# SOME ASPECTS OF THE HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE RED RIVER SETTLEMENT FROM 1812 to 1870

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by

Barry Kaye

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## PREFACE

It has often been observed that Canada has evolved from six different growth points, four of them coastal centres -- the Atlantic coast, the Quebec lowlands, the Hudson Bay lowlands, the British Columbian coast -- and two of them interior settlements -- Upper Canada and the Red River Valley of Manitoba. This thesis surveys the changing geography of the smallest and most continental of the two interior settlements, the Red River Valley, over a period of about sixty years, and is presented as a study in historical geography. It is a geographical study of the Red River Settlement or Colony, sometimes called after its founder the Selkirk Settlement or Colony, which I hope will contribute something to a better knowledge of the early geography of the Canadian West. It is not meant to be, however, a complete geographical analysis. The bias is on agriculture, population and patterns of settlement. Transportation and the fur trade are given but scant treatment.

Geographers have contributed very little to previous knowledge about the Red River Settlement, the first attempt at agricultural colonisation on the Canadian prairies. Robin W. Winks' recent statement with reference to Canada that "historical geography remains largely untouched except in the journals."* applies with particular force to the

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* Robin W. Winks (ed.), The Historiography of the British Empire -- Commonwealth (Durham, N.C., 1966), p. 86.

western part of the country. It is only recently that academic research into the historical geography of the Canadian West has been inaugerated and the number of published items, even in the journals, is still small. Though it has received passing mention in works of a general nature, early settlement at Red River has received detailed examination by no geographer.

In sharp contrast, since Alexander Ross published his valuable history of the colony in 1856, it has been a source of continual fascination to students of history, who have examined in great detail such topics as the part played by the Red River Colony in the struggle between the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies, the rise of the free trade movement in Rupert's Land and the causes and course of the Riel Rebellion. Important biographies of Lord Selkirk, Cuthbert Grant, James Sinclair and Louis Riel have been written. The book and articles that have been wholly or partly concerned with the Red River Settlement are many and some of the most eminent historians who have written about Canada have discussed it at length. Amongst these one might mention J. S. Galbraith, M. Giraud, A. C. Gluek, A. S. Morton, W. L. Morton, E. E. Rich and G. F. G. Stanley. The histories of all these men contain much material of interest to the historical geographer. More specifically I have found the works of Professor W. L. Morton and Professor Marcel Giraud very helpful and relevant. Professor Morton's "Agriculture in the Red River Colony" (1949)

and his "The Significance of Site in the Settlement of the American and Canadian Wests" (1951) contribute a great deal to a basic understanding of the geographical evolution of the Red River Valley up to 1870. Many of the ideas put forward in these two papers are further developed in the same writers "Introduction" to the "London Correspondence Inward from Eden Colvile, 1849-1852"(1956) and his "Manitoba: a history"(1957). Professor Morton's finely written "Introduction" of 1956 is of particular interest to the geographer. There he presents a geographical reconstruction of the Red River Settlement as of about 1850, as a prelude to a discussion of its political history. I have also found a great deal of relevant material in Professor Giraud's "Le Métis Canadien" (1945), a very long and detailed study based in large part on the records of the Hudson's Bay Company, a source that I have not used. It is a study of much wider significance than its title might suggest and deserves to be closely read by all interested in the historical geography of Canada.

In the preparation of this thesis I have consulted no "new" sources nor presented any new conclusions. Rather I have tried to look at a body of material, much of it familiar, as a geographer and present it in such a way as to be of some interest to other geographers. Much of the data relating to the Red River Settlement is difficult to put into geographical expression. Until the early 1830's statistical data are few and of the later Red River censuses only that of 1856 lends itself to anything like accurate and comprehensive

mapping. Thus for the amount of text the number of maps may appear small, and of those produced a large proportion relate to the year 1856. In the available statistical data there are many gaps. Particularly frustrating was the almost complete lack of data on crop acreages. Yet the maps, though few, have, I think, highlighted for the first time some of the variety and significant regional differences existing within the small settlement at Red River.

In terms of approach and techniques of presentation in historical geography I have drawn widely on the writings of Professor Andrew H. Clark on Maritime Canada. For similar purposes I found the work of Professor Harry Roy Merrens on early North Carolina very helpful.

After a preliminary survey of some of the outstanding geographical characteristics of the Red River Valley in about 1810, the thesis is organised into three sections. The first describes developments from 1812, the year of first permanent agricultural settlement, until 1826-1827. The flood of 1826 seemed a useful and convenient breakpoint, for it marked the close of what Giraud has termed "les années d'incertitude". The second section carries the geographical evolution of the Red River Settlement up to 1857 and includes a detailed description of the agricultural economy. The information resulting from the Palliser and Hind expeditions used along with the quantitative data in the census for 1856 provides an overall view of the colony in the years 1856-1858.

The final section surveys the geographical changes and the processes effecting those changes in the period 1857-1870. The study ends in 1870 with the incorporation of the Red River Settlement into the new Province of Manitoba.

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# CHAPTER I

## THE RED RIVER COUNTRY IN 1810 - 1811

### Introduction

In 1811 the Hudson's Bay Trading Company granted in fee simple to Thomas Douglas, Fifth Earl of Selkirk, its largest single shareholder, a huge area of land at the geometrical centre of the North American continent. It was to be known as the Assiniboia Grant and covered an area of 116,000 square miles of the fur trading wilderness of Rupert's Land, the commercial empire of the Hudson's Bay Company. Since 1802 and his reading of Alexander Mackenzie's descriptions of the American north country in his "Voyages from Montreal through the continent of North America etc."[1] Selkirk had hoped to divert part of the flood of British emigrants going to the United States or Upper Canada to the interior plains of British-controlled North America.

The outlines of the area granted to Selkirk for his third colonisation[2] venture are shown in Figure 1. Its eastern boundary followed the canoe route through from Rainy River and Winnipeg River to Lake Winnipeg, continuing north

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[1]New York, 1802.

[2]Selkirk had carried out earlier colonisation schemes in Prince Edward Island and Upper Canada.

as far as 52 degrees and 30 minutes. From there the boundary ran south down Lake Winnipegosis to latitude 52 degrees and then west to the headwaters of the Assiniboine River. The western limits followed the line of longitude 102 degrees and 30 minutes to the height of land separating Souris and Missouri River drainage. The southern boundary curved around the source of the Red River following the low west-to-east divide between Hudson Bay-Arctic drainage and Atlantic-bound streams, and meeting the canoe route again east of Rainy Lake. Assiniboia projected far enough south to take in the whole of the Red River Valley and thus included the region where North American Arctic drainage is pushed most deeply south into the centre of the continent.

The grant embraced parts of several morphological regions; it centered on the low lying, flat corridor of the Red River Valley draining north to Lake Winnipeg, but included a section of the pre-cambrian Laurentian Shield to the north and east and to the west of the wooded heights of the Manitoba escarpment with adjacent parts of the second prairie level. It also cut across several vegetation zones and included within its boundaries a segment of the North American boreal forest zone and of the "natural" prairie grasslands of the Red River Valley and the Souris plains, as well as a section of the transitional aspen parkland belt.

Viewed in continental perspective it is clear that as a base for an agricultural colony the area suffered from acute problems of accessibility and from an almost complete

isolation from the settled areas of North America. These two factors made it certain that it would be difficult to find any sizeable market for agricultural products either in Europe or in North America. The high value, low bulk furs that had so far been the commercial staple of the region could stand the high transport costs to market but it should have been clear to even the most enthusiastic supporters of the colony that agricultural produce could not. There were two main routes of access, both of them waterways through virtually uninhabited, inhospitable Shield country. The first one, the north-south, Lake Winnipeg - Hayes River route led to Hudson Bay and the strategic post of York Factory and a sea route to Europe that was closed to sailing vessels for most of the year. The second line of penetration was from the east, the canoe route of the voyageurs, a complex of river transport, lake travel and portages that linked Lake Winnipeg and the Red River Valley with Lake Superior at the Grand Portage or Fort Kaministiquia and thence with the populated areas of Upper Canada and the St. Lawrence lowland. On the west the Assiniboine and Qu'Appelle Valleys and farther north the Saskatchewan merely opened up trails and water routes to further great expanses of unsettled wilderness.

Before considering the geographical development of the small colony begun under the direction of Lord Selkirk, it is necessary to provide a brief sketch of the Red River country on the eve of colonisation. The first part of this sketch

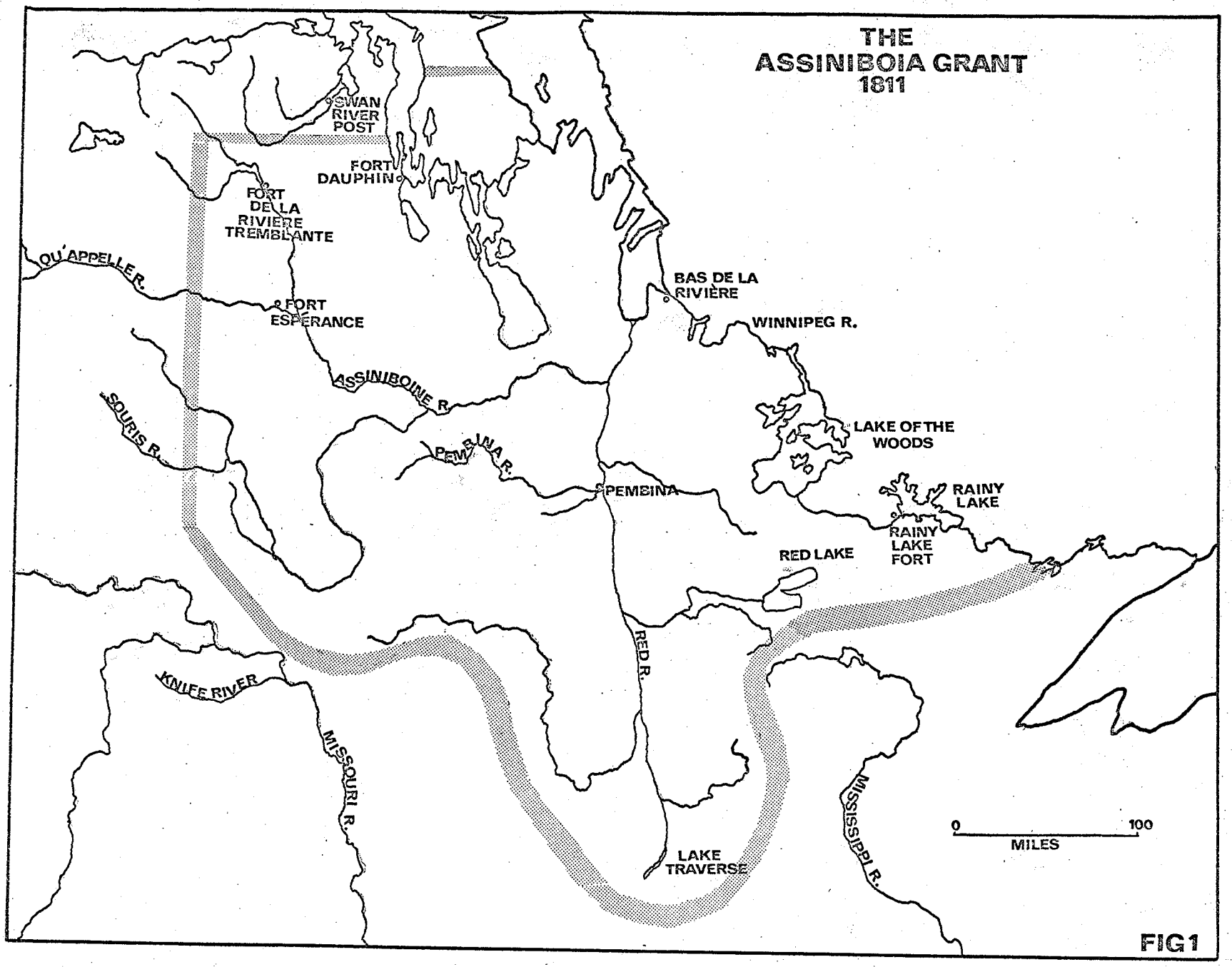
THE
ASSINIBOIA GRANT
1811
SWAN RIVER POST
FORT DAUPHIN
FORT DE LA RIVIERE TREMBLANTE
QU'APPELLE R.
FORT ESPERANCE
ASSINIBOINE R.
SOURIS R.
PEMBINA R.
PEMBINA
BAS DE LA RIVIÈRE
WINNIPEG R.
LAKE OF THE WOODS
RAINY LAKE
RAINY LAKE FORT
RED LAKE
RED R.
KNIFE RIVER
MISSOURI R.
LAKE TRAVERSE
MISSISSIPPI R.
0
100
MILES

FIG 1

will summarise some of the features of the natural setting of the area. It is beyond the scope of this study to attempt a description of the physical geography of the whole of Assiniboia, so particular attention will be placed on the Red River lowland section of it, especially the area around the junction of the Red and Assiniboine. This was the site of the initial agricultural settlement and is the centre of interest throughout the thesis.

Physical Features

Relief:- The Red River lowland is a level, largely featureless plain, the former bottom of pro-glacial Lake Agassiz, conspicuous for the absence of major relief features. Only in the immediate banks of the streams do a few adjacent meander scars and, out on the plains, a number of gravel ridges and kame moraines , break up the general monotony of the flat plain. The plain dips gently northward at the rate of about one foot per mile. However, the area is not without micro-relief features. In the immediate vicinity of the Red and Assiniboine the land rises gently upwards to the crests of subdued river levees. Back from the rivers the flat prairie is diversified by minor, often parallel, swell and swale features, barely perceptible to the naked eye.

Drainage:- The Red River and its tributaries formed the central spine of Selkirk's Assiniboia Grant. Across its centre the Red meanders northward in a fairly pronounced trench,

entering Lake Winnipeg through a large marshy delta, the nesting ground for multitudes of wild fowl. South of the delta the calm flow of the Red is interrupted by a barrier of dolomitic limestone that forms a series of shallow rapids, known to the fur traders as the Sault à la Biche or Pelican Ripple (later St. Andrew's Rapids OR GRAND RAPIDS). The subdued barrier of the natural river levees has combined with the extreme flatness of the terrain to prevent the development of effective drainage. Until the fairly recent initiation of artificial drainage, the paradox of a large entrenched river within an ill-drained, often swampy plain prevailed. Particularly after the spring melt, the Red River lowland was a morass of mud and water, difficult to travel across, and only during a hot, dry summer did the low lying sections of it completely dry out. Alexander Henry the Younger, an astute observer of geographical differences in the Red River Valley, has an excellent description of its condition during the wet summer of 1806:

> "The soil is a stiff black mold, through which the rain does not soon penetrate; but when it is once thoroughly soaked, the water cannot drain off as it does in more elevated plains. In many places we found several feet of water; every little hollow formed a pond, and every rivulet appeared like a river."[1]

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[1] Elliot Coues (ed.), New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest: The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry and of David Thompson, 1799-1814, I, (New York, 1897), p. 285. Also Ibid., pp. 212-213, May 24, 1803: "We found much water in the plains" and May 31, 1803: "There was too much water on the plains for our horses to proceed."

As Henry correctly records, the situation stemmed not only from an immature surface drainage system but from the slow internal drainage caused by the superimposition of fine grained lacustrine clays upon dense, imperivious tills in the low central portion of the Lake Agassiz plain. Conditions were made worse by the periodic flooding of the Red in response to its low gradient, large watershed and the great volume of its snow melt runoff in some years. After such occurrences the low-lying landscape often lay waterlogged or under surface pondage, for months or even years. The years 1776, 1790 and 1809 are thought to have been years of flooding or high water.[1] Inevitably at such times the lower parts of the lowland were converted into large shallow lakes that took years to disappear.

Soils:- The Red River lowland forms part of the Black Soil Zone of the North American prairies. Pedologically these soils are classed as pedocals. The soils in the low central section of the Lake Agassiz plain are fine-grained and lacustrine in origin. They are characterised by a high organic content and low permeability. Most are heavy textured clays developed under a covering of grass and when drained they are of high fertility. To the north and northeast of the Forks areas of silty and sandy loam prevail, sometimes derived from deltaic outwash and fore-beach deposits, sometimes from

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[1] Alexander Ross, Red River Settlement (London, 1856), p. 107.

underlying glacial materials. Beyond, towards the edge of the forested Shield, the black earths are gradually replaced by black-grey wooded soils. Along the immediate fringes of the rivers is a rim of recent flood alluvium which is both fine-grained and well drained. This Riverdale silt is the most fertile of all the local soils.

