande Clairiere on land in Townships 6 and 7, Ranges 24 and 25.<sup>27</sup> The smaller total of these people, shown above, arises from the fact that Township 7 is outside of the area concerned. Four years later, in 1892, a small Belgian colony, Notre Dame du Bon Conseil, with "20 settlers, population 40" was created in

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Census of Manitoba, 1885-'86

<sup>27</sup> Sessional Papers, Canada, 1894, 53 vic. #13, p.13.

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Township 3, Range 23, close to Deloraine.<sup>28</sup> A number of the Scandinavians, Germans and Dutch may have been included among the immigrants from the United States. Others, no doubt, came direct from Europe, while some Germans may have come from the neighborhood of Waterloo county, in Ontario.

The French and Belgian colonists were not welcomed without reservations, even though ~~this~~<sup>their</sup> neighbors were anxious to have the land filled with tax-paying settlers. The Ontario settlers resented the fact that 'foreigners' were placed on land reserved for them by the federal government while, at the same time, Canadians had to "rustle land for themselves."<sup>29</sup> Some time after Grand Clairiere was founded, the Times carried the following comment: "As for New Canada, our Grand North-West, let all newcomers learn English.... In the east let them 'parley-voo' as long as they like."<sup>30</sup>

That the land was rapidly taken up even during the years of drought and low prices, is further indicated by reports carried in the local newspapers. By no means all of the people who came from the east and detrained at Boissevain and Deloraine went to North Dakota. Sales of C.P.R. and Canada North-West lands to newcomers are reported in many issues from the time the papers began to be published. (The Times in 1887, the Globe in 1890, the Enterprise in 1891.) In the spring of 1889, for example, a report from Boissevain declared that immigrants were coming in on every train, and that C.P.R. land sales were very brisk.<sup>31</sup> G.L.Dodds, as agent

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<sup>28</sup> Loc cit.

<sup>29</sup> Deloraine Times, April 5, 1888.

<sup>30</sup> Deloraine Times, Mar. 6, 1890.

<sup>31</sup> Deloraine Times, Mar. 21, 1889.

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of the Canada North-West Land Company, went to Ontario in the spring of 1890, holding "two commissions.....to tell the Ontario people of the great heritage provided for them by the architect of the universe, and to bring out forty young maidens for the young farmers of the Souris plains."<sup>32</sup> Dodds wrote that many in his audiences expressed their intention of moving to Manitoba. At the same time John Underhill, with the aid of a "limelight" was lecturing in the neighborhood of London, Ontario, in the interests of the C.P.R. He organized a "good number" as a party to set out for Deloraine in April.<sup>33</sup>

In November, 1892, the Hon. D.Ferguson, of Prince Edward Island, arrived in Melita to buy 3,000 acres of land along the Souris River for a group of settlers from that province.<sup>34</sup> During that month, Dodds sold 1600 acres of Canada North-West land to "bona-fide settlers, giving speculators a wide berth."<sup>35</sup> Earlier that year the Gould correspondent told the Enterprise that "there are no homesteads left in this district (5-26) and very little land left for purchase."<sup>36</sup> In October 1893, John Dobbyn was testifying before the Hon. George Foster that up to that date he had brought in 268 settlers and placed them on lands for which he was agent.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Deloraine Times, Mar.13,1890.

<sup>33</sup> Deloraine Times, Feb.27,1890.

<sup>34</sup> Melita Enterprise, Nov.3,1892.

<sup>35</sup> Melita Enterprise, Nov.10,1892.

<sup>36</sup> Melita Enterprise, June 16,1892.

<sup>37</sup> Melita Enterprise, Oct.18,1893.

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Only in the Waskada district was there actual depopulation after 1888. For this situation the main reason was the fact that the Deloraine extension swung north to Napinka instead of close to Waskada and then to Melita. Settlers complained to the end of the century that Townships 1 and 2, Ranges 24, 25, and 26 were left without railway facilities.<sup>38</sup> The extension of the Souris Branch, in 1890 to 1892, through Hartney, Napinka, and Melita to the Saskatchewan coal fields deflected settlement from the Waskada district to lands in the vicinity of that line. Tilston, Elva, Pierson, and other settlements developed rapidly for a few years. However, "Railway" Thompson's efforts gave Waskada some publicity, and even in 1894 the Enterprise reported considerable activity in dealing in corner lots on the town-site.<sup>39</sup> There were still many vacant homesteads in the Waskada townships as late as 1896,\* but Thompson, in that year showed "he had not lost faith in the country" by building a commodious stone house in the village.<sup>40</sup> By the spring of 1898, however, the change from depopulation to repopulation had definitely taken place, for it was reported that land was being rapidly bought up "around Waskada."<sup>41</sup>

From time to time, there were reports of the arrival in Southwestern Manitoba of settlers from Britain. For example

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<sup>38</sup> Melita Enterprise, Feb. 9, 1893.

<sup>39</sup> Melita Enterprise, Apr. 5, 1894.

\* Melita Enterprise, Feb. 21, 1896.

<sup>40</sup> Melita Enterprise, May 28, 1896.

<sup>41</sup> Melita Enterprise, Apr. 8, 1898.

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in 1889 the West Hall correspondent of the Times announced that "Mr. Ackroyd and Mr. Brown, from Glasgow, and Mr. Reid, from Edinburgh were among new arrivals in May."<sup>42</sup> Again, in 1893, young immigrants from England were reported to be settling in the Margaret district, north-east of Boissevain.<sup>43</sup>

Taking everything into consideration, Southwestern Manitoba made a fairly creditable showing in the way of settling its lands during the depression period. The increase in population during the five depression years of the 1890's was not much below that for the more prosperous period 1896 to 1901, the absolute increases being 3,080, and 3,649, respectively. The percentage increase for the first period was larger, 41% as compared to 34.4%.

By 1901, the population was actually close to what appears to be the <sup>optimum</sup> ~~optimism~~ for the region, as long as the production of cereals for export remains the basis of its economy. In the next thirty years, the population increased from 14,258 to 18,119,<sup>44</sup> but by 1936, after five years of severe depression it had decreased again to 15,276.<sup>45</sup> This fluctuation seems to indicate that the <sup>optimum</sup> ~~optimism~~ that can be supported by agriculture at the desired standard of living lies somewhere between the population of 1931 and that of 1936.

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<sup>43</sup> Boissevain Globe, May 4, 1893.

<sup>44</sup> Census of Canada, 1931.

<sup>45</sup> Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936.

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Adding to the economic effect of the increase in population, was the increase in the area of land cultivated and seeded to crop. Unfortunately, the statistics at hand do not include the years 1896 and 1901, but some idea of the way in which the area of land in crop was increasing can be gleaned from those for 1891 and 1906.

The total area of land in crop in the six rows of townships in Ranges 19 to 29 was, in 1891, 113,654 acres.<sup>46</sup> By 1906 it had increased to 512,061 acres,<sup>47</sup> and increase of almost 360%.

What this increase in crop acreage meant in terms of gross crop returns per family (assuming a constant price for grain) can be learned by comparing the number of families in two years and the crop acreage. The number of families in 1891 was 1741,<sup>48</sup> the crop acreage, 113,654, giving an average of 65.2% acres of land in crop per family. The number of families in 1906 was 3,645, while total crop acreage was 512,061.<sup>49</sup> The acreage in crop per family in this year was 113.0, almost twice as great as that in 1891. With more land in crop, the settlers were in a better position to take advantage of better crop yield, accompanied as they were after the turn of the century by better prices.

By 1897 good homestead land was hard to find. W. Strang, of Waskada, gives this as the reason why he located, in that year,

<sup>46</sup> Census of Canada, 1891.

<sup>47</sup> Census of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, 1906.

<sup>48</sup> Census of Canada, 1891.

<sup>49</sup> Census of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, 1906.



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on 4-1-26, right on the border, and far from railway accomodation.<sup>50</sup>  
 In 1901 there were reported to be only 40 unimproved quarter sections of land available to settlers in Whitewater Municipality, 125 in Winchester, 175 in Morton, 167 in Cameron, and 600 in the large municipality of Arthur.<sup>51</sup> There were, therefore, 1207 quarter sections of unbroken land available for settlement, amounting to only 12.7% of the total land and water area of 2,376 square miles.

In addition to these unimproved lands there were a number of quarter-sections of lands in various stages of improvement reported for sale. Of these 40 quarters, at \$10 to \$25 per acre were located in Whitewater, 150 at \$3 to \$30 an acre in Winchester 100 or more at \$2.50 to \$30 an acre in Arthur, 200 at \$3 to \$15 an acre in Morton, and 175 at \$2.50 to \$25 in Cameron.<sup>52</sup> The prices varied, of course, with the stage of improvement, the distance from local markets, the type of land, and the anxiety of the owner to sell.

Because so many factors enter into the price of land, it is difficult to determine the course, of land prices during the period. In 1888 George Morton was selling unimproved land in 4-23 and 4-24 for \$6.00 an acre.<sup>53</sup> At the same time the C.P.R. sold land in 2-23 for \$6.75 an acre and in 4-24 for only \$4.75 an acre.<sup>54</sup> In February, 1892, 44,270 acres of Dominion school

<sup>50</sup> Information obtained in personal interview.