Vegetation:- The vegetation cover on the eve of agricultural colonisation cannot be recreated in detail but from an examination of early descriptions, painting and maps, supported by reconstructions based on later evidence, a fairly accurate picture can be assembled.[1] The area supported a mosaic of prairie grassland and woodland, with the former being most extensive. Trees were very localised in occurrence and largely confined to the natural levees bordering the streams. Some form of woodland prevailed on the well-drained levees and back in places as much as one mile or more from the rivers. The relatively warm, dry soils of the river levees seem to have supported dense stands of bur oak (Quercus macrocarpus) with aspen poplar (Populus tremuloides), elm (Ulmus americana), basswood (Tilia americana), lance-leaved ash (Fraxinus pennsylvanica), cottonwood (Populus sargentii) and Manitoba maple (Acer negundo) as lesser associates. The moist,

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[1]The best recreation of the "natural" vegetation of the Province of Manitoba is that in T. R. Weir (ed.), The Economic Atlas of Manitoba (Winnipeg, 1960), Plate 10. This reconstruction for southern Manitoba was assembled "largely from the township descriptions of the land surveys made when the various districts were being opened up for settlement from 1871 to about 1921." For an account of the vegetation of the prairie provinces see F. B. Watts, "The Natural Vegetation of the Southern Great Plains of Canada" Geographical Bulletin XIV, 1960, pp. 25-43.

waterlogged fringes of the rivers were home to willow (Salix interior and Salix amydaloides) and aspen, and back from the streams poplar and aspen replaced the oak-dominant hardwoods. The outer woodland fringe at some distance from the river probably degenerated to scrub and finally merged with the water-tolerant grasses, tall grass prairie and sedges of the back country. Alexander Henry had the following to say of vegetation conditions south of the Forks in 1800:

> "The S. side of the Assiniboine, particularly near the Forks, is a woody country, overgrown with poplars..... This woody country continues S. up Red River to Rivière la Sale. On the E. side the land is low, overgrown with poplars and willows, frequently intersected by marshes, stagnant ponds, and small rivulets.....The banks are covered on both sides with willows, which grow so thick and close as scarcely to admit going through; adjoining these is commonly a second bank of no great height. This is covered with very large wood, such as liard [poplar], bois blanc [basswood], elm, ash and oak; some of the trees are of enormous size. In the rear of this are oaks alone; then poplars and willows....."[1]

The forest belt was not of uniform width on both banks of the Red and the Assiniboine. Early accounts and descriptions suggest that the woods were of greater depth on the east bank of the Red and the south side of the Assiniboine. The woodland strip was mostly continuous but there were points at which the prairie ran down to the river's edge, noticeably for the purposes of this study at Frog and Image Plain below the Forks. Writing in 1815, Colin Robertson described the riparian forests of the lower Red River Valley:

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[1]Coues, New Light, I, pp. 48-49.

> "From the Forks of Assiniboine River to Dead River [Netley Creek], the distance is computed to be 40 miles....the woods deepen as you approach the Lake [Winnipeg] but from the Settlement to the Limestone Quarry [at the Grand Rapids] about 20 miles the woods are about a mile in depth, in Bays they are more and at Points the plains run to the river....Some of these Points are extremely beautiful....such as Limestone Quarry, Image Plain, Ferry [Frog?] Plain."[1]

Similarly another visitor to Red River, W. H. Keating commented on the riparian forests upstream from the Forks in 1823:

> "Sometimes the prairies approach to the edge of the water, but generally there is a line of woods which extends along the banks, on a breadth of from fifty yards to half a mile. This consists, near the margin of the river, of a thick growth of willow, next to which comes cotton-wood, and higher on the bank, aspen, bass, elm, oak, etc."[2]

The local margins of this riverine complex seem likely to have been controlled by drainage and to an inestimable extent by prairie fires, a regular occurrence in the fall of the year. Away from the rivers the lighter, better drained soils of the north-south trending kame moraines to the east of Red River supported stands of conifers ("the pine hills"),[3] oak and poplar while the intervening and surrounding long-grass prairie was frequently dotted with scattered and

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[1]Selkirk Papers (afterwards S.P.), 65, pp. 17, 347-12, 348, Colin Robertson's Journal, July 15, 1815.

[2]W. H. Keating, Narrative of an Expedition to the Source of the St. Peter's River, Lake Winnipeg and Lake of the Woods, etc. (London, 1825), II, p. 58.

[3]Ross, Red River Settlement, p. 13.

isolated clumps of aspen poplar and willow, the "îlets de bois" of French terminology, the "bluffs" of later observers.[1]

Fauna:- At the time of the first European colonisation, the woodlands and prairies of the Red River Valley were home to a variety of wildlife, including buffalo, moose, bear, deer, elk, wolf, fox, wolverine, beaver, raccoon, fisher, mink, otter, muskrat and marten. They formed the most important exploited resource of the area. Each of the above animals was shot or trapped for its pelt or meat or both by native Indians, half-breeds and European and Canadian traders. These items provided the only marketable products of the Red River country during the early years of the nineteenth century. The rivers and lakes teemed with a diversity of fish. Sturgeon was the most important of the river fish and whitefish, especially in the autumn, were taken from northern lakes in large numbers. Multitudes of ducks and geese nested in the lakes, deltaic marshes and swampy prairies of the region. They added to the varied food resources the Red River country provided

## Economic Geography

Following the first entry of European man into the region during the 1730's the economy of the region had been

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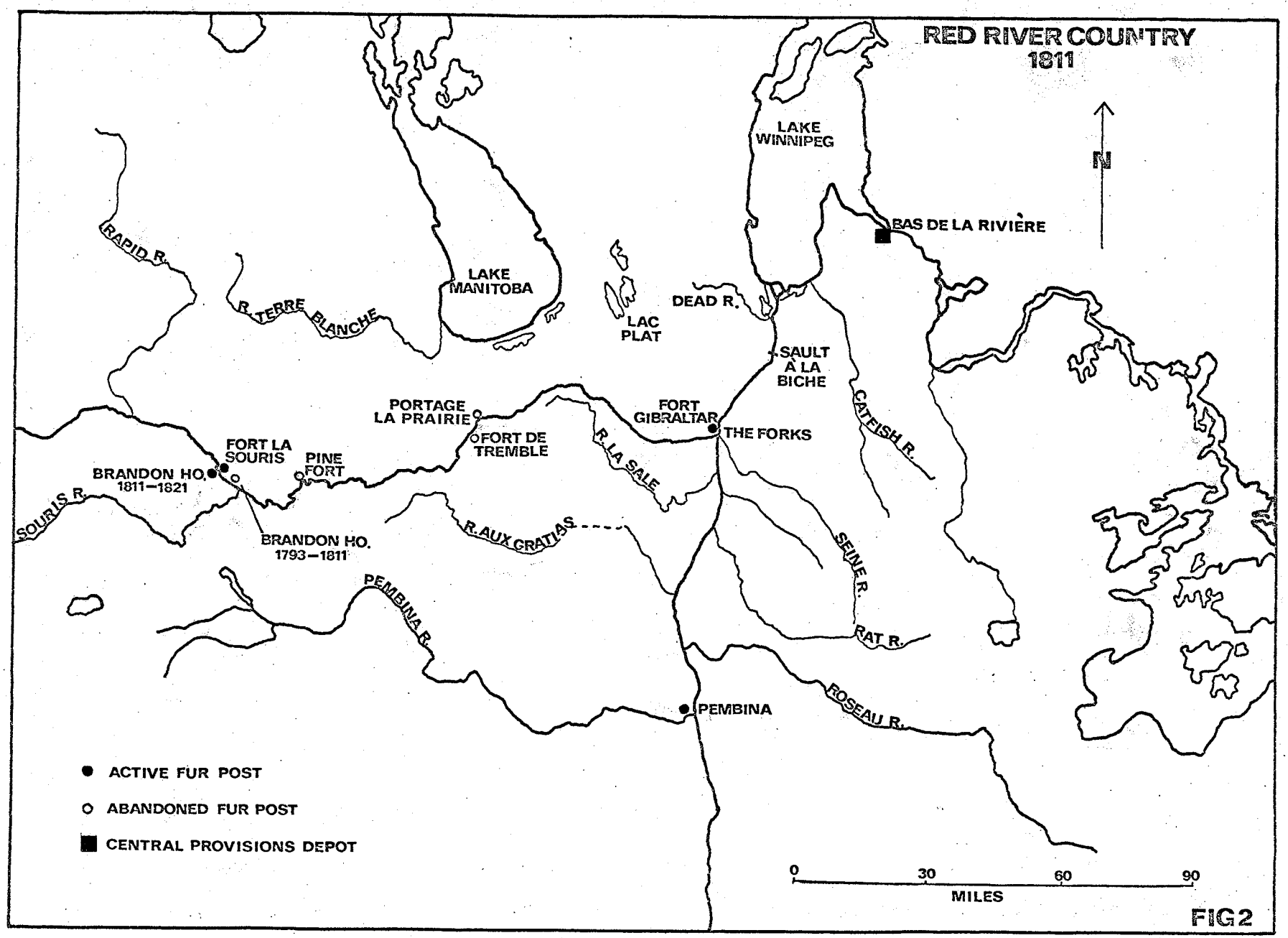
1 L. J. Burpee, (ed.), Journals and Letters of La Vérendrye and His Sons (Toronto, 1927), p. 485; L. R. Masson, Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest (New York, 1960). I, p. 269.


RED RIVER COUNTRY
1811
N
LAKE WINNIPEG
BAS DE LA RIVIÈRE
RAPID R.
R. TERRE BLANCHE
LAKE MANITOBA
LAC PLAT
DEAD R.
SAULT À LA BICHE
CATFISH R.
PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE
FORT GIBRALTAR
THE FORKS
FORT DE TREMBLE
R. LA SALE
FORT LA SOURIS
PINE FORT
BRANDON HO. 1811–1821
SOURIS R.
BRANDON HO. 1793–1811
R. AUX GRATIAS
SEINE R.
PEMBINA R.
RAT R.
ROSEAU R.
PEMBINA
ACTIVE FUR POST
ABANDONED FUR POST
CENTRAL PROVISIONS DEPOT
0
30
60
90
MILES
FIG 2

dominated by the fur trade. The search for the Western Ocean had brought explorer-traders into the Winnipeg Basin but it was the pursuit of furs that had determined them to stay. Since the last decade of the eighteenth century the fur trade had been characterised by the intense and heated rivalry of the North West Company out of Montreal and entering the area by the canoe route from Lake Superior and the Hudson's Bay Company moving inland from their various posts on the Bay. In the organisation of the traders the drainage basin of the Red was divided into two departments, the Upper Red River District of the Assiniboine and the Lower Red River District of the Red River Valley.[1]

The fur posts of the various trading organisations were the most important and characteristic expressions of this economy in the landscape. Most of these posts had river-oriented sites. The water courses were the main lines of movement and transportation, a valuable source of fish and the woodland concentrated on their banks provided natural shelter and timber for fuel and building needs. It was the rivers that integrated the whole region and along which the essential items of the fur trade moved - furs and skins, "plains - provisions" and European trade goods. Within the fur trading system the posts, each with its hinterland, were the centres at which the Indians marketed their pelts and

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[1] A. S. Morton, A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71 (Toronto, 1939), pp. 431-438.

to which increasingly in the prairie region, they brought the spoils of the hunt. The posts were also the distribution centres for trade goods. As the Indians were the most important recipients of manufactured goods and the chief hunters and trappers, the trading posts were particularly concentrated at the seasonal assembly points of the Indian bands. "The posts became part of the complex of site and trail and water route which supported the Indian mode of life."[1] They clustered especially at the junctions of the main rivers, advantageous sites for maintaining extra-regional contacts -- at the Pembina with the Red, the Souris with the Assiniboine[2] and the Qu'Appelle with the Assiniboine. In 1810 the North West Company had secured the strategic site at the Forks of the Red and the Assiniboine by building Fort Gibraltar, the first important trading establishment there since La Verendrye's Fort Rouge."[3]

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[1] W. L. Morton, "The Significance of Site in the Settlement of the American and Canadian Wests", Agricultural History, 1951, XXV, p. 98.

[2] For a recent study of the Souris mouth forts see A. E. Brown, "The Fur Trade Posts of the Souris-Mouth Area," Papers Read Before the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba, Series III, Number 17, 1960-1961 (Winnipeg, 1964), pp. 78-91.

[3] See W. Douglas, "New Light on the Old Forts of Winnipeg," Papers Read Before the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba, Series III, No. 11, 1956, pp. 40-89.

After the abandonment of the posts of the French at the time of the British conquest of New France, the "pedlars" and the Northwesters had been the pioneer traders in the area but since the early 1790's they had been steadily and persistently matched, post for post, by the Hudson's Bay men moving inland from York Factory and Fort Albany. The clustering of two or three or even more posts in one general location was often the outcome of this intense competition, as traders jostled for supremacy. Thus, for example, John Macdonell of the North West Company writing of the Souris mouth area in 1795: "There were five different oppositions built here last winter, all working against one another."[1] Being close together, each could keep a close surveillance on the activities of others and hope to intercept the fur supplies of his rivals. A few of the trading posts were sturdy settlements of some permanence but the majority were transient, flimsy structures that were moved and relocated for a variety of reasons -- the strong competition of a rival, the changing habits of the local Indians or the decline of a local resource (timber, game, or fur bearing animals). Alexander Henry, writing in 1806, noted the impermanence of the trading posts of the region: "The gentlemen of the N.W. Co. are so fond of shifting their buildings that a place is scarcely settled before it is thrown up and planted elsewhere."[2]

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[1] L. R. Masson, Les Bourgeois, I, p. 294.

[2] Coues, New Light, I, pp. 298-299.

The same writer provides an explanation for the abandonment of Pine Fort on the Assiniboine, where it cuts through the sand hills of the Upper Assiniboine delta. "Here we had an establishment for several years, but from the scarcity of wood, provisions, and other circumstances, it was abandoned [1794] and built higher up river, where the settlement is now, at Rivière la Souris."[1] The abandoned, decaying posts formed noticeable relict features in the riverine landscape. John Macdonell, travelling westward in about 1797 to the Qu'Appelle remarks that "all along the Assiniboil River may be seen the vestiges of many commerical settlements, several of which claim an ancient date."[2]

Judged by the number of posts the Assiniboine Valley was much the more important of the two Red River departments. It was the chief arterial thoroughfare to the west and led to the important fur bearing territory of the timbered, well watered hills and intervening valleys of the Manitoba escarpment, which carried the wooded fur country of the north deep into the grassy plains. The Assiniboine Valley was nicely poised between grassland and forest, between the parklands and coniferous forests to the north and west, and the prairies of the Souris plains to the south, where the buffalo roamed in countless numbers. John Macdonell differentiated between

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[1] Ibid., p. 296

[2] L. R. Masson, Les Bourgeois, I, p. 270.

the plains posts on the lower Qu'Appelle River at which "provisions are their chief returns" and Fort de la Rivière Tremblante "with temporary posts established above it" on the Upper Assiniboine, tapping the Duck and Riding Mountain areas, which "furnish most of the beaver and otter in the [Upper] Red River returns."[1]

The Red River lowlands had never been a rich fur preserve but a variety of animal pelts were still being taken out of the valleys of the Red and the Assiniboine during the first decade of the nineteenth century.[2] The shipments from the different posts varied with local environmental conditions and resources. The post at Portage la Prairie accounted for a large share of the muskrats dispatched from the Lower Red River District, taken from the Delta marshes on the southern shoreline of Lake Manitoba and the nearby Netley marshes of the Red River delta area.[3] The importance of the Pembina Mountains (Hair Hills) for bears (especially grizzlys) is reflected in the greater collection of bear skins at the Pembina post.[4] This same post was also the centre of a local trade in maple sugar, made each spring, and salt.

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[1] Ibid., p. 275

[2] For the returns at the Lower Red River Department, 1800-1808, see Coues, New Light, I, pp. 184, 198, 221, 245, 259, 281, 422, 440.

[3] Ibid., p. 291

[4] Ibid., pp. 121, 422.

However, the furs being taken from the Red River Valley at this time were more or less the last remnants of a trade that had been going on with little interruption since the 1730's. As far as the fur trade was concerned, by the second decade of the nineteenth century the Red River lowland was widely recognized as exhausted and worn out. Bishop Provencher's statement of 1818 summarises the situation:

> "Red River is by no means a place for trade. There are no furs here. The largest trade would be in buffalo robes, but the Companies do not take them....All that the North West Company and Hudson's Bay Company obtain from this area is provisions, which consist of dry meats, for their voyageurs along the route to their scattered posts in the North and elsewhere."[1]

Provencher's placement of the Red River Valley in the overall economy of the fur trade of the Northwest is essentially correct. "It was its buffalo plains rather than its fur forests that made the Red River country significant to the fur traders in 1812."[2] The posts on the edge of the buffalo country, from Pembina through to the Souris mouth and the lower Qu'Appelle were primarily supply posts, the collecting and distribution centres for "plains-provisions," the

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[1] G. L. Nute (ed.), Documents Relating to Northwest Missions, 1815-1827 (St. Paul, 1942), p. 141. Similar comments in E. Ellice, A Narrative of Occurrences in the Indian Countries of North America (London, 1817), pp. 6-7 and United Kingdom, Papers Relating to the Red River Settlement: 1815-1819 (London, 1819), p. 4.

[2] M. A. MacLeod and W. L. Morton, Cuthbert Grant of Grantown (Toronto, 1963), p. 13.

variety of preparations made from the flesh and fat of the buffalo, of which the most important was pemmican.[1] The buffalo were hunted down and brought into the forts by the local Plains Indians, the Assiniboins and the Crees, or by half-breed hunters who were attached to many of the posts. There all the provisions were stored in ice-houses until spring, when after the break up of the rivers, buffalo-hide bags of pemmican of about 90 pounds weight were carried in long boats down the Red and the Assiniboine to Bas de la Rivière at the mouth of the Winnipeg River. This post was "the general dépôt for provisions."[2] David Thompson described it as "a depot of Provisions, which are brought to this place by the canoes and boats from the Bison countries of the Red and Saskatchewan Rivers, and distributed to the canoes and boats for the voyages to the several wintering furr trading Houses."[3] Bas de la Rivière, like Rainy Lake Fort to the east and Cumberland House to the north west, was one of the several central provisions depots on the long canoe route that carried the boat brigades through from the Grand Portage on Lake Superior to the Athabascan country. From this main depot on the central

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[1]R. Glover (ed.), David Thompson's Narrative 1784-1812 (Toronto, 1962), p. 312: "...Pemican, a wholesome, well tasted nutritious food, upon which all persons engaged in the furr trade mostly depend for their subsistence during the open season."

[2]Coues, New Light, I, p. 35.

[3]R. Glover (ed.), David Thompson's Narrative, pp. 139-140.

part of the canoe route both eastward and westward moving brigades were loaded up with bags of pemmican. From the same post furs were carried to the St. Lawrence ports and thence to the European markets.

Agriculture:- Agriculture, in the form of gardens attached to some of the trading posts, was also present in the Red River country in 1810, though as compared with hunting, fishing and fowling it contributed but a small proportion of the food of the population. The French explorer-traders had no doubt practised a little agriculture at their posts in the Winnipeg Basin during the 1740's, just as they had cultivated Indian corn at Fort St. Charles on Lake of the Woods, but the record is silent on this matter. With the entry of the traders of the North West Company and Hudson's Bay Company into the area it is known that agriculture definitely became established, though in a minor way. Its origins can probably be traced to the initiative of individual traders interested in working the land and looking for something to pass away the leisure hours of long Red River summer evenings. The garden produce added much needed variety to a monotonous diet consisting almost entirely of meat and fish, and helped to reduce the distress occasioned by any failure of the hunt. The husbandry carried on by these fur trade employees was not field agriculture conducted with a plough and draught animals but a form of gardening -- small, roughly cleared plots carved out of the prairie or stream-side woods and worked by rudimentary

hand tools. Potatoes were probably the main crop but a variety of vegetables and a little grain (Indian corn and oats) were also grown. Prairie grasses were cut for hay and dried for winter feed for the horses stabled at the posts.[1] It was also used as a thatching material.

It is impossible to say just when and where agriculture originated in the Red River lowland. The North West traders had a garden at Portage la Prairie at least as early as 1801, for Alexander Henry had obtained seed potatoes from that source in the spring of 1802.[2] Four years later Henry described the "excellent garden, well stocked with potatoes, carrots, corn, onions, parsnips, beets, turnips, etc., all in forwardness and good order" at the Portage post, adding that because of the dry sandy soil there the melons and potatoes did not yield so well as at his Pembina gardens.[3] The most complete and detailed record of this fur post agriculture is found in Henry's Journal, kept at his Pembina post from 1800 to 1808. As recorded in this journal Henry had astonishing success as a gardener, both in the returns he achieved and the diversity of his crops. Potatoes, cabbages, turnips, carrots, parsnips, beets, squashes, radishes, peas, cucumbers,

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[1]Coues, New Light, I, p. 424: "Aug. 31st, 1807.....My men were just finishing our hay - 3,000 bundles, of about 15 pounds each.".....Sept. 19th "I employed all my men to build a large stable, to contain 50 horses.

[2]Ibid., p. 197, also Ibid., p. 212.

[3]Ibid., p. 291.

melons, along with Indian corn and oats are listed as the diverse products of his gardens. In 1804, for example, Henry claimed to have harvested 1,000 bushels of potatoes, 40 bushels of turnips, 25 bushels of carrots, 20 bushels of beets, 20 bushels of parsnips, 10 bushels of cucumbers, 10 bushels of Indian corn, five bushels of squashes, two bushels of melons and 500 cabbages.[1] Henry was probably the first person to plough as against hoe the tough Canadian prairie sod. In April 1808 the blacksmith at Pembina was making a plowshare and in May Henry tells us that he "began to plow for sowing."[2]

Further north, the North West Company also had a "well cultivated farm" at Bas de la Rivière, with "fields of barley, peas, oats, and potatoes." In W. L. Morton's view this is likely the "oldest continuously cultivated land in Manitoba".[3] The Hudson's Bay men had also realised the benefits of farming. William Yorstone's Journal, kept at Brandon House from 1810 to 1811, notes the planting of cabbages, melons, cucumbers and onions and the harvesting of 458 kegs of potatoes.[4]

A slight variation on this form of agriculture was that carried out by the Canadian freemen, discharged employees of the fur companies who chose to remain in the Northwest with

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[1] Ibid., p. 252

[2] Ibid., pp. 429-430.

[3] W. L. Morton, Manitoba: A History (Toronto, 1957), p. 42.

[4] S.P., 62, pp. 16,500 - 16,542, William Yorstone's Journal.

their families. Some of them cultivated potatoes and vegetables at certain favoured locations, such as at the Forks of the Red and Assiniboine, and sold part of their produce to the traders at the forts.[1]

The traders and freemen were not the only cultivators of the soil. The southern boundary of the Assiniboia Grant passed just north of what is normally considered the northern limit of Indian agriculture in the Great Plains region. At the time of the first European contact with the Indians, the northern limit of agriculture in that area is thought to have been at the Knife River villages of the Hidatsa Indians at about 47 degrees and 30 minutes.[2] Here the Hidatsas, along with their village dwelling neighbours, the Mandans and Arikaras, cultivated a rich variety of crops -- Indian corn, beans, squashes, pumpkins, melons, sunflowers and tobacco, in the river bottoms of the Upper Missouri country. In the forested Shield country between Lake Superior and the eastern edge of the prairies of the Red River Valley, the Ojibwa or Saulteaux Indians lived largely by hunting, fishing and the gathering of wild rice from the numerous rivers and lakes.

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[1] W. L. Morton, Manitoba: A History, p. 42; Marcel Giraud, Le Métis Canadien (Paris, 1945), p. 371.

[2] G. F. Will, "Indian Agriculture at its Northern Limits in the Great Plains Region", 20th International Congress of Americanists (Rio De Janeiro, 1922), pp. 202-205.

There was, however, a little sporadic agriculture throughout this area. The fur trader Daniel Harmon writes in his journal that "the Sauteux, who remain about the Lake of the Woods, now begin to plant Indian corn and potatoes, which grow well,"[1] and by 1820 there is evidence that the Indians of the Red Lake and Upper Mississippi area were planting corn.[2] Ojibwa agriculture reached its westernmost limits at Netley Creek, where "the Great Plains began", on the edge of the Red River delta. It is known that since at least 1806 the Saulteaux had planted Indian corn and potatoes there, a favourite summer camping ground and fishing base.[3] According to John Tanner, a white man living and travelling with the Indians, the Saulteaux had been introduced to the possibilities of farming by an Ottawa Indian from the east.[4] It was the only agriculture in the Red River country not closely linked to the fur posts, but it was on a small scale and probably not maintained every year. At one point Tanner states that "we

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[1]W. K. Lamb (ed.), Sixteen Years in the Indian Country, The Journal of Daniel Williams Harmon 1800-1816 (Toronto, 1957) p. 211.

[2]G. F. Will and G. E. Hyde, Corn Among the Indians of the Upper Missouri (St. Louis, 1917), p. 298, Note 8.

[3]John Tanner, A Narrative of the Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner During Thirty Years Residence Among the Indians In the Interior of North America. (Minneapolis, 1956), pp. 167-168, 171, 190, 203; Coues, New Light, I, pp. 280-281, II, p. 448; S.P., 1, pp. 176-177, Selkirk's Instructions to Miles Macdonell, 1811; Ibid., 65, p. 17,381, Colin Robertson's Journal, Aug. 18, 1815; Giraud, Le Métis Canadien, p. 51, note 1; "Diary of Nicholas Garry,"Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, VI, Section II, 1900, p. 135.

[4]Tanner, Narrative, p. 171. The Ottawa Indians cultivated corn in the Georgian Bay area.

started to come to an island called Me-Nau-Zhe-taw-Naun, in the Lake of the Woods, where we had concluded to plant corn, instead of our old fields at Dead River [Netley Creek]."[1]

Livestock, though few in number, were also present at the trading posts. Horses of the small Spanish variety, essential for travel and the hunt, were kept at most posts and, of course, were an essential part of the nomadic life of the Plains Indians. It would seem that at the time of the formation of the Selkirk Colony the North West traders at Fort la Souris on the Assiniboine had a small herd of cattle, for in 1813 the settlers were able to purchase a bull and two cows from them. The cock and two hens that Alexander Henry had brought from Fort William to Pembina in the summer of 1807 had become a small flock of 18 by the following summer.[2] However, the problems involved in bringing livestock into the Northwest from potential sources of supply (Europe, Canada and the United States) had certainly kept numbers, apart from horses, to a minimum.

Agriculture in the Canadian West probably had its origins during the fur trade years of the eighteenth century. It would, however, be a mistake to overemphasise the importance of agriculture in the area of what was to become Assiniboia. But that the fur traders and others had tested the possibilities of the soil by the early years of the

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[1] Ibid., p. 190

[2] Coues, New Light, I, pp. 428-429, 431, 438.

nineteenth century was significant for future developments. Firstly, the success of fur post agriculture had demonstrated that a wide variety of crops, if only on a small scale, and in the immediate vicinity of the main rivers, could be cultivated in the valleys of the Red and the Assiniboine. It meant, secondly, that a small but basic stock of seeds and domesticated animals could be found at the several nuclei of agriculture. Thirdly, the failure of the crops in certain years had pointed up the fact that tillage undertaken in the midst of a wilderness and in a mid-continental environment could not be carried on without a degree of risk and uncertainty. In 1805 drought and heat had reduced the volume of Henry's crops at Pembina[1] and three years later clouds of the Rocky Mountain grasshoppers (Melanoplus spretus) appeared from the south and destroyed most of the vegetables in his gardens.[2]

Despite the periodic failure of the crops and the lack of detailed knowledge about environmental conditions on the prairies, there had been enough successful harvests at the various trading posts "in the interior of the country", to encourage the fur companies to devise plans for its extension. Both the North West and Hudson's Bay Companies were ready to extend the size of existing cultivated plots

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[1] Ibid., p. 267, Oct. 8, 1805: "Men finished gathering potatoes, but the crop has failed owing to the excessive heat, which scorched everything early in the season. I had only 400 bushels."

[2] Ibid., pp. 430-431. Also Ibid; p. 39.

or to introduce agriculture at posts where it was not already practised. The English Company was willing to go much further than its rivals, however, in sponsoring agricultural development. Central to their strategy was the establishment of an agricultural colony in the Red River Valley.[1] The reorganisation of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1810-1811 clearly recognised the need for cultivation in Rupert's Land and stressed the necessity of reducing the volume of foodstuffs imported from Europe. The movement of the fur frontier into the rich Athabasca River region and to the edge of the Mackenzie Valley, the multiplication of trading posts and the resulting rise in the number of fur trade servants during the period of fierce competition with the Northwesters, as well as the lengthening lines of transportation of the boat brigades, had begun to place a severe strain on local supplies of food and compelled the Company to increase its purchases from outside. It was the desire to cut down the cost of importing provisions from England and the need to stabilise and cheapen the supply of foodstuffs for their servants involved in the inland trade, which lay behind the plans of the Hudson's Bay men to extend their agricultural operations in Rupert's Land.

The creation of Assiniboia, besides satisfying the personal aims and ambitions of Lord Selkirk to settle landless

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[1] A. S. Morton, "The Place of the Red River Settlement in the Plans of the Hudson's Bay Co., 1812-1825," Annual Report of the Canadian Historical Association, 1929, pp. 103-109.

British peasants in the interior of North America, was meant to strengthen the competitive position of the Hudson's Bay Company in its bitter and prolonged struggle with the Northwesters. Selkirk's Colony, focused on the Forks of the Red and the Assiniboine, gradually supplanted Bas de la Rivière and the provisioning posts on the Assiniboine and the Red as the pivot around which the trade of the Northwest turned. The new settlement, with its succession of posts at the Forks, became the crucial supply centre for both agricultural produce and "plains-provisions", the former contributed largely by European farmers, the latter by métis hunters, until by the mid 1820's it had begun to assume the provisioning functions of the posts in the Red River country. The formation of an agricultural colony in Assiniboia augmented and consolidated the food supply role of the Red River Valley in the life and economy of the western plains.

The Company hoped that other benefits might ensue from the presence of a sedentary agricultural population at Red River. The colony could be used as a source of valuable manpower and might well become a convenient home for fur trade servants and their families retiring from service and yet unwilling to return to Europe.

# RED RIVER SETTLEMENT

1812 - 1827

# CHAPTER II

## POPULATION 1812 - 1827

### Introduction

The peoples that came to Red River to make up Selkirk's colony were an heterogeneous group, representing a variety of religions, languages and nationalities. Two main groups of colonists can be distinguished: the immigrants to Red River from overseas and the various people who moved into the settlement from other parts of North America by the process of internal migration. The immigrant colonists can be subdivided according to place of origin into those from Atlantic Britain, mainly Scots but also including a few Irish, and those from Central Europe, the de Meurons and the Swiss.[1] Among the internal migrants the most important elements were the colonists from Lower Canada and the métis and fur traders retiring from service in the Northwest.

### Immigrants

Atlantic Britain:- There was an initial increase of population in the colony from 1812 to 1815 resulting from the arrival there of Scottish and Irish settlers recruited by Selkirk and his agents. Selkirk had seen at first hand the acute distress of much of the rural population of Scotland

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[1]The de Meurons were recruited by Selkirk in North America but they were recent arrivals and formed, along with the Swiss, a distinct Central European element within the Red River population.

and Ireland and hoped to play his part in relieving it by providing an asylum for some of them at his North American colony. Emigration from these areas was not a new thing and the migrants to Red River were part of the general exodus from the Scottish Highlands and Ireland which took their peoples to all parts of North America. The movement to Selkirk's colony was specifically connected with the conversion by many of the Scottish landowners of much of the Highlands into sheep country and the resultant displacement from their holdings of many small tenant farmers.[1]

There were three main parties of emigrants from Britain to Red River, arriving there in 1812, 1814 and 1815,[2] and all approached the colony from a northerly direction, via Hudson's Bay, York Factory and the Hayes River route. The first party was the most varied and the least satisfactory. It included recruits from the Scottish Highlands, the Scottish Islands (Tiree and Mull) as well as a number of Western Irishmen recruited from County Sligo.[3] An unruly and undisciplined body, few of them faced the pioneering life with any great

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[1] S.P., 2, p. 650, Selkirk to Macdonell, June 12, 1813.

[2] The 18 Irish and Scottish labourers who accompanied Macdonell to Red River in 1812 came as servants and not as colonists, to take possession of the land and prepare the way for later arrivals.

[3] Opinions as to the size of this party differ. J. P. Pritchett, The Red River Valley 1811-1849, A Regional Study (Toronto, 1942), p. 95, gives a total of 71. W. L. Morton, Manitoba: A History (Toronto, 1957) p. 46, gives the number of settlers as 120, "with an unknown number of women and children."

enthusiasm. It was not until the arrival of the first party of Kildonan settlers in 1814 that the settlement received its first colonists who were anxious to break and win the land for agriculture.[1] During 1813 Selkirk had wisely narrowed his field of recruitment and most of the arrivals of both 1814 and 1815 were from the parish of Kildonan, Sutherlandshire, in Scotland's extreme north, where in 1813, the Scottish clearances had been at their most extreme.[2] After an abortive attempt at rebellion and protests to London, some of the displaced Highlanders decided to accept Selkirk's offer that they might move to his colony in North America, where they would again be able to farm their own lands. The first party of Kildonan settlers, 83 in number, set out in 1813 but was forced to winter at Churchill and did not arrive at the colony until June of the following year. The arrival of a further 14 or 15 Sutherlanders later in 1814 brought the number of colonists at Red River to about 200. In the late fall of 1815 the second substantial party of Sutherlanders, totalling 84 arrived, the last groups of immigrants from Britain. They joined the 45 or 50 settlers who had returned from Jack River at the northern end of Lake Winnipeg, after the first destruction of the colony by the Northwesters in 1815. During the first four years of the colony's existence perhaps 300 persons had arrived from Britain. Population totals

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[1] S.P., 4, pp. 1194-1195, Macdonell to Selkirk, July 25, 1814.

[2] See, H. Fairhurst, "The Survey of the Sutherland Clearances, 1813-1820", Scottish Studies, VIII, 1964, pp. 1-16.

fluctuated sharply during these early years until finally in 1817 about 150 persons, predominantly Sutherland Scots, settled at Red River after the second dispersal of the colony in 1816. Another 130 to 140 colonists, cajoled, bullied and bribed by the North West Company had moved to Canada and the United States or returned to Britain.