<sup>51</sup> Manitoba, the Centre of Canada, Pamphlet published in 1901 or '02 by authority of Hon. R.P. Roblin, Minister of Agriculture and Immigration, Province of Manitoba. p.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Deloraine Times, Apr. 19, 1888.

<sup>54</sup> Deloraine Times, Apr. 19, 1888.

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lands were sold by auction at the Deloraine Land office for an average price of \$7.55 per acre.<sup>55</sup> In March, 1894, Arthur Municipality asked for and received \$1,000 for  $W\frac{1}{2}$  22-2-26, or a little more than \$3 per acre.<sup>56</sup>

In January, 1891, a uniform assessment of \$500 per quarter section was set by Morton council.<sup>57</sup> Three years later Arthur municipality adopted a graduated scale of assessments ranging from beginning at \$550 per quarter for "Class (1)" lands and decreasing by \$50 in each class to \$300 per quarter for "Class (6) lands."<sup>58</sup> Lands in Townships 4, 5 and 6 on Range 29, and in Townships 1 and 2 in the same Range were placed in Class (6) on account of their distance from a market.

John Spence bought the N.W. $\frac{1}{4}$  22-2-26 in 1897 for \$625, or close to \$4.00 per acre.<sup>59</sup> This was an increase of \$1 an acre over the price Arthur municipality received for the same land in 1894. Whether the difference of \$125 per quarter section is the result of an increase in land values between the two years or if improvements made to the land is impossible to determine. In 1898 Spence paid \$650 for another quarter on the same section.<sup>60</sup>

Factors operating outside the area were also leading to

- <sup>55</sup> Boissevain Globe, Feb. 18, 1892.  
<sup>56</sup> Melita Enterprise, Mar. 22, 1894.  
<sup>57</sup> Boissevain Globe, Jan. 15, 1891.  
<sup>58</sup> Melita Enterprise, Jan. 23, 1895.  
<sup>59</sup> Spence, Memorandum.  
<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

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the economic improvement which took place after 1896. The attainment of the limit of the farmer's frontier in the United States by 1890 turned not only Americans, but many Canadian and Europeans to the Canadian prairies thereafter. Marketing and transportation facilities for wheat improved steadily from 1880 to the end of the century, and freight rates also declined,\*\*the decline culminating in the Crow's Nest Pass Agreement of 1897.<sup>61</sup> These changes coincided after 1896 with better world economic conditions which led to better prices after the turn of the century for all the wheat the farmers could produce.

For the average settler, establishing himself in South-western Manitoba, during the depression, was an arduous task.

Ramsey, for example, supplemented the meagre returns from his crops by taking wood from Turtle Mountain, cutting it at home, and hauling it 20 miles to Melita to sell it for \$4.00 a cord. He and his oldest boy would also go harvesting at Napinka, for ~~whi~~ which they received \$3.00 a day in wages and for the use of their <sup>62</sup> team and rack.

The most detailed example available, of the way in which a settler won his way through the depression to take advantage of prosperity when it came is found in John Spence's Memorandum. By 1885 he had ten acres of land under cultivation, from which

<sup>61</sup> V.W.Bladen, An introduction to Political Economy, (Toronto, 1943) p.101.

<sup>62</sup> Information supplied by Clare Ramsey.

\*\* From 1874 to 1904, ocean freight rates, Montreal to Liverpool, dropped from 18¢ to less than 2¢ per bushel. Total transportation charges on wheat, Regina to Liverpool, fell from 35¢ a bushel, in 1886, to 21¢, in 1906. (Mackintosh, Prairie Settlement - The Geographical Setting, pxi.)

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he received "103 bu. wheat, 65 oats, and 21 barley." He doesn't record selling any wheat that year, but the price for good wheat at Boissevain was 43¢ a bushel. By June 1886, he completed breaking another 10 acres. That year "crops were poor at Waskada," but 1887 was "a very good crop year. Straw not long but grain good, well-filled." The year 1888 was "a bad year, crops all destroyed by heat and frost," and in 1889, "Drouth and gophers destroy our crop." By this time he had 52 acres broken and sown to wheat and another 15 acres of barley, from which he received only 188 bushels and 56 bushels respectively. In August, he mortgaged his farm, with Stuart's Bank in Deloraine, for \$300 cash.

In January, 1890, he ordered "binder, mower, rake and seeder at Massey Co." 1890 was a good crop year for him, and prices in October ranged from 65¢ to 80¢. However, his brother Pete, with whom John had formed a partnership the year before, was hauled out. In 1891 Spence had a heavy crop, but "threshing came so late and storms came so early that  $\frac{1}{2}$  of grain spoiled." In June and July, 1892, Pete hauled "poor" wheat to Melita which he sold at prices ranging from 20¢ to 40¢ per bushel. For one load of 50 bushels he received \$10.00! 1892 was "Not a good crop year," and 1893 was "a poor crop year. Hot and dry winds done much damage in shelling grain." The price for good wheat was as low as 40¢ at Boissevain.

The year 1894 was "a rather poor crop, heat and dry weather." Early in the year he "got out a lot of wood. My last winter for

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wood at the Mountain." 1895 was a disappointing year, for "a pretty good growing season for crops" was followed by frosts, which hurt the grain "bad." The price of wheat was "about 38¢" a bushel, although the average yield for the district was heavy, 27.3 bushels to the acre.

In eleven years, therefore, Spence harvested only two good crops, one in 1887 when he had not much more than 20 acres of land under cultivation. Yet, from the returns he received, supplemented by wages he earned by threshing for others, he had managed to set aside sufficient money to travel to Bothwell, Ontario, in February 1896, where he "Married Ellen MacDonald."

Although Hohn Spence "Lost a lot of hay, wood, binder and old buildings by fire (Oct. 3)" the year 1896 marked the beginning of prosperity for him. "Ellen saves wheat alone," but she saved 2,000 bushels, and during the year he sold 982 bushels of wheat for \$605.75 and 46 bushels for \$17.50. His total income for the year was \$1274.75 and his expenditures, including those for his wedding and his "house outfit" were \$738.75 leaving him with "Bal. to good, \$536.00."

In 1897 Spence was in a position to expand his holdings and he bought N.W. 22-2-26 for \$625.00. The crop that fall was a "fair" one. His year end summary shows that he sold some wheat at a fair price.

"Sold 814 bu. new wheat, \$612.20 (72-77¢)

" 577 bu. old wheat, 252.35 (50-65¢)

3 Steers 46.00 "

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In addition he had 1044 bushels of wheat and 560 of oats on hand in his granary. That year he and Pete "dissolved partnership and settle up."

In the summer of 1898 he bought another quarter section of land, S.E. 22-2-26, for which he paid \$650.00, "\$150 down". This gave him a full section of land. But the year was "a bad year, late spring, hot and dry summer, frosts, many weeds, crop very light. Feed and water scarce." He harvested only 936 bushels of wheat. His operations, including the down payment on his land purchase, left him \$618.05 "in hole." The next year, however, was "a good crop year." He sold 2856 bushels of wheat at Melita for \$1426.00 and at the end of the year 1899 he had 2936 bushels of wheat and 1040 of oats on hand. In September he became part-owner of a J.I. Case threshing machine. Next February he bought N.W. 23-2-26. (No price given.)

Although these next few entries from John Spence's diary properly belong to a period later than the one under study, they are inserted here to show what lay in the future for the farmers of the area.

1903: "I had a good crop year, 5000 bu. wheat and 1050 oats.

Sold 3400 wheat, 60 to 75¢, - \$2309.20."

1904: "A very good year. I have 5600 wheat from 286 acres and 1400 oats. Wheat selling for 70 to 80¢."

1905: "I had 6,600 bu. wheat from 333 acres, and 1350 oats."

1906: "Good crop year."

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1907: "Had a poor crop, 2,000 wheat, 800 oats."

1908: "Good crop year and prices good. I have 6700 wheat and

1400 1400 oats." "Wheat selling at 80 to 94¢, cleared  
\$2166.75."

1909: "A big crop year and prices good. 7200 wheat and 2200  
oats. Wheat 84¢ to \$1.13. Bal. to good \$3,817.00."

In 1917, eight years later, Spence cleared over  
\$23,000!

To what extent the adoption of farming practices suitable to the environment was carried out during the period 1885 to 1896 is difficult to determine from the records examined. From at least 1893, <sup>on</sup> to the Brandon Experimental Farm were urging the practice of frequent summer-fallowing. In 1891, the amount of land summer-fallowed was negligible, if there was any at all. Of a total of 113,960 acres of improved land, 113,654 acres were sown to crop, <sup>63</sup> leaving a possible 306 acres for summer-fallow. Newspaper reports make no mention of any increase in acreage of summer-fallow, although the editors occasionally cautioned farmers to follow the experts advice. R.M.Graham's boast of obtaining 17 bushels to the acre from land yielding its fourth consecutive crop of wheat is an indication that he, at least, was not summer-fallowing very frequently, if at all, by 1897. <sup>64</sup> John Spence makes no mention of summer-fallow during the period.

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<sup>63</sup> Census of Canada, 1890-'91.

<sup>64</sup> Melita Enterprise, Sept.10,1897.

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Apart from summer-fallow, the replacement of hand-broad-casting by the drill press method of sowing would constitute a definite improvement in farming practice. The placing of the seed at a proper depth could not help but result in a greater percentage of germination, more even ripening, and earlier maturity, the latter giving the farmers a better chance to avoid the danger of frosts. The practice of summer-fallowing one-half the cultivated land each year, which enables many farmers in the area to "grow more grain with less rain," did not become general until after 1942. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to conclude, that in 1896, the average settler was in much better position to obtain the benefit of a good season than he was in 1885 or in 1891.



Appendix to Chapter 11.

WHEAT PRICES AND WHEAT YIELDS, 1882 to 1900.

(Wheat Yields are those recorded for Crop Reporting District#1.)

<u>Crop Year</u>		<u>Prices</u>	<u>Yield, bu./acre.</u>		
1882-'83.	Local (In lieu of wages)	\$1.00	No Record.		
1883-'84.	Brandon	.43	No Record.		
1884-'85.	Brandon	.45	24.0.		
1885-'86.	Boissevain	.43	22.5.		
1886-'87.	Boissevain	.43	15.6.		
<hr/>					
	<u>Month</u>	<u>Boissevain</u>	<u>Deloraine</u>	<u>Melita</u>	
1887-'88.	Dec.	\$0.52	\$0.52	-----	28.9.
	Feb.	.50	.56	-----	
	Apr.	No Report	.52	-----	
<hr/>					
1888-'89.	No Crop statistics on record. Prices 50¢ to \$1.00.				
<hr/>					
1889-'90 .	Sept.	No Report	.55	-----	8.7.
	Nov.	No Report	.60	-----	
	Feb.	No Report	.70	-----	
	May.	No Report	.80	-----	
<hr/>					
1890-'91.	Sept.	No Report	.75	-----	18.7.
	Nov.	.80	.70	-----	
	Feb.	.75	.72	-----	
	May.	.84	.85	-----	
<hr/>					
1891-'92.	Sept.	.72	.72	.54	27.8.
	Nov.	.70	.70	.70	
	Feb.	.65	.60	.66	
	May.	.65	.60	No Report	

	<u>Month</u>	<u>Boissevain</u>	<u>Deloraine</u>	<u>Melita</u>	<u>Yield/acre</u>
1892-'93	Sept.	.55	.53	.54	14.5
	Nov.	.50	.48	.48	
	Feb.	No Report	.52	.53	
	May.	No Report	No Report	No Report	
<hr/>					
1893-'94	Sept.	.50	.45	.48	9.1
	Nov.	.40	.40	.40	
	Feb.	.42	.40	.42	
	May.	No Report	No Report	No Report	
<hr/>					
1894-'95	Sept.	.39	.40	.49	13.5
	Nov.	.43	.43	.40	
	Feb.	No Report	.50	.50	
	May.	.60	.50	.65	
	June.	.85	.80	.80	
<hr/>					
1895-'96	Sept.	.44	.45	.45	27.7
	Nov.	.40	.40	.38	
	Jan.	.40	.39	No Report	
	Feb.	.48	.45	No Report	
	Apr.	.50	.43	.41	
<hr/>					
1896-'97	Sept.	.46	.43	.43	15.3
	Nov.	.68	.70	.63	
	Feb.	No Report	.55	.55	
	May.	No Report	.50	.55	
<hr/>					
1897-'98	Sept.	.79	.78	.77	13.6
	Feb.	No Report	.85	.78	

<u>Month</u>	<u>Boissevain</u>	<u>Deloraine</u>	<u>Melita</u>	<u>Yield/acre</u>
Apr, 29,*	1.04	1.00	1.00	
May 13,**	1.35	1.15	1.25	

\*April 29 was the first day on which a price of \$1.00 or better was paid on these markets.  
 \*\*On May 12, 1898, A.E. Thompson, grain-buyer at Melita, paid \$1.36 per bushel for one load of wheat. He paid \$1.35 for the rest of that day.

1898-'99	Sept.	.50	.60	.55	13.5
	Nov.	.54	.55	.52	
	Feb.	No Report	.55	.53	
	May.	.60	.55	.50	

1899-1900	Sept.	.56	.54	.55	16.2
	Nov.	.54	.52	.52	
	Feb.	No Report	.46	.52	
	May.	No Report	.51	.52	

Summary.

	<u>Boissevain</u>		<u>Deloraine</u>		<u>Melita</u>	
	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>
1887-'88	.52	.50	.56	.52	----	---
1889-'90	No Reports		.80	.55	----	---
1890-'91	.84	.75	.85	.70	<u>66</u> ---	---
1891-92	.72	.65	.72	.60	.70	.54
1892-'93	.55	.50	.53	.48	.54	.48
1893-'94	.50	.40	.45	.40	.48	.40
1894-'95	.85	.39	.80	.40	.80	.40
1895-'96	.50	.40	.45	.39	.45	.38
1896-'97	.68	.46	.70	.43	.63	.43
1897-'98	1.35	.79	1.15	.74	1.36	.76

	<u>Boissevain</u>		<u>Deloraine</u>		<u>Melita</u>	
	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
1898-'99	.60	.50	.60	.49	.55	.52
1899-1900	.56	.54	.54	.46	.55	.52

Price quotations are taken as close to the 15th of the month as possible. (From the local Newspapers.) They are the Highest prices paid on the <sup>day</sup> the information was received each week by the editor, not the average prices paid to farmers. James Smart, for example, sold wheat in Brandon, in 1884 or '85, for 32¢, not the 45¢ quoted. Pete Spence, in the summer of 1892, sold 'poor' wheat at Melita for 20¢, when prices were as high as 66¢.

The price given for a particular month may be a poor example of the price range during that month. For instance, the price quoted for November, 1898, is 52¢. Actually, the price was 60¢ at the first of the month. By the 18th, it had dropped to 50¢, where it remained until the end of the month.

During the period, 1890 to 1900, Boissevain prices were often higher than those paid at the other two markets. Boissevain were said to pay a little more to attract farmers to their market from the districts further west.

That purely local factors caused fluctuations in prices is indicated in the following report from the Enterprise;<sup>\*</sup>

"Recently a couple of grain dealers at Hartney proceeded to pummel each other which resulted in advancing the price of wheat a few cents. The Farmer can stand lots of that kind of work."

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\* Melita Enterprise, Apr.24, 1896.

## CHAPTER 12.

### LOCAL NEWSPAPERS OF SOUTHWESTERN MANITOBA TO 1900.

"Situated as you are, in the heart of the Garden of Manitoba, a pushing prosperous and progressive people, advancing with gigantic strides where others are forced to crawl, the time has long since passed when a vehicle for the interchange of opinion on public matters became a necessity."<sup>1</sup>

Next to schools and churches, perhaps the local institutions most influential in the pioneer communities of Southwestern Manitoba were the newspapers.

The Deloraine Times, Turtle Mountain and Souris River Gazette was the first newspaper to be published in the area, and the first issue was distributed on November 10, 1887, not quite a year after Deloraine was created by the C.P.R. W.H. Daubney was the editor.

Almost three years later, on September 4, 1890, W.H. Ashley, who had previously published a paper at Hanover, Ontario, began publication of the Boissevain Globe.

The Melita Enterprise with E.L. Harvey as editor, came out with its first issue on November 12, 1891. Harvey's newspaper career in Melita was a very brief one, for he died in April, 1892, and his was the first body buried in the cemetery of the new town. J.B. Graham then bought the paper, and carried on Ashley's work.

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<sup>1</sup> Hartney Star, Feb. 23, 1893.

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The Hartney Star was the fourth newspaper to appear in the area during the period of depression. The first edition appeared on February 23, 1893. Until 1898, when the Napinka Gazette began its brief career, these four papers held the journalistic field.

Hartney, though within the area considered as Southwestern Manitoba in this study, seems to have had closer economic ties with the towns of Souris, Virden, and even with Brandon, than with Boissevain, Deloraine and Melita. The earlier settlers, for the most part, came in from Brandon rather than by the Commission Trail. For these reasons, the development of the Hartney district has been touched upon only lightly, and this will be the case with the Star.

The most important contribution of these early newspapers unquestionably resulted from their efforts to sustain the morale of the pioneers during a difficult and baffling period. Time and again their editors proclaimed their faith in the fertility of the land and their confidence in those who tilled it. "The Enterprise makes its bow to the happy residents of the Garden of Manitoba," was the way Harvey opened his first editorial.<sup>2</sup> "We know this is the banner district of the province for fertility of soil, but we want other people to know it,"<sup>3</sup> wrote Daubney, and he exerted himself to the utmost to see that they did.

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<sup>2</sup> Melita Enterprise, Nov.12,1891.

<sup>3</sup> Deloraine Times, Mar.1,1889.

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At the same time the editors thundered their disapproval of the protective tariff, of railway rates and monopoly, of any mismanagement of local affairs and of everything they considered detrimental to the development of the district they were serving.

Every local achievement was given extravagant commendation by the editors, who were equally adept at finding alibis for any local failures. For example, Ashley of Boissevain pointed with pride to the fact that wheat from his district had been selected, in 1891, by provincial authorities for seed grain shipments to the Dakotas,<sup>4</sup> and later headlined the news that George Morton had taken three first prizes at the provincial Grain Show.<sup>5</sup> Though 1894 was a year of low yields and very low prices,<sup>6</sup> the editor of the Star stoutly maintained that the area was far from bankrupt, and quoted statistics to show how much better off his readers were than the inhabitants of the American prairies to the south.