The Highlanders settled in a compact area along that stretch of Red River between Point Douglas and Frog Plain, (Figure 3), in what soon became a closely knit, well organised economic unit. The parish of Kildonan was a Scottish enclave, where many of the people could speak only Gaelic and most of them were strongly Presbyterian in faith. Marrying amongst themselves and keeping aloof from the other colonists, these clan-conscious Highlanders long maintained their unique personality. The Kildonan settlers especially had come as families and as a group believing that by emigration they might preserve their identity as a community and their dignity as a race. A few had come as craftsmen -- millwrights, wheelwrights or blacksmiths -- but most were peasant farmers who gave much needed strength and solidity to Selkirk's emerging colony. They complained continuously of conditions at Red River and in 1818, after the first destruction of their crops by grasshoppers, even threatened to leave the colony altogether. But the Scots generally adjusted themselves well to the harsh conditions of the country, learning the various techniques that would ensure their survival. Though they clung in many instances to their

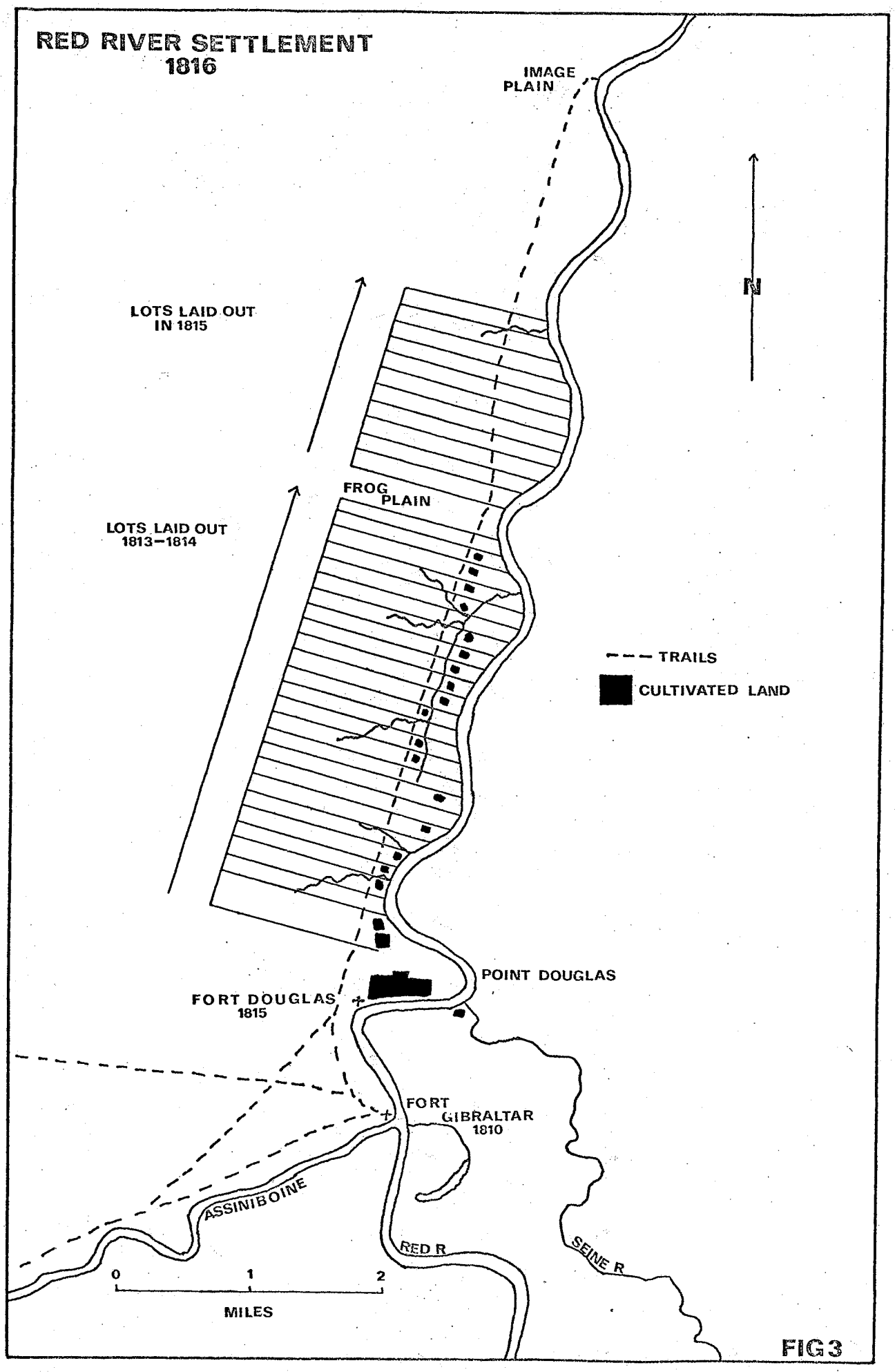


FIG 3

SOURCE: AMOS' PLAN OF RED RIVER SETTLEMENT, 1816.

old ways, they soon learnt to be fairly adequate hunters and fishermen, activities which helped them to maintain their as yet precarious agricultural economy. Their grievances centred around the absence of a minister of their own faith and language, rather than around the hard pioneering life they faced on the North American plains. During the many years of scarcity the Scots usually suffered less than the other settlers at Red River, for whatever they lacked in skill and capital, they made up for by hard work, frugality and perseverence, as well as by their determination to uphold the agricultural way of life. They soon developed as close an attachment to their lots along the Red River as they had had for their holdings alongside the Helmsdale River in the Strath of Kildonan.[1] After the 1826 flood, coming almost as if to test the strength of the bond between the various colonists and the land they had settled, the Scots returned to their lots, restored their devastated farmsteads and planted their crops during the early summer as the water slowly retreated. There they soon domonstrated that a fairly stable agriculture could be established in this outlier of settlement on the North American prairies.

Central Europe:- In sharp contrast to the Scots and settled across the Red River from them were the colonists

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[1]S.P., 26, p. 8238, Simpson to Colvile, May 31, 1824.

from Central Europe. The de Meurons[1] were the first immigrants of non-British origin and the earliest settlers to take up land on the east side of Red River. Disbanded mercenaries who had fought in the War of 1812, they had been recruited by Selkirk in 1816 with the promise that they would each receive 100 acres of land in his colony. Instrumental in Selkirk's recapture of his colony during the 1816-1817 winter, several of the de Meurons applied for and were granted land on Point Douglas in the following spring. Later in 1817 most of those wishing to remain at the colony were given "shady lots" across from the Forks in the well-wooded tract of country between the Seine and the Red, where they soon raised homes and cleared plots of land for cultivation.[2] The first group of soldier-settlers at Red River, they were a military and defensive force placed at the centre of the colony to protect it from any further possible outbreaks of violence. They may have been satisfactory as soldiers but most of them were poor settlers, their complaints and problems numerous. The lack of wives and farm implements, the price

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[1]These soldier-colonists included a number of men from the Watteville and Glengarry Fencibles Regiments as well as from the de Meuron Regiment but they were known collectively as the de Meurons or Meurons.

[2]Selkirk had originally enrolled about 100 soldiers, but only about half of them chose to remain at Red River, the rest returning to Europe. The census of August 1818 lists 46 de Meuron bachelors in 31 houses. In 1821 Nicholas Garry gives 65 Meurons "of all ages". Presumably by this time some of them had dependents or families. See "Diary of Nicholas Garry," Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, VI, Section II, 1900, p. 193.

of goods at the colony store, and the grasshopper plagues, were the cause of continuous grumbling. An unruly, undisciplined, brawling body of men, they presented an open threat to law and order within the colony. Despite their diversity of origin -- they included German speaking Swiss, Germans, Poles, French and Italians -- they were a distinct and easily recognized group.[1] Their settlement was known as "Germantown", the track connecting their lots was German Street, the River Seine was known for a time as German Creek, whilst the first mission at Red River was named after the great German missionary, St. Boniface.

Closely associated with the de Meurons and attached by marital ties were the 170 Swiss colonists who arrived in the autumn of 1821.[2] This was the largest and last party of immigrants to come to the Red River Settlement, and had been recruited by Selkirk's agent in Switzerland with the aid of some over imaginative promotional literature, mainly in the cantons of Neuchâtel and Berne. Predominantly French speaking and Protestant, they were mostly townsmen rather than countrymen, craftsmen and artisans rather than farmers. They arrived

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[1]For a detailed analysis of one element amongst the de Meurons see, V. Turek, "Poles Among the De Meuron Soldiers," Papers of the Manitoba Historical and Scientific Society, Series III, 9, 1954, pp. 53-68.

[2]For the Swiss colonists see: G.F.G. Stanley (ed.), "Documents Relating to the Swiss Immigration to Red River in 1821," C.H.R. XXII (1), 1941, pp. 42-50; "Early Days at Red River Settlement and Fort Snelling....Reminiscences of Mrs. Ann Adams 1821-1829," Minn. Hist. Col., VI, 1894, pp. 75-115.

in the colony at a low point in its fortunes; after a poor harvest and just before the unsuccessful 1821-1822 hunt. The Swiss were ill equipped to meet the rigours of a Red River winter and soon showed themselves to be no farmers. Their whole way of life was unfriendly to the steady and relentless toil which any successful pioneer agricultural enterprise requires and as a result they never reconciled themselves to the hardships of frontier life. Faced with the reality of conditions at Red River and rightly feeling they had been tricked by Selkirk and his agent, the Swiss became the leaders of the emigration movement from the colony in the early 1820's.[1] Their talk was usually of emigration rather than of farming and their intended goal was the United States, for the early migrants away from the Red River went south not west. Individual families of disillusioned Swiss and de Meurons had left in 1822, 1823 and 1824 but most of them departed after the 1826 flood. Much to the relief of the colonial authorities, who gave them provisions to help them on their way, both the Swiss and the de Meurons, never reconciled to conditions at Red River, decided to move south en bloc during the summer of 1826 to America's rapidly emerging

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[1]E. H. Oliver (ed.), The Canadian North-West: Its Early Development and Legislative Records (Ottawa, 1914), I., pp. 228-230.

Middle West.[1] Some of them settled around Fort Snelling but most travelled to milder climates lower down the Mississippi, many to Illinois' booming lead mining district around Galena.

Internal Migrants

Until 1821 the Red River Colony had grown largely through the personal efforts of Lord Selkirk and by intercontinental migration. If the early years had been more successful and the progress of the colony more even, the number of immigrants would almost certainly have been greater. As it was they were not numerous: perhaps a total of 500 to 520 Scots, Irish, Swiss and de Meuron colonists. Selkirk died in 1820 and after 1821 immigration virtually halted. The colony continued to grow, apart from natural increase, by intracontinental migration, as more and more metis and retired servants and officers of the Company took refuge there. In the summer of 1818 a small number of French Canadian farming families, recruited in the Montreal area, had accompanied the Roman Catholic missionaries to Red River. Here they formed the nucleus of a French speaking and Roman Catholic community which grew up on the east side of Red River around the church of St. Boniface.[2]

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[1]The Swiss and de Meurons made up most of the emigrants of 1826, though a few Swiss and Poles are recorded in later colonial censuses. Estimates of the total number of emigrants range from 243 to 300. See Alexander Ross, The Red River Settlement (London, 1856), p. 109; S.P., 27, p. 8471, D. McKenzie to Colvile, Jan. 30, 1827: Grace Lee Nute (ed.), Documents Relating to Northwest Missions, 1815-1827 (St. Paul, 1942), p. 443.

[2]The number of Lower Canadian colonists is uncertain. It was

Similar in language and religion to these French Canadian farmers but different in their way of life were the more numerous métis. They had begun to settle at several lake and riverside places even before the creation of Selkirk's colony. Their early settlement was uncontrolled and these half-breeds set down where they wished in the Northwest. They moved into the Red River lowlands from all directions and scattered to all parts of it: at the Forks, along the Assiniboine, and especially at Pembina, settling where and as they pleased.[1] So great was the accumulation of métis at the favoured hunting place of Pembina, that they gave the youthful colony a twin focus.[2] The concentration of people at Pembina was the most obvious illustration of the essential dichotomy of the Red River economy. The colony at the Forks had been founded as an agricultural settlement but the uncertainty of farming made it partly dependent on the hunt conducted out of Pembina, while Pembina itself, despite a little agriculture, was primarily a collection of métis hunters, grouped around a Catholic mission and an Hudson's Bay Fort. This tendency was partly arrested in 1824 when the Pembina métis were herded

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probably about 40. The 26 Canadians listed in the 1818 census are probably "free" Canadians, ex-employees of the fur trade companies and not the settlers from Quebec.

[1] S.P., 4, p. 1200, Macdonell to Selkirk, July 25, 1814; Ibid., 19, p. 6541, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, November 8, 1819.

[2] W. H. Keating, Narrative of an Expedition to the Source of St. Peter's River (London, 1825), II, p. 225: "The colony planted by the Earl of Selkirk occupies two positions on the banks of this river, one at the confluence of the Assiniboin, usually called Fort Douglas, and the other about sixty miles above, called Pembina."

together and settled at the main colony, largely at White Horse Plain but also at St. Boniface. Henceforth, the two main supports of life at Red River, the buffalo hunt and agriculture, were to be conducted from and at the one compact settlement. The métis were at first strongly opposed to an agricultural colony founded in the midst of their traditional hunting grounds and becoming the willing dupes of the North-westers had broken it up in 1815 and 1816. But they later fell under the civilising influence of the Catholic priests, and following the example of their leader, Cuthbert Grant, settled down there in increasing numbers. They soon became the most distinctive element in the settlement and the largest part of its population. Some became farmers and many had riverside homes and a patch of cultivated land but the majority were unwilling to give up the wild, free life of the plains they had always enjoyed. Their economy was based on the buffalo hunt, arranged after 1826-1827 into two well organised trips into the prairies.[1] The fisheries formed another means of subsistence and others worked as trip men, guides and voyageurs for the Company.

In 1821 there began another important exodus of peoples from all parts of Rupert's Land to Red River, for the union of the fur trade companies in that year brought people as well as peace to the colony. One consequence of this amalgamation was that many of the posts created during the height of the

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[1]Marcel Giraud, Le Métis Canadien (Paris, 1945), p. 650.

competition between the North West and Hudson's Bay companies were either closed down or reduced in personnel, and so released many fur trade employees from their positions. This process had begun in a small way even before the Union of 1821. One condition of the original land grant of Assiniboia to Selkirk had been that one tenth of it should be reserved for the settlement of fur traders who had been in the Company's employ for a term of not less than three years. Selkirk had expressed his willingness to allot up to 100 acres of land to any discharged Company servant of good character.[1]

Taking up this offer in 1818, a number of Orkneymen (retired employees of the Hudson's Bay Company), with their "wives brown and white and their children" were settling along the Assiniboine at the White Horse Plain, close by the métis also gathering there since about 1814. At that place they laid the foundations of Orkney Town.[2] But retired traders only became a significant element in the colonial population after 1821.[3] In that year a few of these men left their posts, bound for locations where they could begin life anew. Some returned to Britain, others went to Canada or the United States, but most crowded into the Red River Settlment. The arrivals

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[1] S. P., 3, p. 724, Selkirk to Macdonell, June 20, 1813.

[2] Ibid., 15, p. 5199, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, July 30, 1818; Ibid., 16, p. 5330, Capt. Matthey to Selkirk, Aug. 30, 1818. According to M. Giraud this settlement was known for a time as Birsay after the parish of the same name in the Orkneys: Le Métis Canadien, p. 670.

[3] S. P., 23, p. 7384, Simpson to Colvile, Sept. 8, 1821.

of 1822 were fewer, but in 1823 more than 200 discharged employees left the Northwest fur posts, most of them set for Red River.[1] Thereafter, the influx of these people into the colony was a yearly feature of life there. The arrivals included representatives of the whole hierarchy of fur trade employees, from clerks and servants to quite wealthy "commissioned gentlemen". The majority of them were Orkneymen and many brought with them their swarthy Indian or half-breed wives and their children.[2] Unwilling to face the possibility of social ostracism in Europe, and feeling a real attachment for the American northlands, these men made their future in the Red River Colony. Here the multiplying schools and churches of river front parishes would provide for the educational and spiritual needs of themselves and their families. The early arrivals were granted land north of Frog Plain in St. Paul's parish (Figure 4). Later arrivals moved lower down into the Grand Rapids area, in what would soon be St. Andrew's parish. Others moved to the lower Assiniboine or to Point Douglas. Most received land grants of up to 100 acres but a few retiring officers were given large holdings of as much as 2,000 acres in the Image Plain area.[3]

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[1]Giraud, Le Métis Canadien, p. 685.

[2]For the Red River Orkneymen see Ross, Red River Settlement, pp. 110-111.

[3]S.P., 26, p. 8237, Simpson to Colvile, May 31, 1824.

Population Growth

Until 1821 the population of the settlement grew slowly, uncertainly and mainly as a result of immigration from Europe. A population of 222 in 1818, recorded in the first Red River census,[1] had increased to 382 (181 men, 83 women and 118 children) by 1819.[2] Nicholas Garry, visiting the colony in 1821, estimated that there were 419 colonists, plus another 500 at the upper settlement of Pembina.[3] To this total were added the 170 colonists from Switzerland arriving later that year. The continued and accelerated increase of population after 1821 was largely the result of internal migration, as the settlement became the home of the fur traders unemployed. Already by the spring of 1822 there were 1,281 persons there; 234 men, 161 women and 886 children.[4] This growing population was further swelled in 1824 by the withdrawal of the Pembina métis to the lower settlement. In that year Simpson estimated that there were over 2,000 persons in the colony.[5] This period of population increase, perhaps the most rapid in the settlement's history, was interrupted by the 1826 flood and

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[1]S.P., 15, p. 5237, Names of the Settlers of Red River, Aug. 1818; Ibid., 16, p. 5330, Capt. Matthey to Selkirk, Aug. 30, 1818. A number of Orkneymen, already settling along the Assiniboine, are not recorded in this census.