Year after discouraging year, to the day crops were threshed, the editors persisted in reprimanding those who were pessimistic about crop prospects, and who "blackened the reputation" of the area by spreading "false reports to Brandon, Winnipeg, and other places of the East."<sup>7</sup> In the fall of 1888, although heat and frost had completely destroyed the crops, the Times, fearful of the effect of adverse publicity on immigration, kept insisting

<sup>4</sup> Boissevain Globe, Jan.1,1891.

<sup>5</sup> Boissevain Globe, Oct.8,1891.

<sup>6</sup> Hartney Star,

<sup>7</sup> Melita Enterprise, July 26,1893.

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that the reports of frost damage were greatly exaggerated.<sup>8</sup> Again, in 1893, the Enterprise declared, late in July, that "the Melita district will make as good a showing as any part of the province."<sup>9</sup> That year the average wheat yield in the Melita district was only 9.1 bushels to the acre while the yield for the province was 15.6.<sup>10</sup> The editors' overoptimism may easily have added to the disillusionment experienced by many newcomers, but they may be forgiven for it, for their intentions were of the best.

The pages of the Times, the Globe, and the Enterprise carry on invaluable informative record of the successes and failures, the hopes and fears, and the ambitions and frustrations, which the settlers in the new communities experienced alternately during the baffling years of the period. "The columns of the Times will always be open to the discussion of (farm) matters by farmers themselves," promised Daubney in his initial issue.<sup>11</sup> No letter was considered too long to be printed, and many were carried over to the following issue. Because the editors were liberal with their space, every phase of life, from the purpose of the Almighty to the treatment of glandered horses, is extensively described.

No new local ventures, large or small, failed to receive

<sup>8</sup> Deloraine Times, Sept. 17, 1888.

<sup>9</sup> Melita Enterprise, July 26, 1893.

<sup>10</sup> Ellis, Manitoba Agriculture and P.F.R.A. p.40.

<sup>11</sup> Deloraine Times, Nov. 10, 1887.



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commendation in print. Harvey, of the Enterprise, in 1891, urged the taxpaying farmers near Melita to support the mill bonus by-law, because the millers were seeking "to add to the wealth and importance of the Souris District of Manitoba."<sup>12</sup> Daubney of the Times, drew attention to the Deloraine Carriage Factory which had "six rigs in<sup>the</sup> paint-shop" at one time, and pointed out that the quality of the work was "helping considerably to build up the town."<sup>13</sup> Mr. William Lambert, the upholsterer of Boissevain received a special compliment in the Times for "building in his workshop a hearse of most beautiful design."<sup>14</sup>

The newspapers closely scrutinized the activities of the local municipal councils, and were not backward in expressing their ideas for the improvement of their towns and the surrounding country. Early in 1892, the editor of the Globe made the following suggestions to the council of Morton municipality regarding improvements in Boissevain:<sup>15</sup>

- (1) A system of drainage for the town.
- (2) Removal of the nuisance ground to a location further away from town.
- (3) That a health officer be appointed, paid \$75 per annum, and that he be made to do his duty.

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<sup>12</sup> Melita Enterprise, Nov. 12, 1891.

<sup>13</sup> Deloraine Times, May 9, 1889.

<sup>14</sup> Deloraine Times, May 13, 1890.

<sup>15</sup> Boissevain Globe, Feb. 5, 1892.

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- (4) The enactment of bylaws,  
 (a) to enforce the building of proper chimneys,  
 (b) to allow for cleaning of the streets,  
 (c) to prevent horses from feeding in the streets,  
 (d) to levy a tax on transient traders.

Not long afterwards this editor roundly condemned the council for granting \$200 to the Brandon hospital, pointing out that \$150 of the money would be put to better use in cleaning up the town to prevent sickness.<sup>16</sup> About the same time, he began an agitation for a town park.

In 1894, the editor of the Hartney Star was the instigator of a movement to petition the Legislature to divide the large municipality of Winchester into two equal parts, east and west, pointing out that since 1890, conditions had changed and that the area was too large for efficient administration.<sup>17</sup> The division was made in 1896,<sup>18</sup> but in a manner different from what the Star had advocated. That year Cameron was created, from the two northern rows of townships of Winchester, thus more completely cutting Hartney off from its connections with the southern area.

The Enterprise in 1891, was urging Arthur council to enact a herd by-law,<sup>19</sup> and like the Globe, was continually agitating for improvements to the town of Melita. However, the editor fought equally as hard for improvements in the more remote parts of the municipality, for example, the construction of the Antler bridges.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Boissevain Globe, Mar.31,1892.

<sup>17</sup> Hartney Star, May25,1894.

<sup>18</sup> Statutes of Manitoba, 1896 ch.18,59 vic.

<sup>19</sup> Melita Enterprise, Nov.12,1891.

<sup>20</sup> Melita Enterprise, Apr.12,1894.

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Daubney,\*\*of the Times, seems to have made the encouragement of immigration his particular concern. In his introductory editorial he promised that "Matters of interest relating to.... the promotion of immigration will be given prominence....."<sup>21</sup> and he kept his word. During the years 1888,1889, and 1890, he suggested scheme after scheme to the councillors of the various municipalities, in his continuous effort to bring more settlers to the area.<sup>22</sup> He saw every local, provincial, and federal development in the light of its effect on immigration. In his view, by the "exorbitant" prices the C.P.R. and the Hudson's Bay Company were asking for land, they were blocking immigration. "They keep the country poor in farmers, poor in production, and rich in taxation."<sup>23</sup> Announcing the shipment of a car-load of coal from the nearby coal mines, he pointed out that "each car that goes is a grand advertisement for this part of Manitoba.....with a fertile soil, lots of wood for the getting, and with the cheapest coal in the province, the district of Deloraine has much to commend it to the immigrant."<sup>24</sup> Later, he was supported in his efforts by the editor of the Globe, who, on one occasion, advised the Hon.T.M.Daly, federal Minister of Justice, that "a general reduction in tariff would do more to promote immigration than the \$500,000 proposed for immigration services."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Deloraine Times, Nov.10,1887.

<sup>22</sup> See chapter 8, pp. 127 f.

<sup>23</sup> Deloraine Times, Apr.12,1888.

<sup>24</sup> Deloraine Times, Feb.27,1890.

<sup>25</sup> Boissevain Globe, Sept.1,1892.

\*\* Daubney died on February,3, 1895, and he did not see the change from depression to prosperity. His wife succeeded him as editor of the Times.

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On the temperance issue, the newspapers differed only in the degree to which they supported the 'drys'. The Times was content with expressing its approval of local option and prohibition, and asked its readers to give the matter some thought before marking ballots. The Globe, the Star, and the Standard supported prohibition, the latter proclaiming in its first issue that it was strongly temperance.<sup>26</sup> The Enterprise declared forthrightly, that "it was Manitoba's duty to show the other provinces of the Dominion how thoroughly a province can prohibit the liquor traffic."<sup>27</sup> The Reverend Vrooman wrote 'guest' editorials for this paper on more than one occasion. Perhaps the fact that the editor's wife, Mrs. J.B.Graham, was the regional organizer for the W.T.C.U.<sup>28</sup> had some bearing on the strong opinions expressed by the Melita paper. All the local papers gave a liberal amount of space to reporting the activities of the respective temperance organizations, and to printing lengthy dissertations supplied by these on the evils of strong drink.

All four of the early newspapers proclaimed in their respective first issues, their political independence in provincial and federal affairs. The Enterprise always carried the slogan "Devoted to the Interests of the Province, Not Party." The Hartney Star declared its policy to be purely local. "Our politics will be not this party nor that party but simply HARTNEY.....We do not

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<sup>26</sup> Napinka Standard, Apr.20,1899.

<sup>27</sup> Melita Enterprise, Oct.13,1892.

<sup>28</sup> Melita Enterprise, Jan.19,1893, and Hartney Star, Jly.6,1893.

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propose, then, to pose as Independent. We prefer rather to leave the slimy pool of politics undisturbed."<sup>29</sup> The Times explained that it was "independent in politics....reserving all the while to ourselves the right to point out those measures which appear to be in the best interests of the country as a whole."<sup>30</sup>

Subsequent issues, however, prove beyond a doubt that these papers were unanimous in their opposition to the Conservative government at Ottawa. An item in the Globe, in 1893, declared that two things were necessary for the prosperity of Manitoba," the reformation or annihilation of the present administration at Ottawa, and the last gasp of a protective tariff."<sup>31</sup> The Star, in the fall of the same year, printed a lengthy editorial from the Winnipeg Commercial bitterly critical of Hon. George Foster, and the Hon. Frank Angers.<sup>32</sup> About eighteen months later, the Hartney paper printed the Liberal platform in full,<sup>33</sup> and it prominently displayed reports of all Liberal meetings during the federal campaign of 1896.<sup>34</sup> The Enterprise during the same campaign advises its readers to vote for Dalton McCarthy,<sup>35</sup> and, when he resigned the Brandon seat, suggested the acclamation of Sifton at the by-election on Nov.17.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Hartney Star, Feb.23, 1893.

<sup>30</sup> Deloraine Times, Nov.10,1887.

<sup>31</sup> Boissevain Globe, Oct.26,1893.

<sup>32</sup> Hartney Star, Oct.27,1893.

<sup>33</sup> Hartney Star, Mar. 1,1895.

<sup>34</sup> Hartney Star, Mar.15,1895.(Speers & Underhill, speakers)

<sup>35</sup> Melita Enterprise, June 12,1886, (see above, ch.9 )

<sup>36</sup> Melita Enterprise, Oct.30,1896.

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In provincial politics, the Times first supported Greenway for his struggle against the monopoly clause of the C.P.R. contract. In 1888, when John Hettle was nominated in the Liberal interest for Turtle Mountain, the Times advocated that he be given the seat by acclamation.<sup>37</sup> All four papers later supported Greenway on the Manitoba school question. In 1896 the Enterprise suggested an acclamation for A.M. Campbell, Liberal member for Souris, because of his "good record" for the previous eight years.<sup>38</sup> Three years later, however, the Melita paper opposed Campbell, for they disapproved of his attitude in favoring the C.P.R. over the N.P. for the Waskada railway charter. "An explanation from Mr. Campbell why he did not assist Mr. Thompson in securing the N.P. when they were willing to build would be of interest to the electors of this constituency."<sup>39</sup>

On the whole, during this early period, none of the papers could be considered violently partisan, but after 1898, the situation was transformed by the advent of the Napinka Gazette, followed by those of the Melita Western Progress, the Napinka Standard, the Deloraine Advertiser, and the Boissevain Recorder.

The first editorial of the Gazette boldly declared "that the interests of Manitoba and the North-West Territories are identical with those of the Liberal-Conservative party."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Deloraine Times, June 7, 1888.

<sup>38</sup> Melita Enterprise, Jan. 3, 1896.

<sup>39</sup> Melita Enterprise, Nov. 24, 1899.

<sup>40</sup> Napinka Gazette, July 7, 1898,

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The editor, Frank Lush, announced his determination to advance the Conservative 'Cause', "Surrounded as we shall be by Liberal newspapers, at Deloraine and Boissevain....at Hartney and Souris ....and at Melita."<sup>41</sup>

From that time on, political sniping was the order of the day. It was intensified when the Melita Western Progress, a paper as forthrightly Liberal as the Gazette was Conservative, appeared in January, 1899. The editor, Robert Simpson, declared in his first issue "we believe both the Provincial and the Dominion governments are honest in their efforts to develop the country.... we must.....give the present (Dominion) government a chance to carry out its policy."<sup>42</sup> The Gazette took up the challenge by classifying the newcomer as a specimen of "Siftonia Baccillâ" or "Reptilia Siftonia Liberali Faction" and compared it to that "Machine-made Ottawa-Winnipeg paper....the Deloraine Times."<sup>43</sup>

A month or so later, on February 9, Lush of the Gazette made a direct invasion of Deloraine, the Times' own stronghold, and his paper came out as the Deloraine Advertiser and Napinka Gazette. Then, in April, he definitely evacuated Napinka in favor of Deloraine, and Volume 1, Number 1, of the Deloraine Advertiser appeared with the following declaration of policy:

"In Dominion and Provincial politics we are Conservative,  
Socially and commercially we are patriotic."<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Melita Western Progress, Jan. 4, 1899.

<sup>43</sup> Napinka Gazette, Jan. 11, 1899.

<sup>44</sup> Deloraine Advertiser, April 27, 1899.

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J.P.Alexander, the Conservative 'king-pin' of earlier days, was his assistant.<sup>45</sup>

The Conservative cause was taken up in Napinka, by the Napinka Standard, which came out with its first edition the week before Lush began publishing the Advertiser. Lambton Bohn, the editor, declared himself to be "strongly Temperance" and unfavorable to both Greenway and Laurier.<sup>46</sup> Bohn disappeared suddenly in the early autumn, under undisclosed circumstances, but after a lapse in publication of two issues, the Standard reappeared on September 29, with H.T.Butler as publisher.

Said Butler, "Politically the Standard will support the Conservative party with loyalty and all the ability it can call forth.....We look forward to the downfall of the Greenway Government and the speedy elevation of Hugh John Macdonald to the position of premier of the garden of Canada."<sup>47</sup> He took up with the Western Progress the vendetta he had inherited, and when Greenway was defeated on December 7, 1899, he expressed his jubilation in poetry and large headlines.

"Sound the loud Timbrel  
O'er Manitoba's prairie  
Hugh John has Triumphed  
The People are Free.

(Slow music by the Greenway Organs.)

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<sup>45</sup> Deloraine Times, Apr. 27, 1899.

<sup>46</sup> Napinka Standard, Apr. 20, 1899.

<sup>47</sup> Napinka Standard, Sept. 29, 1899.



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HONESTY WINS THE FIGHT!

DEATH OF POLITICAL RASCALITY!

END OF GREENWAY MISRULE!" <sup>48</sup>

Butler's Standard survived Greenway's government by less than two months. The last issue in the Provincial Archives is dated February 9, 1900.

Meanwhile, the Advertiser and the Times remained heavily engaged in political controversy in Deloraine, and, with the advent of the Recorder, the political verbal warfare was extended to Boissevain.

Late in September, 1899, the Standard forecast the coming of a Conservative paper to Boissevain. <sup>49</sup> Not more than a week later, on October 5, Vol. 1, No. 1, of the Recorder was circulated in that district. This edition is not available, but the Recorder's political policy is made clear in the following excerpts from the issue which immediately preceded the federal general election of November, 1900.

"All ye patriotic electors who have a spark of loyalty in your bosoms rise up in your might and turn the rascals out." <sup>50</sup>

"The manager of the Grit committee room can get posters and pointers from the Conservative committee room, which will save him the trouble of taking them down from any store in which

<sup>48</sup> Napinka Standard, Dec. 15, 1899.

<sup>49</sup> Napinka Standard, Sept. 29, 1899.

<sup>50</sup> Boissevain Recorder, Nov. 1, 1900.

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they have been displayed."<sup>51</sup>

Why so many strongly partisan newspapers began publication just before the provincial general election of 1899, and the federal campaign of 1900, may be explained by the following editorial, quoted from the Morden Chronicle by the Boissevain Globe.

"By reason of politics there are about twice as many newspapers being published in Manitoba as there is a decent living for....Shortly before the last provincial campaign, a score or more of newspapers commenced publication, not on business principles, but upon political principles."<sup>52</sup> The editorial points out that probably many of the new publishers were laboring under the false impression that a newspaper business could be operated at a profit on the proceeds of political patronage alone. That this reasoning may be correct is indicated by an article in the Western Progress which draws attention (rather gleefully) to the fact that in Hugh John's patronage list, the name of the Napinka Gazette appeared almost a year after it ceased publication.

The political duels at the close of the century were spectacular, but far more important to the development of the area was the steadfast faith of the earlier editors in the land and in those who cultivated it.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Boissevain Globe, Mar. 8, 1900.

## CHAPTER 13

### SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS.

"The Prairies are distinctive in that they have had to organize their social and economic life to combat drought, distance, the emptiness of the great open spaces, and the isolation and individualism of the agricultural industry."<sup>1</sup>

Economic conditions, political movements, railway extension, and municipal administration were not the only phases of life with which the prairie communities of Southwestern Manitoba were concerned during the period 1885 to 1899. Churches, schools, and recreational facilities were developed in the new environment and they all came under the hammer of the "four creative elements"<sup>2</sup> enumerated in the quotation above. At the end of the century, however, they retained to a large degree, most of the characteristics of the social organizations revered by the settlers in the homes from which they had migrated. Moreover, even during the years of discouragement and difficulty, the settlers from Ontario and Britain, had established, before 1896, towns that could be called "the liveliest in Manitoba," had built some imposing churches and fine schools, and had placed many commodious farm homes of brick and stone on the prairie.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> E.H.Oliver, "The Institutionalizing of the Prairies,"  
Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada,  
Series iii vol.24, p.20.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Hill, Manitoba, p.641.

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"Pioneer hardships, instead of deadening their spiritual aspirations, stirred in them a zeal of worship which early manifested itself in the erecting, under almost impossible conditions, of halls and churches to keep alive their religious aspirations. Freely of time, labor and money they gave, that in the land of their adoption the faith of their fathers might be established."<sup>4</sup>

By 1883, there was the Anglican All Saints Church at Waubeesh, and a Presbyterian Church at Old Deloraine which was ministered to by a Reverend Andrew MacNab.<sup>5</sup> There were also two Methodist ministers stationed at Deloraine, but the records examined do not show if a church had been built at that time.<sup>6</sup> All these ministers held services at outlying points. Hennefield, a Methodist colony near the boundary, was served from Deloraine,<sup>7</sup> and there were Methodists at Waskada, for John Spence, in July 1883, walked to Deloraine to get "Rev. Davis for Mary Johnston's funeral."<sup>8</sup>

On the Souris River, Mr. A.D. Wheeler, a Methodist minister homesteading on N.E.10-4-27, held services in 1882 at the home of A. Trerice, one mile north of the present Melita.<sup>9</sup> A year later, Donald Morison organized a Presbyterian congregation. He prevailed upon the Rock Lake Presbytery to supply a student missionary, and the first service was held in the Morrison home,

<sup>4</sup> Duncan, "Annals of Melita," Deloraine Times, Mar. 30, 1944.

<sup>5</sup> Henderson's Gazette, 1884.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Information supplied by James Smart.

<sup>8</sup> Spence, Memorandum.

<sup>9</sup> Duncan, "Annals of Melita".