[2]Ibid., 19, p. 6558, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, Nov. 8, 1819.

[3]"Diary of Nicholas Garry," p. 193.

[4]S.P., 24, p. 7673, Abstract of Settlers, Cattle and Seed R.R.S. Spring, 1822.

[5]Ibid., 26, p. 8256, Simpson to Colvile, May 31, 1824. This

the subsequent emigration.

These years of rapid expansion were also the period during which the population at Red River, in terms of its racial composition, was at its most varied. Simpson calculated in 1824 that the representatives of "upwards of twelve different nations" could be found amongst the population.[1] It is not possible to trace in detail the changing composition of the settlement's population, for only the 1818 census and Garry's calculations of 1821 attempt to break down that population into its various groups. Of the 222 persons recorded in 1818 the Scots formed 67 per cent, the de Meurons 20 per cent and the Canadians 13 per cent. By 1821, out of a recorded total of 419, the figures were 52 per cent, 15 per cent and 33 per cent respectively. Even these few figures bring out the most significant trend; the declining proportion of the European immigrants within the colony as against the increasing proportion of Canadians.[2] This trend quickened after 1821 and by 1824 perhaps 80 per cent of the approximately 2,000 inhabitants at Red River were retired Company servants, métis

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long letter includes a good description of the various elements in the Red River population.

[1] Ibid., 26, p. 8257, Simpson to Colvile, May 31, 1824.

[2] Garry appears to include all non European colonists in the Canadian group. It probably includes ex-French Canadian voyageurs, as well as the Lower Canadians who had arrived in 1818, and may include a number of métis living in the vicinity of the Forks.

and Indians, who now greatly outnumbered the formerly dominant overseas elements.[1] Red River Settlement was already well on its way to becoming a predominantly half-breed colony and by 1827 the foundations of the settlement's basic patterns of population were well established.

The trend towards the formation of a largely half-breed settlement was accelerated by the wave of emigration, 1822-1827, that removed most of the Central Europeans from the colonial population. As in most pioneer regions there was at Red River a constant procession of those who were moving in and moving out, driven by a desire to better their lot elsewhere. This emigration in the early 1820's also had the effect of removing from the colony those settlers who seemed unable to surmount the problems of survival there.[2] It left the Scottish Highlanders as the only important group of immigrant colonists, and the only people, apart from the few families from Lower Canada, with a long experience in agriculture.

The Red River Settlement in 1825.

The most significant internal differences within the settlement were related to the regional origin of the colonists.

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[1] J. S. Galbraith, The Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor, 1821-1869 (Toronto, 1957), p. 48.

[2] S.P., 27, p. 8471, D. McKenzie to Colvile, Jan. 30, 1827; A. Ross, Red River Settlement, p. 109.

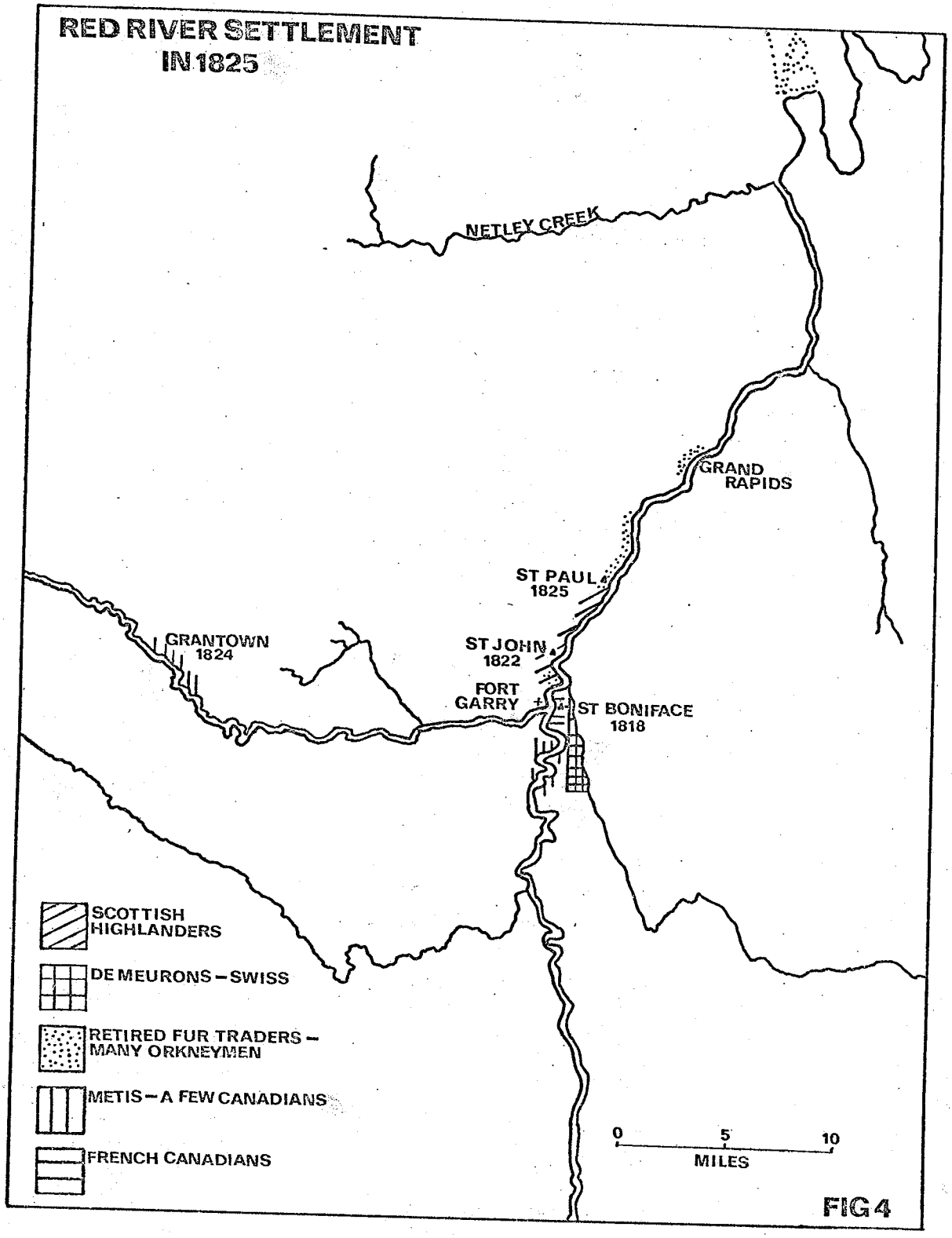
RED RIVER SETTLEMENT
IN 1825
NETLEY CREEK
GRAND
RAPIDS
ST PAUL
1825
GRANTOWN
1824
ST JOHN
1822
FORT
GARRY
ST BONIFACE
1818
SCOTTISH
HIGHLANDERS
DE MEURONS – SWISS
RETIRED FUR TRADERS –
MANY ORKNEYMEN
METIS – A FEW CANADIANS
FRENCH CANADIANS
0
5
10
MILES

FIG 4

The settlement was a mixture of races and religions but the main elements in this mixture had not blended to any marked degree. Differences of background, culture, religion and language kept them apart and aloof. This segregation, at first deliberate policy, had later been further encouraged by the clergy who came to the settlement, since it eased their work and facilitated the problems of ecclesiastical organisation, if people of different denominations were geographically separated.[1] Figure 4 shows the approximate extent of the settled area as of about 1825, together with the location of other important features of the colonial landscape. The map is of necessity nonquantitative and simply records the approximate distribution of the major elements in the colonial population. The Lower Settlement below the Forks was predominantly British and Protestant; below the Scottish Highlanders, other Scots, Orkneymen and English speaking half-breeds were settling. Opposite the Forks, where Upper Fort Garry had been erected in 1822, and increasingly south of it, was the French speaking and Catholic settlements of the French Canadians and French speaking half-breeds, who were soon to reoccupy the lots fronting on the River Seine, vacated by the emmigrating Swiss and de Meurons. Separate and distinct, and almost an

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[1]Writing in 1813, Selkirk had stated that it would be desirable if "each class" could be put "in a separate settlement at a little distance, so as to devoid the occasion of quarrels and disturbance": S.P., 3, p. 724, Selkirk to Macdonell, June 20, 1813. See also A. Ross, Red River Settlement, pp. 80-81.

independent colony, was the métis settlement of Grantown, up the Assiniboine at the White Horse Plain. The map does not attempt to show the variations in population density for there is no means of establishing such variations with any degree of precision. Densities were probably greatest in the oldest settled region north of Point Douglas, the predominantly Scottish section of the colony,[1] and lowest in the vicinity of the Grand Rapids, which was just beginning to be settled in 1835 by retired Company men. Elsewhere there were probably relatively high densities in the vicinity of Grantown, around the St. Boniface mission, and in the largely Swiss - de Meurons part of the settlement alongside the River Seine. On the Assiniboine below White Horse Plain and along the Red upstream from the Forks settlement was still thinly scattered and much of the river front remained unoccupied.

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[1]W. H. Keating, writing of 1823, noted that "the first house of the lower settlement is situated about twenty miles above the fort, but the country is thickly settled only within three miles of the mouth of the Assiniboin": Narrative of An Expedition to the Source of St. Peter's River, II, p. 60.

## CHAPTER III

## LAND DIVISION AMONG THE SETTLERS

### Introduction

Upon arrival in Assiniboia Macdonell's initial task was the selection of a settlement site, a decision to which he could apply a number of criteria outlined by Selkirk and gained from previous colonial experience in Ontario and Prince Edward Island.[1] These criteria included good drainage on a level site above the river where the banks were backed by an expanse of fertile soil and yet close to supplies of timber. Specific suggestions found in Selkirk's correspondence with his Governor included the examination of potentialities at Pelican Ripple (St. Andrew's Rapids), the first break in navigation along the Red River and a place of possible future importance, but he cautioned that from Fidler's survey the site might be too low and subject to flooding. Early in September 1812, "the different points and bays" along the west bank of the Red River were examined for potential sites at which to locate the initial settlement. The site at the Rapids was found not suitable and Macdonell's final choice was "a point of some extent of burnt wood fit for immediate cultivation which likewise contains green woods for building

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[1] S.P., 1, pp. 173-175, Selkirk's instructions to Miles Macdonell, 1811.

etc., a little below the Forks".[1] The place chosen for the first settlement and cultivation was the pronounced promontory formed by the meandering Red, about a mile below the Forks, and soon to be known by Lord Selkirk's family name, as Point Douglas. The selection was an expedient one and can be easily understood. Macdonell was looking for an area which could be cleared quickly, tilled, and sown with wheat before the onset of a winter, which the colonists planned to pass at Pembina, living by the hunt. A fire had recently run through the Point, leaving much of it with only a light cover of brush and weeds, and so it could be more readily put into cultivation than an area covered by grass or timber. Furthermore, the soil appeared excellent and there was timber for construction nearby. The proximity of the Forks and the Northwesters' Fort Gibraltar must have been an additional advantage of the site, for during the early weeks of colonisation, when relations between the North West Company and the settlers appeared friendly, Macdonell had received considerable aid and advice from the men at the Fort.

Once established at the Point, there was no attempt to relocate the colony and Macdonell wisely decided to consolidate, during 1813 and 1814, the beginnings made there in

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[1] Ibid., 62, p. 16,747, Miles Macdonell's Journal, Sept. 7, 1812. Macdonell's original choice had been a site somewhere below the Point. The advantages of Point Douglas had been first demonstrated to Macdonell by one Peltier, an old French Canadian freeman whom he had met during his travels along the lower Red.

1812. He ignored Selkirk's suggestion of December 1812, that "the settlement might not be placed to more advantage near R. Dauphin [Mossy River] than Red River," and that he should explore a sweep of timbered country at the northern extremity of the Assiniboia Grant from the vicinity of the Dauphin River "to the tract from the Rapid of Saskatchewan northward to Limestone River at the northern extremity of Lake Winc and thence straight across to the nearest branch of Nelson R.", with the aim of finding a more suitable position for the colony.[1] Selkirk felt that "the good land of the interior", as he mistakenly termed it, was more easily accessible from the sea, and therefore to be preferred to the country further south. Macdonell was later to express his satisfaction with the site at Point Douglas, noting particularly the fertility of the soil there and its freedom from "troublesome Indians", which meant the colonists were able to toil in comparative safety and, unlike the people collected at Pembina, would be able to herd cattle with little chance of theft.

## The Origin and Evolution of the Settlement Pattern

Macdonell had cleared and fenced a patch of land on Point Douglas in 1812 but at first there was no attempt to

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[1] S.P., 3, p. 726, Selkirk to Miles Macdonell, June 20, 1813.

[2] Ibid., 4, p. 1187, Miles Macdonell to Selkirk, July 25, 1814. Macdonell had been advised by his brother John, a North West Company man, writing from Bas de la Rivière in June 1812 that "the safest places from the incursions of these barbarians [the Sioux Indians] and the best lands lay between our post of the Forks or junction of the Red & Assinibouan Rivers and Lake Winnipick". Quoted by J.P. Pritchett, The Red River Valley (Toronto, 1942), p. 81.

commence a formal division of the land or to make land grants to individual colonists. Macdonell was anxious to secure the food supply of the settlement during 1813 and concentrated colonial effort on improving and extending the land cleared on the Point; ditches, dikes and pathways were constructed, fences and buildings erected.

However, at the end of May 1813, Macdonell records that he "commenced running lines with Mr. Fidler, laying out our land",[1] and by July he was able to inform Selkirk that

> "I have since laid out lots of 100 acres, of 4 acres front on the river, according to the annexed rough Sketch No. 18. -- On these lots they are now at work preparing to build, etc. The farms in lower Canada are of 3 acres front, & the first settlers in U. Canada had only the same, but they found it afterwards too narrow, which induced me to add one acre additional to the breadth of our lots here. This is sufficient for any common farmer."[2]

Mr. Fidler was Peter Fidler, a Hudson's Bay trader and surveyor, who had arrived at the Red River Colony from Brandon House and he was instrumental in making the first formal land survey on the Canadian prairies. It is clear from Macdonell's remarks that he was consciously recreating along the Red River, though in a slightly modified form, a type of land division and pattern of settlment of which he had knowledge -- the rang settlement pattern of Lower Canada.[3] At the

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[1]S. P., 63, p. 16,833, Miles Macdonell's Journal, May 31, 1813.

[2]<u>Ibid.</u>, 3, p. 787, Miles Macdonell to Selkirk, July 17, 1813.

[3]Macdonell, though born in Scotland, had spent much of his life at St. Andrew's, near Cornwall, and close by the St. Lawrence.

same time Macdonell shrewdly noted that the virtual absence of woodland away from the rivers would inhibit the development of a second range of long lots such as had been laid out in French Canada. In laying our river lots Macdonell was also following Selkirk's advice that the colonists be given "separate lots, each enjoying the advantage of wood, water and open lands fit for immediate cultivation."[1] To combine such features within individual lots, in a region where woodland was almost wholly confined to the river banks, meant that some kind of linear strips running back from the wooded river front into the prairies would have to be surveyed. It is not known how many lots were surveyed in 1813, but the number was certainly few and most of the land put into crops that year was on Point Douglas. Macdonell specifically mentions the laying out of one farm and four, 100 acre lots down river from the Point, and this may well have been the total number of holdings granted. From its centre of origin close by the Point, the river lot system was extended downstream towards Frog Plain. The arrival of the Kildonan colonists in 1814 meant that the whole of the colonial population could not be fed from the land tilled on Point Douglas, and as a result, many of the colonists were given quantities of seed, largely potatoes, and fixed on their separate lots. Holdings laid out the previous year were resurveyed with

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[1] S.P., 1, p. 173, Selkirk's instructions to Miles Macdonell, 1811.

some slight changes. The river frontage was reduced from four to three acres and the additional lots granted were surveyed with the same measurements. Macdonell was anxious not to "spread the settlement too far" and take up too much of the river front, as he could not envisage any settlement away from the streams.[1] By the autumn of 1814, there were some 36 or 37, 100 acre lots laid out perpendicular to the west bank of the Red River, and the colony stretched for about three miles between Point Douglas and Frog Plain. In addition, there were several large blocks of land under cultivation on the south side of the Point. During the spring of 1815 a further eleven lots were surveyed beyond Frog Plain and a number of smaller holdings were granted on Point Douglas. Following the destruction of the colony in 1815 the lots were resurveyed again in 1816, but the concessions previously granted beyond Frog Plain, were not reoccupied that year.

The records reveal interesting details of the means of disposal of the concessions granted in 1814.[2] Three settlers, presumably the unmarried ones, were immediately placed on their specific lots, leaving 34 lots to be distributed amongst 34 families. These 34 lots were divided into four groups of six lots each. The settlers were then formed into four divisions of six families, and each of these divisions

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[1] S.P., 83, p. 116,911, Miles Macdonell's Journal, June 26, 1814; Ibid., 4, pp. 1194-1195, Miles Macdonell to Selkirk, July 25, 1814.