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"a canvas-covered dwelling with an earth floor," situated on the present townsite of Melita. <sup>10</sup>

The first church building to be erected west of the Souris River seems to have been an Anglican Church, built sometime between 1882 and 1885, by some young Englishmen who were homesteading in the very south-west corner of the area, on 12-1-29. <sup>11</sup> In 1890 a small group of Baptists built a hall at Melita, and in 1892 the Presbyterians at Melita built a church and manse. The Methodists used the Baptist hall for services until 1897, when they built the Victoria Methodist church, a "commodious" building of brick veneer, <sup>12</sup> A cyclone destroyed the Baptist hall in 1899, and they later built "a very nice brick church," but the number of Baptists in Melita was too small to support their church and after some time <sup>13</sup> they sold it to the Roman Catholics.

Meanwhile, further east, the railway came to Boissevain in 1885 and to Deloraine in 1886. The congregations at Waubeesh and old Deloraine had to leave their churches behind them when they moved their homes and businesses across the prairie to the new townsites. In both cases they used railway coaches for their services until they built churches or made other arrangements. <sup>14</sup> At Boissevain, both Methodists and Presbyterians erected churches during the summer of 1886. <sup>15</sup> The Methodist passion for revival

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Information supplied by Chas. Sankey.

<sup>15</sup> According to Sankey.

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soon made itself evident for, in 1888, the Boissevain correspondent of the Deloraine Times reported that "The Methodists are holding revival meetings in the church. Success is attending the revival and a number have been converted from the error of their ways."<sup>16</sup>

The Anglican congregation from All Saint's Church did not build in Boissevain until 1889.<sup>17</sup>

Among the Protestants, denominational lines were not drawn very closely, particularly in the smaller outlying settlements. Where there was only<sup>one</sup> form of service available, people of all faiths attended. A story is told of a wedding service at Waskada during the '80s at which the bride was Anglican, the groom Presbyterian, and the officiating clergyman a Methodist.<sup>18</sup>

With "zeal of worship" went fear of subjection "to the dreadful results of the sale of intoxicating liquors."<sup>19</sup> A contemporary writer attributed prairie prohibition sentiment to the climate, saying that "it favors sobriety, for.... The exhilarating atmosphere lessens the craving, even of the habitual drunkard, for an artificial stimulant."<sup>20</sup> The inhabitant of the Souris Plains must therefore enjoy a perpetual state of partial inebriation from 'drinking in the ozone': Temperance sentiment more than likely came to the prairies from the frontier counties of Ontario,

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<sup>16</sup> Deloraine Times, Apr. 5, 1888.

<sup>17</sup> According to Chas. Sankey.

<sup>18</sup> A story told by Jas. Smart.

<sup>19</sup> Manitoba Free Press, May 23, 1881.

<sup>20</sup> A.O. Legge, Sunny Manitoba, p.198.

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and was not the result of any particular qualities of the prairie climate. If it was, why weren't the Indians temperance-minded?

Temperance activity seems to have been placed on an organized basis before 1889. Early that year, " at the regular Blue Ribbon temperance meeting, 24 new members signed the pledge and donned the Blue Ribbon" at Boissevain.<sup>21</sup> A year or so later the ladies at Boissevain formed their own temperance organization, a unit of the W.C.T.U.,<sup>22</sup> and henceforth the Globe donated a liberal amount of space to temperance articles. Meanwhile, at Deloraine, a 'council' of the Royal Templars of Temperance was active for, on February 6, 1890, this group called a public meeting at the Mansion House, a temperance hotel, to "discover what means had better be adopted to gain a majority" at a local option referendum set for the following week.<sup>23</sup>

At Melita, in 1893, a branch of the W.C.T.U. was organized with Mrs. R.M.Graham as president.<sup>24</sup> The editor of the Enterprise was a staunch prohibitionist,<sup>25</sup> who energetically supported every local option and prohibition referendum that took place during the period. Both the Templars and the W.C.T.U. were active in Hartney as early as in 1893,<sup>26</sup> and in 1894, a public subscription was solicited in that community to build a temperance hotel.<sup>\*26</sup>

That prohibition sentiment was not confined to the active members of these societies is indicated in the province-wide

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<sup>21</sup> Deloraine Times, Feb. 14, 1889.  
<sup>22</sup> Boissevain Globe, Dec. 7, 1890.  
<sup>23</sup> Deloraine Times, Feb. 6, 1891.  
<sup>24</sup> Melita Enterprise, Jan. 12, 1893.  
<sup>25</sup> Melita Enterprise, Oct. 13 1892 .  
<sup>26</sup> Hartney Star, July 6, 1893      \*<sup>26</sup> Hartney Star, Feb. 15, 1894.

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prohibition plebiscite of August 1892. The Electoral District of Turtle Mountain delivered 663 votes for, and 126 votes against prohibition. Deloraine Electoral District voted 629 for and 159 against, and Killarney District gave prohibition a majority of 341.<sup>27</sup> In the Dominion-wide plebiscite in 1898, Arthur Municipality favored prohibition by a vote of 332 for and 26 against.<sup>28</sup>

The most militant of the proponents of prohibition in Southwestern Manitoba was the Reverend W.A. Vrooman, Methodist minister at Melita. This clergyman contributed lengthy expositions of the social and economic consequences of the liquor traffic to all three newspapers. Some residents of Melita resented his forthrightness, for the Enterprise, on one occasion, severely reprimanded the perpetrators of "a dastardly crime." They had entered Mr. Vrooman's stable, maltreated his horses, and ruined his harness.<sup>29</sup>

In spite of the difficulties involved in collecting taxes to support them, the number of schools in Southwestern Manitoba rapidly increased. In 1885 there were 24 school districts in the area, 20 of them in Turtle Mountain County, and only 4 in Souris River County.<sup>30</sup> By 1901, Arthur Municipality was provided with 29 schools for 24 townships, Winchester (Brenda and Winchester)

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<sup>27</sup> Boissevain Globe, Sept. 1, 1892.

<sup>28</sup> Melita Enterprise, Sept. 30, 1898.

<sup>29</sup> Melita Enterprise, Nov. 12, 1892.

<sup>30</sup> P.A.M., Sessional Papers, Manitoba 1885. (Report of Superintendent of Protestant Schools.)



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with 30 schools for 16 townships, Morton with 20 schools for 12 townships, Whitewater with 16 schools for 6 townships, and Cameron with 17 schools for 8 townships.<sup>31</sup> With the exception of Arthur, the area contained an average of more than two schools per township.

Even before the depression period ended, in 1896, Boissevain, Deloraine, Melita, and Napinka, had school buildings as fine as those of any other town in the province. The main difficulty in towns and villages was to keep pace with the growing school population and frequent rebuilding had to be financed.

In January, 1893, there was considerable discussion among the ratepayers of Boissevain over the construction of a new school. Civic pride demanded a stone building but economic conditions required caution in public expenditures. Civic pride won out, but only after a spirited controversy which ended when the majority of the ratepayers, who were opposed by the trustees and some prominent taxpayers, voted to build a two room stone school-house to accommodate sixty pupils in each room.<sup>32</sup>

In Deloraine, where Dr. R.S. Thornton was chairman of the school board, debentures were issued for \$4,000 and in 1894 a four roomed school was erected.<sup>33</sup> By 1901, improvements to the school had increased its value to \$10,000, and the number of teachers to five.<sup>34</sup>

Melita, in 1893, decided to build a four room brick veneered school, for which the C.P.R. donated the site.<sup>35</sup> The original

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<sup>31</sup> Canada's Centre is Manitoba, pp. 13 to 18, 25 to 28.

<sup>32</sup> Boissevain Globe, Jan. 3, 1893.

<sup>33</sup> Deloraine Times, Mar. 30, 1944.

<sup>34</sup> Canada's Centre, p. 16.

<sup>35</sup> Melita Enterprise, Aug. 9, 1893.

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debentures were issued for \$6,000, but this did not prove to be enough, for early the following year the ratepayers were asked to vote on a by-law authorizing the sale of debentures for another \$2,000, "to pay off liabilities incurred in building."<sup>36</sup> The debentures sold for 1.03 $\frac{1}{2}$ . The rapid development of Melita, even during the depression period, is indicated by the total assessments for Melita School District in 1886 and 1892. These were \$19,110.00 and \$193,000 respectively.<sup>37</sup>

Pierson, a settlement which developed rapidly after the Souris Branch of the C.P.R. was extended to the Saskatchewan boundary in 1892, built a new school in that year.<sup>38</sup> By the end of the century, this was a village of 300 population, with two schools and three churches.<sup>39</sup>

In June 1894, the ratepayers of Napinka and vicinity presented a petition to the Arthur council for permission to form a union school district of lands in Arthur and Winchester municipalities.<sup>40</sup> In 1898 the Napinka school trustees called for tenders for a stone school house to hold 160 pupils, estimated cost \$4,000.<sup>41</sup>

Other villages where schools were located by 1901 were Elva, in Arthur Municipality; Medora, Goodlands and Waskada, in Winchester; Whitewater, in Morton; Minto and Elgin, in Whitewater;

<sup>36</sup> Melita Enterprise, Feb.1,1894.

<sup>37</sup> Melita Enterprise, Feb.1,1894.

<sup>38</sup>Melita Enterprise, Nov.17,1892.

<sup>39</sup> Canada's Centre, p.14.

<sup>40</sup> Melita Enterprise, June 24,1894.

<sup>41</sup> Melita Enterprise, April 29, 1898.

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and Lauder and Hartney, in Cameron.<sup>42</sup> Hartney had a \$6,000 school with four teachers.<sup>43</sup> In Morton, Boissevain was incorporated as a town in 1898, and at that time had two school buildings, each said to be worth \$10,000.<sup>44</sup>

Among other institutions which appeared in the Southwestern communities were the banks, of which the first were established and operated by local business men. A.P. Stuart, a partner in Caver's and Stuart's store which was moved in from old Deloraine, established Stuart and Company's bank in 1888 in the new town.<sup>45</sup> Messers Crawford and Cowan "began a private banking business in Boissevain the same year."<sup>46</sup> On March 1, 1890, Sutherland's Saving Bank, not incorporated, was opened for business in Boissevain with the following announcement in the Times:

"Object - to promote economy, prudence, and foresight in our youth, to give them the true idea of the value of a five cent piece, to show them how money will accumulate, bearing int interest.

OUT OF DEBT, OUT OF DANGER!"<sup>47</sup>

In 1891 the Union Bank opened a branch in Boissevain,<sup>48</sup> and soon afterward the Commercial Bank of Manitoba did the same,

<sup>42</sup> Canada's Centre, pp.13 to 28.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p.28.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p.18.

<sup>45</sup> Deloraine Times, Mar.30,1944.

<sup>46</sup> Deloraine Times, Nov.29,1888.

<sup>47</sup> Deloraine Times, Mar.6,1890.

<sup>48</sup> Boissevain Globe, Feb.14,1891.

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for the next year the Globe was informing the world that Boissevain was the only town in rural Manitoba to have two chartered banks.<sup>49</sup>

At Melita, the first bank opened was that of A.W.Law and Company, in 1892, and in 1898 it was taken over by the Union Bank.<sup>50</sup>

Diversification of industry, as a means to reduce the dependence of the area on the proceeds of wheat alone, was the subject of much discussion carried on in the columns of the local papers. There appeared to be a number of enterprising pioneers who were willing to experiment.

Coal was mined near Lennox as early as in 1883,<sup>51</sup> and in 1889, a joint stock company, which included Colin H. Campbell, of Winnipeg, was formed to operate a mine on a larger scale, and to connect it with Deloraine by a railroad.<sup>52</sup> A year later, 12 miners were at work in a 45 foot shaft, taking out 10 tons a day of coal that was "not a soft coal, nor yet is it a hard one." The mine was on N.E. 12-1-24, 14 miles from town, and the coal sold for \$3 a ton at the pit.

"MILLIONS OF TONS NEAR DELORAINE!"<sup>53</sup> was the Times headline that greeted this accomplishment. According to old-timers now residing in Boissevain, the coal had one drawback. "You had to wring the water out of it before you could burn it."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Boissevain Globe, Dec. 22, 1892.

<sup>50</sup> Duncan, "Annals of Melita."

<sup>51</sup> Henderson's Gazette, 1884.

<sup>52</sup> Deloraine Times, Jan. 10, 1889.

<sup>53</sup> Deloraine Times, Jan. 30, 1890.

<sup>54</sup> Mr. E.I. Dow and Mr. Orris of Boissevain.

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Boissevain's non-metallic mineral asset was a building-stone quarry, located on a small "mountain," only a mile and a half south of the town. By 1892, "One hotel, a flour mill, a store, and a black" were built "entirely of stone."<sup>55</sup> Other industries in Boissevain at that time were a flour mill, "roller style" with a capacity of 125 barrels a day, and a planing and shingle mill.<sup>56</sup> At Whitewater, in 1894, brickmaking was in progress.<sup>57</sup>

The possibilities of profits from cheese-making seem to have attracted local investors beginning with George Morton in 1882. No cheese factories remained in operation for any great length of time. In February 1889 the Times drew attention to a "load" of cheese which was taken into Deloraine by a settler from the Antler district. The editor declared it to be a good quality cheese, which "indicates the possibilities that are open in this part of Manitoba."<sup>58</sup> In 1894 cheese factories, owned by joint stock companies comprised of farmers and local business men, appeared at Melita<sup>59</sup> and Deloraine.<sup>60</sup> The Deloraine factory had to be located at Helena, on 27-3-23, because of the shortage of water in the town. The cheese sold in Deloraine for 12½¢ a pound. Both factories eventually made way for creameries, and cheese was replaced by butter.

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<sup>55</sup> Boissevain Globe, Dec.22,1892.

<sup>56</sup> Boissevain Globe, Oct.2,1890, and Dec.22,1892.

<sup>57</sup> Melita Enterprise, Mar. 15, 1894.

<sup>58</sup> Deloraine Times, Feb.12,1889.

<sup>59</sup> Melita Enterprise.

<sup>60</sup> Deloraine Times, Mar.30,1944. and Manitoba Gazette 1894.

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As for the average farmer, diversified farming made little headway, particularly west of the Turtle Mountain. Livestock was more of a liability than an asset in periods of drought, when feed was scarce and water, in many places, was scarcer. Many farmers came to the conclusion of R.J. Dobbyn, of Melita, in 1894, that there was "too much talk of mixed farming."<sup>61</sup> Some were like the farmer from Wakopa, who, when he drew a load of fat hogs to Boissevain in the spring of that year, found that he could not sell them "head or alive." He was out of feed and could buy none.<sup>62</sup> "Diversified farming sure has its drawbacks," was his comment.<sup>62</sup> The majority of farmers were convinced, like Dobbyn, that, given a price of 50¢ a bushel, "one year with another"<sup>63</sup> they could make wheat farming pay in spite of short crops. That they were largely correct in their view is indicated by the statement of a present-day soil expert that the present type of farming (grain and fallow system) is the logical outcome of natural and economic laws.<sup>64</sup> Today, farmers in the area, well aware that "Drought may be expected to recur with varying frequency, with varying severity, and with varying duration,"<sup>65</sup> are more concerned with the future state of the world wheat market than they are with the prospect of recurring drought.

Of the public enterprises undertaken during the pioneer

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<sup>61</sup> Melita Enterprise, Mar. 8, 1894

<sup>62</sup> Boissevain Globe, Mar. 29, 1894.

<sup>63</sup> Melita Enterprise, Mar. 8, 1894.

<sup>64</sup> Ellis, Manitoba Agriculture and P.F.R.A., p.16.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p.19.

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period, the Deloraine well is perhaps the most unique. It became evident very early that good drinking water could not be obtained on the townsite selected by the C.P.R. without drilling for it. By early 1888 the citizens of the new town had collected sufficient money, they thought, to pay for a drilled well. The provincial government supplemented the fund with a grant, and in February, advertised for a well driller.<sup>66</sup>

The editor of the Times, just as eager to drink good water as were his readers, reported faithfully the progress made by the driller and the delays which occurred.

April 12: "The contractor for the well reached 92 feet. He has to start again on account of the well being crooked."

April 19: "A new hole was started by Maxwell the contractor. He is down 70 feet - straight as a plumb-bob."

May 3: "Maxwell the well man is not well; consequently the well is not here, neither is Maxwell."

May 10: "What has happened to Maxwell, is he dead? When will that well business be finished?"

"That well business" was not to be "finished" until January, 1894, nearly six years after it was started, and after \$16,839.75 had been spent in drilling 1980 feet.<sup>67</sup> By January, 1889, the well was down 380 feet, and the drill was in soapstone. The Deloraine Council, realizing by now that the well was to be

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<sup>66</sup> Deloraine Times, Feb. 15, 1888.

<sup>67</sup> Deloraine Times, Mar. 30, 1944.

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an expensive proposition, passed a bylaw for the sale of \$5,000 worth of debentures to finance it.<sup>68</sup> Next month the Hudson's Bay Company contributed another \$50.<sup>69</sup> In March the drill struck a harder rock at 612 feet. "Hope runs high," reported the Times.<sup>70</sup> However, drilling continued spasmodically until 1892, when it was discontinued for lack of funds.<sup>71</sup> In 1893 W.H. Atkinson, the sawyer, began again with volunteer labor, and finally the drill pierced a spring. The Times was jubilant.

"SUCCESS AT LAST!

WATER! WATER! WATER!

INEXHAUSTIBLE SUPPLY!

HURRAH! HURRAH! HURRAH!

HERES TO THE WELL!" 72

The spring, however, proved far from inexhaustible, and it soon gave out. As a result, the good people of Deloraine were no further ahead in the matter of a water supply than they were in 1887.

Occupied as they were with trying to improve their economic condition, or with the work of the church and its affiliated organizations, the settlers found time to turn their attention to a variety of recreational activities.

A large skating rink was completed in Deloraine in

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68 Deloraine Times, Jan.10,1889.  
69 Deloraine Times, Feb.14,1889.  
70 Deloraine Times, Mar.6,1889.  
71 Deloraine Times, Mar.30,1944.  
72 Deloraine Times, Jan.11,1894.



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December, 1889. The opening was somewhat premature for that year, for on Saturday, December 22, "eleven gentlemen played tennis with their coats off," the thermometer showing 45 degrees" in the shade" at 2 P.M.<sup>73</sup> The other larger centres built skating rinks soon after Deloraine, and early in the 1890's the Enterprise was boasting that Melita had the fastest skater in the west if not in the world. "We want a race for a purse of \$50.... Come (Brandon) Sun, let us hear from you," challenged the editor on January 10, 1896. In January, 1891, sixteen pairs of curling rocks arrived in Boissevain,<sup>74</sup> and it was not long before "Curliana" was a regular feature of the newspapers during the winter months.