[2] Ibid., 38, p. 18,253, Journal of Archibald MacDonald, July 13, 1814.

consisted of families that were related or friends. The families then drew lots to see into which of the four main divisions they should have their land. Once this was decided, each of the groups of six families formed themselves into three subdivisions, each of two families. The three groups of two families then drew lots for two adjoining holdings. Once this was decided the two families decided amongst themselves which of the two lots they should take. This ingenious scheme, devised "so that every man would have his friend his next neighbour" seemed to please everyone," so that no one would change his land for anothers".

In 1813, there was established for the first time at Red River a settlement pattern and system of land division that even then had a long history in North America. Its origins have been traced by the French geographer, Max Derruau.[1] He sees the first examples of it in the third decade of the seventeenth century on the land of the noted seigneur, Robert Giffard, at Beauport along the north shore of the St. Lawrence, opposite the Isle d'Orléans. In Derruau's view the settlement pattern begun there may have been an attempt by French colonists to reproduce a form of land division they had known in Western France, more specifically in the Pays of Perche. Many of the early settlers at Beauport had formerly farmed in Perche, a wooded pays colonised in the early medieval

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[1] M. Derruau, "À L'Origine Du' Rang' Canadien", Cahiers de Géographie de Québec, Nouvelle Serie, I, 1956, pp. 39-47.

period. There the unit of settlement was the waldhufendorf or wood village, which had a central street from which ran back in a series of long narrow strips, the holdings of the villagers. Derruau suggests that the French colonists may have had this settlement pattern in mind when they commenced clearing land on the shores of the St. Lawrence, though in Lower Canada the river replaced the street as the central line of communication. From this centre of origin the long lot had been reproduced all along the St. Lawrence and its tributaries, despite attempts by the authorities to encourage the creation of nucleated villages.[1] It had later been introduced to other parts of North America and to different environments, from the sub-tropical coastlands of the Mississippi delta country[2] to certain isolated islands of settlement in the North American plains, such as at Detroit,[3] Prairie du Chien,[4] Vincennes and Kaskaskia.[5] This characteristic French method of land division

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[1]P. Deffontaines, "The Rang-Pattern of Rural Settlement in French Canada," in M. Rioux and Y. Martin (eds.), French-Canadian Society, I, (Toronto, 1964), pp. 3-19.

[2]H. Blume, "Landschaft und Wirtschaft in Louisiana Unter Französischer Kolonialverwaltung," Erdkunde, X, 1956, pp.177-185.

[3]R. H. Brown, Historical Geography of the United States (New York, 1948), pp.276-281.

[4]G. T. Trewartha, "The Prairie Du Chien Terrace: Geography of a Confluence Site," A.A.A.G., XXII, 1932, pp. 119-158.

[5]R. L. Gentilcore, "Vincennes and French Settlement in the Old Northwest," A.A.A.G., XLVII, 1957, pp. 285-297; H.B. Johnson, "French Canada and the Ohio Country," Canadian Geographer, XII, 1958, pp. 1-10.

in riverine regions, it has survived as the most important French influence on the cultural landscape of North America.[1] Considered in this broad way the settlement pattern initiated by Macdonell and Fidler at the Red River Colony in 1813 can be seen in clearer perspective. Most of the early settlers were Scots, but the system of land division into which they were placed was distinctly French.

Looking back on the early development of the settlement at Red River, the river lot system of land division may appear to have been not only the best but almost the logical and inevitable settlement pattern given the physical geography of the area, the technological capacity of the colonists and the previous experience of Governor Macdonell. However, the records reveal an undercurrent of doubt about the suitability of the long lot, for despite its several advantages, this form of settlement has two basic weaknesses. It spreads settlement too far along the rivers, and in the event of an attack by hostile forces is difficult to defend. In his initial instructions to Macdonell, Selkirk, though expressing a preference for some form of dispersed settlement, had advised him that

> "If, however, the Indians appear disposed to be troublesome so as to excite any apprehensions for scattered settlers, small lots of 5 or 10 acres adjoining to the fort and assigned to the men on a temporary tenure to cultivate till they can safely take possession of their full lots".

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[1] F. Bartz, "Französische Einflüsse im Bilde Der Kulturlandschaft Nordamerikas", Erdkunde, IX, 1955, pp. 286-305.

The Indians never presented a threat to the youthful colony. Rather the beginnings of agricultural settlement in Assiniboia must be seen against a background of worsening relations between the colony and the North West Company, culminating in the dispersal of the settlers in 1815 and again in 1816. Macdonell's decision of 1814 to reduce the river frontage of the settlers' lots was taken to give the colony greater compactness and to limit its spread along the rivers. This would make the colony both easier to defend and to administer. In the same year Macdonell informed Selkirk that he had proposed to the Kildonan settlers "that they should build their houses in knots of five or six families for mutual security and encouragement, in the manner that your Lordship's first settlers began in Prince Edwards Island".[1] But attempts to inaugerate this system failed. The Highlanders insisted on having river frontage and did not wish to be grouped together in any form of nucleated settlement.[2] In 1816, Selkirk, aware of the first dispersal of his colony and concerned for its future safety, outlined a scheme for the creation of compact villages alongside the Red River.[3] He wanted the land settled in this

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[1]S.P., 4, p. 1195, Miles Macdonell to Selkirk, July 25, 1814; Ibid., 68, p. 18,232, Journal of Archibald MacDonald, July 6, 1814. Macdonell's reference here is to Selkirk's earlier colonial venture in the Atlantic Provinces.

[2]The Kildonan settlers were an independent and stubborn group and complained about the location of the colony as well as its settlement pattern. At one point they petitioned Macdonell to give them land at Pembina, where they felt the danger of frost would be less than farther north.

[3]S.P., 6, p. 1,894, Selkirk to Colin Robertson, Mar. 30, 1816.

fashion because it would afford greater protection to the settlers in the event of further attacks by the métis. Selkirk's accompanying sketch map shows that he had in mind a village with a loosely knit, gridiron plan. But the scheme never passed from the paper to the ground and Selkirk's colony was destroyed again in 1816. It was not recaptured from the Northwesters until January, 1817, and the following summer Selkirk reached Red River ready to oversee the re-establishment of his colony.

During his stay at Red River Selkirk made two important decisions that were to strongly influence the future form and direction of colonisation. In the first place, he left unchanged the basic layout of the settlement. If he had so wished, Selkirk could well have supervised the formation of the villages he had proposed in the previous year. Instead, perhaps confident that his colony was now secure from future danger, he had Fidler resurvey the river lots north of Point Douglas.[1] The lots resurveyed were 24 in number and they were laid out from a base line running north 12 degrees east, extending from just north of Point Douglas down to Frog Plain. Each lot had a frontage of 10 chains and a depth of 90 chains.[2] These holdings were granted on very favourable terms, for as

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[1] Ibid., 67, pp. 18,173 - 18,174, Journal of Charles Bourke, July. 24, 1817.

[2] Alexander Ross, Red River Settlement (London, 1856), p. 43.

Canadians, Swiss, métis and retired fur traders resulted in the expansion of the settlement away from this core area and the reproduction of the long lot system of land division elsewhere along the rivers. In 1817 the de Meurons were granted lots amongst the woods and clearings on the western side of the River Seine. This represented the first formal division of land east of Red River and in the following year the French Canadian colonists acquired land opposite the mouth of the Assiniboine. At about the same time permanent settlement began to the north of Frog Plain. Governor Alex. Macdonell records in 1818 that he had "set out 10 lots below Frog Plains and that there will be more soon."[1] In the same year land was surveyed for the first time along the Assiniboine, when five lots were marked out for a number of retired Company servants (Orkneymen) at a point some 16 miles above the Forks.[2] All locations, groups and nationalities were to fit into the same settlement pattern. The 80 to 100 families of métis that settled at White Horse Plain, 18 miles up the

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[1]S.P., 15, p. 5,199, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, July 20, 1818.

[2]Ibid., Already in the spring of 1814, " a distinct Canadian settlement" had begun to form on the Assiniboine River midway between the Forks and Portage la Prairie: Ibid., 4, p. 1,200, Miles Macdonell to Selkirk, July 25, 1814. Also Ibid., 19, p. 6,541, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, Nov. 8, 1819: "I have set out about 12 lots to Canadians up the river [Assiniboine] from the N.W. Fort to opposite the farm of Hayfield". In 1817-1818, the model farm of Hayfield had been established on the north side of the Assiniboine, some two miles from the Forks.

Assiniboine River in the spring of 1824, were given river lots 12 chains wide and two miles deep, though the metis leader, Cuthbert Grant, received a double lot.[1] There was founded Grantown, later the parish of St. François-Xavier, the first significant westward extension of the river lot system along the Assiniboine and the first agricultural colony west of Red River.

The rapid areal expansion of the colony in the early 1820's made it imperative that the Colonial Governors should have instructions on how to go about disposing of land. The "Memorandum for Captain R. Pelly respecting Red River Settlement", dated January 1823, sets out the general principles on which settlement proceeded.[2] Grants of land were small. They did not generally exceed 100 acres and the standard frontage for a holding was eight chains. The grants made at the colony were fairly uniform in both size and shape, and though a few persons, usually prominent retired fur traders, acquired larger quantities of land, extensive holdings were rare and the using of land for speculation never became a factor in the progress of early settlement at Red River. Smaller lots of 25 acres could also be laid out along a road

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[1] M. A. MacLeod and W. L. Morton, Cuthbert Grant of Grantown (Toronto, 1963), pp. 93-94. This work includes the best study of the origins of the Grantown settlement. See also M. Giraud, Le Métis Canadien, (Paris, 1945), pp. 652-655, 714-717.

[2] E. H. Oliver (ed.), The Canadian North-West: Its Early Development and Legislative Records (Ottawa, 1914), I, pp. 250-251.

attractive to the half-breed hunters by the erection there of the outlying Catholic mission of St. François-Xavier. The determination with which the policy "to form a compact and strong population at the Forks" was carried out is best illustrated by the enforced removal of most of the Pembina metis to a location further north in 1824. This displacement of population was made imperative by the growing realisation, confirmed by the Major Stephen Long expedition of 1823, that the Pembina settlement lay south of the 49th parallel, the international frontier set down in 1818, and therefore in American territory and beyond the control of the Hudson's Bay Company. The removal of the Company's Fort Daer in the spring of 1823 and the abandonment of the Pembina mission preceeded the removal of the metis. Several locations were suggested for the site of the new half-breed settlement -- Image Plain, the shores of Lake Manitoba, the lower Assiniboine and the Red River below the Forks -- but they were finally located at White Horse Plain, some 18, largely unsettled miles up the Assiniboine from the main centre of the colony, yet still closer and more central than the distant Pembina border-land.

It may appear from the above remarks that the partitioning of land at Red River into individual grants was well

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[1] Estimates of the population at Pembina during the early 1820's vary from 300 to 500. See "Diary of Nicholas Garry", Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, VI, Section II, 1900, p. 193; Grace Lee Nute (ed.), Documents Relating to Northwest Missions, 1815-1827 (St. Paul, 1942), p. 328; W. H. Keating, Narrative of an Expedition to the Source of St. Peter's River (London, 1825), II, pp. 39,225.

regulated and according to some overall plan. There was a plan but in actuality no orderly system came into existence. The rapidity with which land was taken up in the early 1820's, the absence of a trained surveyor from the colony for long periods, and the fact that lots were distributed without the boundary lines being clearly marked, led to a great deal of confusion in the laying out of the settlement. The problem was aggravated by the absence of well defined physical features in the Red River Valley, which made it difficult for any settler to decide where his own property ended and another man's commenced. Governor A. Bulger commented in 1822 on the "irregular way in which the lots from the very beginning appear to have been marked out" and predicted that a surveyor would have two years' work clearing up the general confusion.[1] The arrival of the Scots surveyor, William Kemp, later that year, gave, for a short time, much needed professional competence to the task of laying out the colony. Kemp surveyed the lower two miles of the Assiniboine and along the Red from the Forks down to a mile below Image Plain. He also drew up a plan of Kildonan parish and of the area between the Red River and the River Seine. The original lots, "in a deplorable state of confusion", were resurveyed. Kemp advised that future settlers should be placed on the Red below Image Plain and along

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[1] S.P., 24, p. 7749, A. Bulger to Colvile, Sept. 8, 1822. Mr. L. Allez, brother-in-law of Governor Alex. Macdonell, had acted as colonial surveyor in 1821 and part of 1822, and had surveyed the lots granted to the Swiss colonists. But he was a man of weak character and little competence.

the Assiniboine as far upstream as Sturgeon Creek, "as there both the land and the wood are of better quality than it is anywhere that I have as yet seen. By that means the people would be kept more in a body and be easily assembled together in case of danger."[1] Kemp also recommended and drew up a plan for the creation of a village alongside the Assiniboine, preferably "in the vicinity of some well wooded place as near the fort as possible", to be settled by retired fur traders who were to receive small grants of 25 acres. This scheme was rejected and the Company men were located in the spring of 1823, at Image Plain on eight lots of 32 acres each, surveyed by Kemp the previous autumn.[2] The beginnings of colonisation at Image Plain during 1822-1823 marked another important extension northward of the settlement along the Red River. Kemp departed the colony in 1824 and much of his work was undone by the flood of 1826. In the aftermath of that great disaster, it was reported that

> "these accidents invariably deranged a number of the original divisions. Grounds which were allotted for the maintenance of one family who went away had often fallen into the hands of another arriving or may be was interchanged to alleviate distress. Every measure taken to prevent the confusion has proved hitherto of little avail."[3]

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[1] S.P., 25, pp. 8,120 - 8,122, Kemp to Colvile, December 7, 1822.

[2] Oliver, Canadian North-West, I, pp. 234 - 235.

[3] S.P., 27, p. 8,451, D. McKenzie to Colvile, August 1826.

As the fundamental unit for settlement and agriculture, the river lot was the most important form of land subdivision within the Red River Settlement. Of the others the parish boundaries were the most significant, for the parish, though lacking political relevance, was the unit of settlement organised for religious and educational purposes. In so far as the religious, social and educational aspects of life at Red River centred around the parish, the settlement was a "congregation of missions. These missions were called parishes".[1] The parish represented the grouping of a number of long lots around a centrally located church with its associated parochial school, and extended along between five to ten miles of river front, though at this early date the parishes were ill-defined entities.

The establishment of the first mission at St. Boniface in 1818 and the erection of a church on the east side of the Red opposite the Forks, added another distinctive element to the settlement's riverfront landscape. New parishes were created at a particularly rapid rate during the 1820's and the speed of actual settlement is reflected in the rate of church construction. St. John's parish church, later to become the Anglican Cathedral of Rupert's Land was erected as a mission in 1822, just below Point Douglas on the lot designated

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[1]W. L. Morton, "The Red River Parish: Its Place in the Development of Manitoba" in R. C. Lodge (ed.), Manitoba Essays (Toronto, 1937), p. 90. The discussion of the Red River parish in this thesis relies heavily on this study.

for it by Selkirk in 1817, and was quickly followed by St. Paul's or Middle Church, six miles below at Image Plain in 1825. By 1827 there were three parishes in the colony: the Protestant parishes of St. John and St. Paul on the west side of the Red River below the Forks, serving both Anglicans and Presbyterians, and the Roman Catholic Church of St. Boniface with its outlying mission at St. François-Xavier,[1] meeting the needs of the French Canadian colonists, the turbulent métis and the Canadian voyageurs.

Colonial expansion north along the Red from the initial core of settlement around Point Douglas seems to have been fairly continuous to a point somewhere just below Image Plain. The parish of St. Andrew's, however, founded at the Grand Rapids in 1827, grew around a sub-centre of population which later enlarged to coalesce with settled areas to the south. Colonisation at the Rapids, close by the site Selkirk had suggested for the initial settlement, began as early as 1824 and in 1830 there were 60 families, largely those of retired Company servants, who had made their homes there.[2]

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[1]The mission at St. François-Xavier, beginning in 1827, was at first served by a priest who resided there permanently in winter but who only visited on Sundays during summer. It took over the name of the earlier mission at Pembina. In 1834 the metis settlement gained a resident priest. See M. Giraud, Le Métis Canadien, p. 847.

[2]D. Gunn and C. R. Tuttle, History of Manitoba from the Earliest Settlement (Ottawa, 1880), p. 268.

Conclusion

Macdonell's choice of a site for the initial settlement was a large point of land to the north of Forks, later to be known as Point Douglas. Until 1817 colonial settlement was confined to a three mile stretch of the Red River between Point Douglas and Frog Plain. The relatively large-scale influx of migrants, especially after 1821, resulted in a rapid expansion of the settled area. In terms of its settlement pattern the colony was distinctly and characteristically French. Macdonell introduced the rang-pattern of settlement that he had known in Lower Canada into the Red River Valley. The more immediate origins of this form of land division can be found along the north shore of the St. Lawrence during the 17th century, but its more remote beginnings may go back to the great clearing period in medieval France. From its initial location to the north of Point Douglas during the years 1813-1814, this settlement type was extended to other river-front locations as the population increased. The river lot triumphed over both the insecurity of the early years and the indecision of Macdonell and Selkirk: linear settlement in extension prevailed over the nucleated type of settlement. The river lot initiated strong control over settlement, but control in general harmony with the characteristics of the physical environment. Since each lot had river frontage, every family was able to locate its farmstead and buildings on the well-drained and sheltered levee crest with immediate access to fuel as well

as building and fencing materials. Each settler also had easy access to the river, an important line of transportation, the most readily available source of water, and a valuable source of fish. With the coming of the church to the settlement, the lots were grouped into parishes, which functioned as the focal points of the colony's religious, educational and social life.

## CHAPTER IV

## AGRICULTURE 1812 - 1827

### Introduction

The early development of agriculture at Red River has previously been discussed in the general histories of A. S. Morton, J. P. Pritchett and M. Giraud.[1] Only W. L. Morton has, however, attempted its discussion divorced from the political and social history of the colony and even he has left certain facets unconsidered.[2] In this chapter emphasis will be placed on an economic and geographic interpretation of the formative years, considering first the arable and second the pastoral side of the settlement's agrarian economy.

The information available for consideration comes largely from the Selkirk Papers and the letters, journals and diaries of colonists and colonial visitors in the years before 1827.[3] These records seem often to dwell upon the exceptional, the good or the bad, leaving the commonplace unexplained.

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[1]A. S. Morton, The History of the Canadian West to 1870-71 (Toronto, 1939); J. P. Pritchett, The Red River Valley 1811-1849 (Toronto, 1942); Marcel Giraud, Le Métis Canadien (Paris 1945).

[2]W. L. Morton, "Agriculture in the Red River Colony", C.H.R. XXX, Dec. 1949, pp. 305-321.

[3]"Diary of Nicholas Garry", Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, VI, Section II, 1900, pp. 73-204; W. H. Keating, Narrative of an Expedition to the Source of St. Peter's River, etc. (London, 1825), II; John West, The Substance of a Journal

The personal correspondence sometimes seems to suffer from the presentation of facts by the writer in a way calculated to create a favourable or unfavourable impression on the correspondee. All the documents, but particularly diaries and journals, are open vehicles for the expression of personal opinions or bias and the total available information covers an unknown portion of the complete agricultural scene in these lean years. However, accepting the limitations of the available information it is possible to examine certain aspects of agriculture, especially the effects of environment and of isolation upon the nascent colony in the years between 1812 and 1827.

Arable Farming

In these early years the agrarian life of the colony struggled for continued existence not only against such normal pioneering problems as the lack of environmental experience and suitable farm implements, but against an unusual concentration of catastrophic events arising out of the physical and social environs. These normal and abnormal forces combined to subject the colony to a prolonged period of stringent subsistence and to influence not only the immediate agrarian scene but also certain features of the long term pattern of cropping. Because of the problems facing agriculture, the colony had to find other means to feed itself. The struggle to establish a stable, farming economy at Red River represented

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At the Red River Colony, (London, 1824); Grace Lee Nute (ed.), Documents Relating to Northwest Missions, 1815-1827 (St. Paul 1942).

an attempt to initiate a new sedentary way of life on the Canadian plains, different from the nomadic life of the Indian and half-breed and the economy of the fur trade which had hitherto prevailed. Only towards the end of these years was anything like a viable agriculture beginning to emerge out of the distress and hardship which had characterised the settlement's early history. Indeed, tillage only endured as a partner of the nomadic economy of the fur trade, the buffalo hunt of the prairie and the fisheries of lake and river.[1] The most obvious expression of this partnership was the fall migration of most of the colonists to Pembina to live off the hunt during the winter months. Agriculture was too weak and uncertain to be able to exist without the support provided by the nomadic economy of the plains.[2] When the hunt failed, as it did in 1822, 1825, 1826, and 1827, the colony's agricultural production was too small to avert famine and want amongst some elements of the population.

Normal Problems:- Chronic from the outset of tillage in the autumn of 1812 was the lack of suitable implements for the cultivation of the soil. The available hand tools, hoes and spades, were inadequate for turning the tough prairie

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[1] W. L. Morton, "Agriculture in the Red River Colony", p. 305.

[2] The position of the hunt in the total economy of Red River will not be considered in detail in this thesis. It is excellently described by M. Giraud, Le Métis Canadien, especially pp. 644-655.

sod or for deep cultivation. Like the sickle and the scythe, such tools by their very nature probably tended to keep the cultivated acreage of even the most ambitious colonist to a small size. With the single exception of an ill-made plough first used on Point Douglas in 1813,[1] the colony was without animal drawn implements, either ploughs or harrows, for the first ten years of its existence. In 1817 the first "English plough", presumably with iron moldboard and colter, was brought to Red River via York Factory and its revolutionary effect on the economic well-being of its owner can be inferred from the fact that two years later he was planting 60 acres of land.[2] However, not until 1823-1824 did the settlers begin successfully to make ploughs in the colony from local oak timber and imported iron and not until several years later do the records reveal such implements as common colonial assets.[3] By 1831 there were 187 ploughs at work in the colony. One result of this acute shortage of implements is probably to be found in the slow expansion outward from the core area on Point Douglas during the second decade of the nineteenth century. Certainly Alexander Ross' description of Kildonan in 1825 when he mentions that cropping was limited to "some

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[1] S.P., 3, p. 787, Miles Macdonell to Selkirk, July 17, 1813.

[2] Ibid., 19, p. 6393, W. Laidlaw to Selkirk, July 1819.

[3] D. Gunn and C. R. Tuttle, History of Manitoba From the Earliest Settlement (Ottawa, 1880), pp. 233, 242-243; Alexander Ross, The Red River Settlement (London, 1856), p. 78.

small patches of land lying along the banks of the river: for the plough had not yet got beyond the footpath on which we travelled", is likely to reflect the harsh limits on cultivation effected by such lack of tools.[1] This statement also suggests that cropping was confined to the warm, loam soils of the relatively well drained river levee lands. But even in that physically favoured zone, tillage was limited to small patches of roughly cleared land worked by settlers with primitive hand tools.[2]

Abnormal Problems:- From the available materials it is rarely possible to separate the second normal colonial experience centering about environment from the colonial reaction to a series of catastrophic events springing largely from the physical environment in these early years of agriculture. Only the immediate discovery in 1812-1813 of the unsuitability of fall sown wheat to the winter cold and its subsequent cultivation by a newcomer on only one occasion is to be found in the records as a direct colonial reaction to normal environmental limitations.[3] Otherwise the unusual concentration of detrimental environmental phenomena of the period removed from

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[1]Alexander Ross, The Fur Hunters of the Far West: A Narrative of Adventures in the Oregon and Rocky Mountains (London, 1855), II, p. 258.

[2]There are no data on the total cultivated acreage until 1831. In that year 2,152 acres were recorded, but for most of the period under consideration here the arable acreage was certainly well under half that figure.

[3]John West, Substance of a Journal, p. 107.

TABLE 1

NATURE OF THE HAZARD

| Year | Flood | Grasshoppers | Frost | Others |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1812 | | | | 13 Winter Cold (Fall sown wheat) |
| 1813 | | | 7 | 14 Drought, Birds, Grubs, Weeds |
| 1814 | | | 8 | |
| 1815 | | | | Fur trade war |
| 1816 | | | | Fur trade war |
| 1817 | | | 9 | 15 Wind |
| 1818 | | 3 | | |
| 1819 | | 4 | 10 (spring) | |
| 1820 | | 5 | | |
| 1821 | | 6 | | |
| 1822 | | | | 16 Migratory Birds |
| 1823 | | | | 17 Drought, Hail |
| 1824 | | | 11 | |
| 1825 | 1 Minor and Local | | | 18 Grubs, Rodents, Crop Disease (rust) |
| 1826 | 2 Major | | 12 | 19 Waterlogging |
| 1827 | | | | |

Numbers refer to Sources as in Appendix A

the pioneer farmer experience with normal conditions and may have influenced his reaction to his local surroundings. From its beginnings in 1812 the colony was beset by a succession of natural disasters of which flooding and grasshopper plagues must be considered the most complete in their destructive effects (Table 1). These two types of catastrophies reduced crop yield in six of the 15 years under discussion. The minor and localised flooding at both Pembina and the main settlement in 1825 was but a prelude to the major flood of 1826, the effect of which was to slow down the progress of agriculture at Red River. Conditions were ripe for a flood in the spring of 1826; the previous autumn had been wet, the winter snowfall had been heavy and the river did not break up until the first week of May. The river waters continued to rise for 22 days, spilling over the banks and converting part of the Red River lowlands into a lake. The settlers were forced to flee from their homes, taking refuge on the ridges and rises to the east and west of the Red River and not until the third week of June did they begin to return to their lots and endeavour to sow the seed they had salvaged. Farmsteads had been destroyed and much of the land remained waterlogged. "Yet barley, potatoes, and even a little wheat sowed as late as the 22nd of June, came to maturity".[1] But the crops were damaged by grubs and autumn brought early frosts, which along with abundant precipitation further reduced

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[1]Ross, Red River Settlement, p. 109.

the volume of the late sown crops.

In 1818 grasshoppers appeared in significant numbers at the Red River Valley for the first time since 1808. For four years these pests seriously injured the crops and created a mood of despair and disillusionment amongst the colonists. Of all the hazards affecting agriculture on the North American plains they must be considered one of the most pervasive.[1] They began their work of systematic destruction on August 2, 1818, turning what appeared likely to be a good crop year into a poor one. Of the maturing crops barley, oats and garden produce were almost totally destroyed, wheat and potatoes were materially reduced, and among the settlers, those east of the river, especially the de Meurons, suffered more than those to the west. The following May the grasshopper larvae appeared in the seed plots and proceeded to devour almost the entire crop, and "even ate up the plains" in places, so that hay was also scarce in 1819. Many of the grasshoppers flew south that summer but some lingered in the settlement during 1820 and 1821, and did not finally leave altogether until mid July, 1821. They were not to reappear until 1857. Of the other environmental checks on arable farming, late summer or early autumn frosts were the most frequent, and on several

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[1]The importance of grasshoppers as a factor in the development of North American agriculture is discussed by J. T. Schlebecker, "Grasshoppers in American Agricultural History", Agricultural History, XXVII, 1963, pp. 85-93; for Manitoban agriculture see A. V. Mitchener, "A History of Grasshopper Outbreaks and Their Control in Manitoba, 1799-1953", 84th Annual Report of the Entomological Society of Ontario, 1953, pp. 27-35.

occasions reduced the volume and variety of the Red River harvests. In addition, drought, hail, high winds, prairie fire, destructive migratory birds, rodents and grubs, contributed at some time in these early years to the retardation of agriculture. Their effect, some more devastating than others, was to compound the crop yield problem created by the major factors discussed above.

The colony, isolated far beyond the frontier of settlement, also became the focus of a bitter but undeclared fur trade war between the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company. While two years were marked by open hostility and physical ravage, no doubt an aura of basic insecurity affecting the individual's outlook on agricultural effort lasted for several years before and after. In both 1815 and 1816 the colonists were forced to leave the settlement for Jack River, and though they were able to return in 1815 to gather the crops planted in spring, in 1816 there was no harvest at Red River. In at least seven years and probably over a longer period, if any weight is attached to the effects of physical destruction and social insecurity, early Red River agriculture laboured under an unusual set of circumstances; unusual in their concentration rather than in their occurrence.

Crops:- The extent to which these events and occurrences affected arable agriculture can best be determined by an analysis of the available data on crops, crop sowings, harvests, and seed supply. This information is sometimes

TABLE 2

SEED SOWN AT THE RED RIVER SETTLEMENT 1812 - 1827

| Crop | 1812 | 1813 | 1814 | 1815 | 1816 | 1817 | 1818 | 1819 | 1820 | 1821 | 1822 | 1823 | 1824 | 1825 | 1826 | 1827 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Wheat | 1½ bu. | 1½ bu. | 5/8) bu.) | 40 bu. | * | * | 142 bu. | 297 bu. | *) ) | 80? bu. | 235 bu. | * | * | * | * | |
| Barley | | 5 bu. | 7 ) keg) | | * | * | 53 bu. | 88 bu. | *) | | 142 bu. | * | * | * | * | |
| Corn | | * | * | | * | * | | 3½ bu. | * | * | 12 bu. | * | * | | | |
| Oats | | 6½ bu. | 5-6 keg | | * | | * | | | | | | | | | |
| Buckwheat | | 6 gal. | * | * | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rye | | * | | | * | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Potatoes | | 90 keg | 300 keg | 100 bu. | * | * | 475 bu. | 668 bu. | * | | 570 bu. | * | * | * | * | |
| Peas | | * | * | * | | * | | | | | 17 bu. | * | * | * | | |
| Beans | | 2 1/16 bu. | | * | | * | | | | | | | | | | |
| Turnips | | * | | | | | * | * | | | | | | | | |
| Hemp | | * | | | | | | | | | | | * | * | | |
| Flax | | * | | | | | * | | | | | | | | | |
| Tobacco | | | | | | | * | | | | * | | | | | |
| Melons | | | * | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cucumber | | | * | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Fruit | | | | * | | * | | | | | | | | | | |
| Pumpkins | | | | | | * | | | | | | | | | | |
| Radishes | | | | | | | | * | | | | | | | | |
| Cabbages | | | | | | | * | * | | | | | | | | |
| Carrots | | | | | | | * | | | | | | | | | |

* Crop sown -- amount not known

For Sources see Appendix B

detailed and quantitative but frequently receives only passing mention. The quantitative data sometimes has no common volume denominator. The passing references give but an incomplete picture of the spectrum and the total number of sowings. However, when organised into tabular expression and supported by other data they provide an interesting insight into crop patterns and crop selection (Table 2). As in most pioneer agricultural colonies it reveals a wide range and a considerable diversity of crops being planted during the early years of settlement, an inevitable reaction of farmers unsure of themselves and the environment. After the failure of fall sown wheat in 1812 and the total failure of both wheat and barley in 1813, wheat, barley and potatoes were the most consistently grown crops and those which very early became preeminent in the food supply of the colony. At least part of this situation seems to stem from the more satisfactory results obtained from these crops during this sequence of harsh years. The basic patterns of land use at Red River, in terms of the ratios of the different crops sown, clearly emerged during the first five years of colonisation and were not to change significantly until after 1870.

The information on crop sowings reveals that wheat soon became the chief grain and major crop and by 1824 its dominance was obvious enough for it to be referred to as the "staple commodity" of the settlement.[1] After the failure of

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[1] S.P., 26, p. 8317, R. P. Pelly to Colvile, Aug. 26, 1824.

fall sown wheat in 1812 it was almost all spring sown, though some members of the Hudson's Bay Company continued to press the case for fall sown wheat since they believed it would better survive the destruction of grasshoppers than that sown in spring.[1] Barley was normally the second grain of the colony, despite its failure during certain years when it was badly damaged by grasshoppers. Of the crops grown, potatoes were the most productive of all during these years and could usually be relied upon to succeed, yielding heavily in the alluvial loam peripheral to the rivers even when other crops failed. Besides the harvest gathered by the colonists, potatoes were occasionally purchased from the freemen collected at the Forks, some of whom had their cultivated patch.[2] During most years the food these three main crops provided was varied by a number of supplemental crops, each sown and harvested in small amounts but probably absent altogether in some years. Of these oats, Indian corn and peas were the most significant. In addition, there were experiments with rye and buckwheat, but both gave poor returns and quickly disappeared from the crop selection. Further dietetic variety was provided by the cultivation of a heterogeneity of garden crops, which included melons, pumpkins, cucumbers, beans, carrots, radishes, cabbages, turnips and parsnips. In 1815 Miles

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[1] Ibid., 22, p. 7095, Colvile to Alex. Macdonell, Feb. 24, 1821; E. H. Oliver, (ed.), The Canadian North-West: Its Early Development and Legislative Records (Publications of the Canadian Archives, No. 9, Ottawa, 1914), I, pp. 213-214.

[2] S.P., 3, p. 780, Miles Macdonell to Selkirk, July 17, 1813;

Macdonell made what was probably the first attempt to grow fruit trees on the Canadian prairies when he set out apple and pear seeds on Point Douglas, and two years later he planted wild plum and cherry trees and wild currant bushes, as well as green gage, damson, egg plum and Kentish cherry stones.[1] It is unlikely that he had much success for the continental climate and the ease with which wild fruits could be collected from the prairie and the riverside woods did not encourage the cultivation of fruit.

As well as these food crops, a number of crops which were thought to have commercial possibilities were also tried. Hemp and flax are the ones most frequently mentioned as likely to find a sale in European markets. Lord Selkirk's "Advertisement and Prospectus of the New Colony" announced that "hemp is peculiarly calculated for inland situations, as that article is so valuable in proportion to its weight, that it can bear the expense of a considerable inland navigation. This cultivation is also a favorite national object, and the settlement benefits from the public encouragement which is held out for promoting it."[2] Both flax and hemp were planted without success

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Ibid., 62, p. 16,755, Miles Macdonell's Journal, Sept. 21, 1813; Ibid., 65, p. 17,426, Colin Robertson's Journal, Oct. 20, 1815.