Outdoor recreation was not neglected during the summer. Organized cricket, baseball, lacrosse, and soccer leagues appeared very early. According to the accounts appearing in the local papers the rivalry between the various towns was very keen. As late as in 1891, the Turtle Mountain Hounds, organized in 1882 to cope with the wolves, were reported to be holding a meeting at C. Sankey's.<sup>75</sup> Harness racing became a popular sport, and in 1894 the Deloraine Turf Club was incorporated.<sup>76</sup>

The "Fiske Jubilee Singers"<sup>77</sup> and other travelling entertainers came annually to at least the larger towns, and provided their share of indoor entertainment. In the smaller communities the school-houses were in constant use during the

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<sup>73</sup> Deloraine Times, Dec. 27, 1889.

<sup>74</sup> Boissevain Globe, Jan. 15, 1891.

<sup>75</sup> Boissevain Globe, May 14, 1891.

<sup>76</sup> Manitoba Gazette, Mar. 31, 1894.

<sup>77</sup> Melita Enterprise, June 7, 1893.

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year for dances, socials, concerts, amateur theatricals, and children's entertainments. The cultural side of life was cared for by the creation of "Mutual Improvement Societies", the members of which seemed to spend many evenings reading Shakespeare, reciting Burns, debating the merits of Victorian novelists, or discussing art. <sup>78</sup> Life in Southwestern Manitoba, even during the most discouraging years of the period when money in the pocket was scarce, was far from completely dull.

Any survey of the development of Southwestern Manitoba during the last twenty years of the 19th century is not complete without a special reference to the contributions made by outstanding personalities. Institutions, whether they are religious, political, educational, commercial, cooperative, or recreational, can be established and continued with success only if there are men and women in each community able and willing to accept the responsibilities of leadership.

Fortunately for Southwestern Manitoba, there were many of these who came during the trying years of settlement. From time to time these pages have referred to the achievements of men like John Brondgeest, Reeve Somerville of Brenda, G.L.Dodds, "Railway"Thompson, James Downie, the Underhills, J.P.Alexander, and others. There still remain many whose contributions to their communities will have to remain unmentioned on account of the limitations of space. Among these, unfortunately, are both doctors and ministers.

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<sup>78</sup> Deloraine Times, Jan.17, 1889, Melita Enterprise, Nov.3, 1892.

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The "most outstanding man in Southwestern Manitoba"<sup>79</sup> was the Globe's estimate of George Morton, the "cheese king" who came from Kingston, Ontario, in 1882. Although his Dairy Farm project failed even before he could get it into operation, he remained in or near Boissevain until he died, in 1891. Undoubtedly he could to his native province and resumed the business career he abandoned when he came to Manitoba.

After Morton built his store and elevator in Boissevain, in 1885, he placed similar buildings at Whitewater in 1888, in order that the settlers on his tract of land north of the lake would not have so far to draw their grain. At this time the Times paid him the following tribute; "Mr. Morton deserves considerable credit for his push, energy, and thoughtfulness."<sup>80</sup>

The "Father of Boissevain" never ran for public office, but his advice was always welcomed by those who did. In August, 1890, he went to Ottawa for the express purpose of persuading His Conservative friends to remove the tariff on twine, against which his neighbors had protested for years in vain. They were willing to bet money that he would succeed in his quest.<sup>81</sup>

His last public appearance was on December 3, when he was chosen to preside at a municipal nominating convention.<sup>82</sup> He died of pneumonia, on Sunday, December 27, 1891.<sup>83</sup>

Of all

Of the many tributes to George Morton received by the Globe

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<sup>79</sup> Boissevain Globe, Dec. 31, 1891.

<sup>80</sup> Deloraine Times, Nov. 29, 1888.

<sup>81</sup> Boissevain Globe, Dec. 31, 1891.

<sup>82</sup> Boissevain Globe, Dec. 7, 1891.

<sup>83</sup> Boissevain Globe, Dec. 31 1891.

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from people in different parts of Canada, perhaps most appropriate, and certainly most quaint, was one contributed by "Homesteader", more than a month later:

"Honored by those who knew him,

A 'friend ' indeed was he.

His death is felt by everyone,

'Tis felt by you and me. "<sup>84</sup>

Valuable as was the leadership and enterprise displayed by men such as Morton, Dodds, Thompson, and the others, the communities of Southwestern Manitoba could not have achieved the degree of progress they did without the steady perseverance of the average homesteader, who year after year, broke more land, sowed his grain, harvested it, sold it, and paid his taxes. Like the wheat they grows, which <sup>pushes</sup> its roots deeper into the soil, if the spring is dry and backward, to obtain full benefit from whatever rains come in June and July, John Spence and his fellow homesteaders stood ready, after years of poor crops and low prices, to take advantage of the good years which were to come.

## CONCLUSION.

This survey of the history of Southwestern Manitoba concludes with a brief reference to the way in which John Spence, the homesteader who chose his land near the centre of the treeless till plain lying between Turtle Mountain and the Souris River, encountered and overcame the difficulties arising from the physical environment of the region. This is so because he is representative of the latest group in the long procession of mound-builders, Assiniboines, fur-traders, and agricultural pioneers who, one after the other, came to the Souris Plains and sought to exploit the resources they contained.

The story related in the preceding pages has been concerned more with telling what was done, than with seeking an explanation of why it was done. However, some conclusions can be drawn from it.

Throughout the long centuries reviewed, men came to the Souris Plains and similar plains nearby, and because the land was fertile, some of them were determined to cultivate it, regardless of the obstacles which climate and isolation placed in their way.

The definite exception to the rule seems to have been the Assiniboines. Very little is known of their predecessors, the mound-builders, but there is fragmentary evidence to lead to the suspicion that they made an attempt to cultivate the fertile soil of the Antler Creek triangle. The Assiniboines exploited,

not the soil, but the buffalo which the soil successfully sustained.

The fur-traders, perhaps because of their European background, planted seed on the hard dry soil and persisted in their efforts to make the land produce. The younger Henry, for example, was baffled again and again by the conditions facing him on the Saskatchewan plains, yet he repeated his efforts, knowing that, given a favorable season, the land would produce. Peter Fidler and others near the mouth of the Souris River had their crops blasted by heat and destroyed by grasshoppers, yet they continued to plant field and garden crops as long as they were stationed in the area.

The Assiniboines established the only successful subsistence economy on the Souris and Regina Plains, the buffalo economy. A purely agricultural subsistence economy can not be maintained in the area, particularly that part of it west of Turtle Mountain, for man can not live on wheat alone. Fuel, clothing, and building material, which pioneers could provide for themselves in a more humid region, had to be imported to the Souris Plains. Exploitation of the prairie soil was feasible only when the wheat surplus could be traded for these things. Only when the region was connected with the rest of the world could the proceeds of the bountiful harvests of the good years be used to provide sustenance for the lean years which surely followed. Only then could adequate assistance be given to the inhabitants of Southwestern Manitoba when a succession of crop failures made it

impossible for them to provide for themselves.

It is true that many of the prerequisites for a wheat-exporting agricultural economy had been developed elsewhere before the settlers from Ontario first came within sight of Turtle Mountain. However, it does not necessarily follow that they could be applied successfully to the till plains of its slopes, or the sandy sediments of the Souris basin. Climate and soil combined required the characteristic displayed by Alexander Henry and John Spence alike, faith in the fertility of the soil and faith in their ability to make the soil produce, given an even chance.

Artificial obstacles, particularly the tariff and the railway monopoly, unquestionably aggravated the difficulty of overcoming the handicaps that nature had placed in the way of successful agriculture. These may have been essential to fulfilment of the "purposes of the Dominion," but it is clear that they placed the settler at a disadvantage.

As their fathers had done in the backwoods of Ontario, so the pioneers of the Souris Plains turned to direct political action for relief from unnecessary hardship. While the farmers' party, the Patrons, passed into oblivion in 1896, the movement did bring the most glaring of the apparent injustices to the attention of the authorities at Ottawa. The lessons learned during the 1890's, both in political action and in economic cooperation provided a foundation for later movements which have done much to place the farmer in a position of greater equality with the other classes of the new nation.

## Conclusion

A survey of this sort raises more questions than it can answer. To what extent has the the struggle with climate and soil developed characteristics in the inhabitants of Southwestern Manitoba which are different, for example, from those displayed by people living in the Swan River Valley or in the Stonewall district? What accounted for the development of a considerable degree of capital formation by 1897 ? What circumstances enabled the early settlers to stay on the land during the years of the depression without the large amount of direct government assistance or private charity which has been required in more recent times?

These, and other questions, deserve the attention of the sociologist and the economist, rather than that of the historian alone. The answers, however, require the extension of the Survey Historical/to include the era of prosperity which lasted from 1900 to 1916, the years of poor crops from 1916 to 1922, the comparative 'boom' which collapsed in 1930, and the 'Great Depression' of the 1930's. The last ten years have witnessed an unprecedented succession of good crops and good prices. The development of gas and oil resources in the near future may easily bring about a dramatic transformation of the lives of those who live on the Southwestern Plains of Manitoba.



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