[1] Ibid., 63, p. 16,992, Miles Macdonell's Journal, April 20, 1815; Ibid., 64, pp. 17,429, 17,261, 17,265, Miles Macdonell's Journal, 1817.

[2] "Lord Selkirk's Advertisement and Prospectus of the New Colony", reproduced in Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, II, 1908, pp. 135-138.

in 1813. Flax was being grown at Hayfield Farm in 1818 and in 1825 one resident of the colony observed that "it grows well here".[1] Flax seed for the settlement, along with instructions for its cultivation, were sent out from Britain in 1824 and the Colonial Governor was requested to encourage its successful introduction into the colony's agriculture.[2] Once established there it was hoped that its cultivation would give employment to both settlers and Indians, as well as providing an article of export to Europe. However, the cultivation of both flax and hemp remained largely on an experimental basis and neither was produced in significant amounts. The early farmers at Red River also experimented with tobacco but their efforts were rewarded with little success.[3] Probably first planted in 1818, it was an early victim of the grasshopper invasion.[4] Its cultivation remained sporadic and uncertain and the Company remained dependent on supplies from overseas. The total acreage devoted to all commercial crops was tiny, for regardless of their possible suitability to the

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[1] S.P., 15, p. 5,219, W. Laidlaw to Selkirk, July 22, 1818; G. L. Nute (ed.), Northwest Missions, p. 439. See also John West, Substance of a Journal, p. 107, and W. H. Keating, II, p. 47.

[2] S. P., 26, p. 8,280, Colvile to R. P. Pelly, June 4, 1824.

[3] John West, Substance of a Journal, p. 107: "Some have raised the tobacco plant but it has not yet met with a fair trial".

[4] S. P., 16, p. 5,368, Capt. Matthey to Selkirk, Sept. 12, 1818.

TABLE 3

VOLUME OF THE MAJOR CROPS HARVESTED AT THE RED RIVER SETTLEMENT

1812 - 1822

(No Data After 1822)

*For Sources see Appendix C.

| Year | Crop | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Wheat | Barley | Potatoes | Oats |
| 1812 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1813 | 0 | 0 | Good returns | |
| 1814 | 28-29 bushels | Good returns | Good returns | |
| 1815 | 400 bushels | 200 bushels | 500 bushels | |
| 1816 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| 1817 | 99 1/2 bushels | 11 1/10 bushels | 360 bushels | 25 bushels |
| 1818 | | | | |
| 1819 | | | | |
| 1820 | 2,000 bushels ? | | | |
| 1821 | | | | |
| 1822 | (5,000 - 6,000 bushels) | | | |

Red River environment, they were precluded by the stringent demands on the available cultivated acreage for food crop production.

In Table 3 the available information on the volume of early Red River harvests is presented, though only the three

major crops are recorded consistently enough to bear study. There was one year, 1816, when the colonists were absent from the settlement, that no crops were harvested, and eight others, 1813, 1817, 1818, 1819, 1820, 1821, 1825 and 1826, when results were poor or unsatisfactory. By contrast, the crops of 1814, 1815, 1822, 1823, 1824, and 1827 were good or adequate, the environmental checks on agriculture less effective. The years of meagre harvests and natural disasters outnumbered those when the crops were good and the hazards few. It was not, however, the mere occurrence of good or poor years, but the almost total lack of agricultural food supply interspersed with poor yields and occasional good ones which kept the colony in a retarded state until after 1820. That is to say, the disruptive effect of lean harvests was sufficient to swallow up any production of the poor years and much of the small surplus of the good ones.

One important problem resulting from the meagre harvests of the period and having an important bearing on crop selection in any year was that of seed supply. Once harvested, the Red River crop production was carefully distributed and often rationed, so that seed might be saved for the following spring.[1] But the smallness of the early harvests made dependence on the Pembina hunt and the fisheries

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[1] John West, Substance of a Journal, p. 80: "to save as much seed as possible the allowance of grain is given out to the settlers with the most rigid economy by the Chargè d'Affaires." See also S.P. 15, p. 5189, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, July 20, 1818 and Ibid., 23, p. 7463, Alex. Macdonell to Colvile, Nov. 13, 1821.

almost complete, which further reduced the consumption of farm produce between reaping and seeding. However, in the really bad years the colonists were forced to eat part of their seed corn, and this invariably resulted in a double season of scarcity as insufficient was left to put back into the land to give a full crop the following year. The failure to sow all the cleared land in some years can be attributed to the lack of sufficient seed, for despite the slight cultivated acreage there was, on occasion, more land than there was seed to supply it.[1] When the supplementary source of food, the buffalo hunt, also failed, as it did during the winter 1821-1822, the settlers were ready to find unpleasant and unsatisfactory substitutes to preserve their precious stocks of seed. That winter the colonists were reduced to eating "a little musty grain", and the Indian potato, a root from the plains, and some were even willing to kill their horses and dogs for food rather than be without seed the following spring.[2]

But to secure the continuity of arable farming and the diversity of agricultural production, something more than rigid economy and hoarding was often necessary. In many years it was essential to replenish existing supplies of seed with new seed from outside sources, a task made difficult by the

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[1] S.P., 24, p. 7593, Simpson to Colvile, May 20, 1822: "It is, however, to be deeply regretted that there is a great scarcity of seed. Much land cannot be taken into cultivation".

[2] John West, Substance of a Journal, p. 81; S.P., 24, p. 7589, Simpson to Colvile, May 20, 1822.

complete isolation of the colony and its great distance from areas of potential supply. Much of the seed sown in the early years of settlement came from Britain. Seed of many varieties accompanied the immigrant parties of 1812,[1] and the first spring sowing included Norfolk and Aberdeenshire barley, Essex and field beans, globe and Swedish turnips, black and Polish oats, as well as unnamed types of wheat, buckwheat, rye, hemp and flax.[2] The following year, after the complete failure of the wheat crop, wheat seed of British origin was brought to Red River from York Factory where it had been left by the second immigrant group of 1812.[3] Selkirk, acutely aware of the problems involved in establishing an agricultural colony, later sent out samples of seed which he hoped would be most suited to the short summers of Red River. He informed Macdonell in 1813 that he had dispatched, "a sample case of Orkney bere or big... for the purposes of experiment being more likely than any other grain to answer in our highest northern latitudes".[4] Barley seed was later sent out from

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[1] J. P. Pritchett, The Red River Valley, p. 95.

[2] Scattered references, S.P., 63, pp. 16,824-16,840, Miles Macdonell's Journal, May-June, 1813.

[3] Ibid., 63, p. 16,897, Miles Macdonell's Journal, May 10, 1814.

[4] Ibid., 3, p. 705, Selkirk to Miles Macdonell, June 16, 1813. Bere (beare) or big (bigg) is a type of barley which was widely cultivated in Northern and Western Scotland. It became one of the crops at Red River, though it was probably known normally as barley. Also Ibid., 19, p. 6414, Capt. Matthey to Selkirk, Aug. 2, 1819: "We had hard frosts 12 to 15 May, so as to freese beare".

Northern Sweden and further samples of bere may have been brought to Red River about the year 1817.[1]

The trading posts of the Winnipeg Basin and the partly agricultural Indians at Dead River were closer and more convenient sources of seed.[2] No evidence has been found of seed being acquired from the Dead River Indians but on several occasions the traders' gardens at Brandon House and Bas de la Rivière were to supplement the colony's small seed stock. The standard crops at the fur posts of the Northwest were primarily wheat, barley and potatoes, along with a number of garden vegetables. Considering the intensity of the problem at Red River and the isolation from alternate sources, the crop reliance at the colony probably reflects in part the supplemental seed types available at the posts and the willingness of the pioneer farmer to copy the valid experience he found around him. Potatoes and Indian corn were brought from Brandon House in 1813 and again in the spring of 1816 new seed was secured from the same post.[3] More important for preserving

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[1] A. S. Morton and C. Martin, History of Prairie Settlement (Toronto, 1938), p. 16; E. Marwick, "Orkneymen of Red River," Orkney Miscellany, I, 1953, p. 17.

[2] S.P., 1, pp. 176-177, Selkirk's Instructions to Miles Macdonell, 1811: "The Company's establishments at Brandon House, etc. will also supply you with seed potatoes and perhaps some seed grain ...Perhaps however a greater supply at least of Indian corn may be obtained from the Ottawa and Bungee Indians at Dead River near the mouth of Red River."

[3] Ibid., 63, p. 16,824, Miles Macdonell's Journal, May 8, 1813; Ibid., 8, p. 2,738, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, Sept. 1816; Ibid., 65, p. 17,515, Colin Robertson's Journal, May 1, 1816.

the continuity of arable farming at Red River was the seed transported from Bas de la Rivière in 1817 after the failure to harvest a crop in the colony the previous year, for it represented a new beginning for agriculture.[1] The substantial gardens at the mouth of the Winnipeg River provided the colonists with further supplies of seed in 1818.[2]

It was, however, the harvest failures, 1818-1821, that produced the most serious crisis in the early development of arable farming and much of this crisis centred around the problem of obtaining sufficient seed to maintain the agricultural side of the colonial economy. After the poor crops of 1818 the only available barley seed in 1819 was that which had been cut off at the ear by the grasshoppers.[3] The almost complete failure of the crops again in 1819 meant that certain precautions had to be taken to ensure the survival of the agricultural way of life. Small amounts of barley and potatoes (it was considered too late to plant wheat) were sown at Brandon House and Pembina, where it was hoped the crops would escape the effects of the grasshoppers and mature well enough to provide the colonists with seed for the next spring.[4]

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[1] Ibid., 14, pp. 4572-4574, W. Laidlaw to Selkirk, March 6, 1817: Ibid., 64, pp. 17,209, 17,229-30, 17,233, 17,246, Miles Macdonell's Journal, Feb.-April, 1817.

[2] Gunn and Tuttle, History of Manitoba, p. 205. The writer has not been able to verify the claim made by Alexander Ross, Red River Settlement, p. 23, that the colonists obtained seed from Bas de la Rivière as early as 1813. Ross did not arrive in the colony until 1825 and some of his information about these early years is unreliable.

[3] S.P., 16, p. 5291, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, Aug. 15, 1818; Ibid., 19, p. 6414, Capt. Matthey to Selkirk, Aug. 2, 1819.

[4] Ibid., 19, p. 6389, W. Laidlaw to Selkirk, July, 1819; Ibid.,

Seed also arrived from distant sources that year, including garden seeds, wheat, barley, peas and oats boated in from Montreal, and the colonial authorities were also confident that additional supplies of wheat, potatoes and corn could be brought from the trading posts at Rainy Lake and the Lake of the Woods.[1] The result of these precautionary measures is not known but by the winter of 1819-1820, the colony had decided that something more was necessary to restore its seed supply. It determined to send a small party to the United States for extra seed.[2] In that direction the nearest agricultural settlement, apart from the Indian villages on the Upper Missouri, was Prairie du Chien at the junction of the Mississippi and Wisconsin rivers in Wisconsin Territory and separated by several hundred miles of wilderness from the small colony at Red River. However, the problems of transportation between the two small settlements were surmounted and on June 3, 1820 the party of colonists that had set out the previous December arrived back with a cargo which included 250 bushels of wheat, 100 bushels of oats and 30 bushels of peas.[3]

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19, p. 6541, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, Nov. 8, 1819.

[1] Ibid., 19, p. 6546, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, Nov. 8, 1819; Ibid., 19, p. 6389, W. Laidlaw to Selkirk, July 1819; Ibid., 19, p. 6543, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, Nov. 8, 1819.

[2] S.P., 20, p. 6831, Robert Logan to Maitland, Garden and Auldjo, July 3, 1820; Ibid., 21, p. 6946, Alex. Macdonell to Colvile, Aug. 8, 1820; G. L. Nute (ed.), Northwest Missions, pp. 252, 256, 268; Ross, Red River Settlement, pp. 50-51; H. H. Sibley, "Remininscences of the Early Days of Minnesota", Minn. Hist. Col., I, 1850-1856, p. 470.

[3] The original purchase had been of 300 bushels of wheat but some seed had had to be left behind on the trip home because of overweighting of the boats and the shallowness of the rivers.

This dramatic trip has rightly been celebrated in histories of the settlement as an outstanding event and as the first important commercial link between Selkirk's Colony and the American frontier.[1] But it is easy to exaggerate its significance for the early progress of arable farming in the colony. In the first place, the settlement was not completely out of seed, as has sometimes been implied, in the spring of 1820, and a crop was already in the ground when the Prairie du Chien expedition arrived back in June.[2] Secondly, the expedition returned so late in the season that the new seed was not sown until June 4[3] and of the grain attacked by grasshoppers that summer it was the late seed from Prairie du Chien that suffered most. The earlier planted crop was much less damaged and a larger proportion of it survived to be harvested.[4] Furthermore, by 1822, as a consequence of the lean harvests of the two previous years, the almost complete failure of the winter hunt which had necessitated the consumption of more seed grain than was normal, and the rapidly increasing population at this time, "there was a great scarcity of seed" in the colony.[5] It was again brought from Bas de la Rivière, where

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[1] J. P. Pritchett, The Red River Valley, pp. 227-228.

[2] G. L. Nute (ed.), Northwest Missions, p. 268, Provencher to Bishop Panet, May 23, 1820: "The little seed we planted this year is looking fine".

[3] S. P., 21, p. 6946, Alex. Macdonell to Colvile, Aug. 8, 1820.

[4] Ibid., 21, p. 6949, Alex. Macdonell to Colvile, Aug. 8, 1820.

[5] Ibid., 24, p. 7593, Simpson to Colvile, May 20, 1822.

agriculture had escaped all the dangers that had threatened to destroy the colony at Red River.[1] Of the 180 bushels of surplus wheat found there in 1822, 100 bushels were saved for provisioning the canoes going east and 35 for the spring sowing at the post. The remaining 45 bushels were used as seed by the settlers at Red River, the whole carefully distributed by Simpson.[2]

Commercial Opportunities of the 1820's

Harassed by a series of natural disasters and poor harvests, it is not surprising that the colony was unable to meet the commerical possibilities, small as they were, open to it. During the early years of the settlement's history, the fur trade continued to be fed largely by the "plains-provisions" of the hunting lands. Too busy trying to feed itself, the Red River Colony was unable to fulfill its role as a supply base for the fur trade. As early as 1816 the London Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company had pledged to buy in the colony, for a period of 10 years, at prices equivalent to those of the London market, the provisions necessary for feeding its trading posts.[3] It was only in 1824, however, that the colony had a surplus of grain, and in that year the Company was purchasing wheat, Indian corn and peas at 7/8d

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[1] Ibid., 23, p. 7338, A Cuddie to Colvile, July 31-Aug. 5, 1821: "It is somewhat remarkable that all these years of our misfortune the post of the N.W.C. at the mouth of the River Winnipeg has received no injury".

[2] Ibid. 24, pp. 7593-7594, Simpson to Colvile, May 20, 1822; Ibid., 25, p. 7929, Simpson to Colvile, June 24, 1823; John West, Substance of a Journal, pp. 81, 92-93.

[3] Giraud, Le Métis Canadien, p. 729; Morton, Canadian West, p. 636.

per bushel, and barley at 5/- per bushel.[1] The offer of 1816 was completely out of context with the economic situation within the colony, while the orders of 1824 were at least concurrent with some surplus. The relatively good harvests of 1822-1823 made 1824 a possible commercial year. In 1823, for the first time the Northern Council at York Factory ordered agricultural produce from the colony, 700 bushels of Indian corn, and in each of the next four years, 1,000 bushels of corn, 200 cwts. of flour, 12 cwts. of barley, 100 bushels of peas, and 20 kegs of butter were requested of it. These early orders were modest, but they were a beginning and must have given some encouragement to the Red River farmers.

However, the demands and specifications made of the colony then and in later years were unrealistic and out of context with the conditions prevailing there. The Northern Council specified what they wanted rather than asked the colonial authorities what surplus agricultural produce they had for sale. In 1824, for example, it was ridiculous to order "best kiln dried flour" at a time when there was not even a powered grist mill in operation at the Red River.[2] Equally unrealistic were the demands for Indian corn. It is clear that the Company hoped to make corn the staple crop of the Red River Settlement and the most important item in

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[1] S.P., 26, pp. 8250-8252, Simpson to Colvile, May 31, 1824.

[2] Ibid., 26, p. 8310, R. P. Pelly to Colvile, July 29, 1824; Ibid., 26, p. 8317, R. P. Pelly to Colvile, Aug. 26, 1824.

their purchases from it,[1] for it was believed that this crop was the one most suited to the environmental conditions at Red River and most likely to survive the periodic destruction of the grasshoppers.[2] To Simpson, the great advantage of corn was that, unlike wheat, it could be shipped to the fur posts "whole", with no preliminary milling.[3] This was an important consideration at a time when there was nothing but a number of hand-mills in the colony.[4] These orders for corn from Red River after 1823 have been quoted to suggest that it was a crop of some consequence there, but the evidence reveals that the colony was unable to meet the demands for corn. This is obvious from the reaction of the Governor of the time, R. P. Pelly. The Company had asked for 1,000 bushels of corn in 1824 but Pelly reported that there were not 300 bushels in the whole colony.[5] He considered Indian corn an uncertain crop, likely to be destroyed by the slightest frost, and he noted that despite the Company's encouragement

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[1] Ibid., 26, p. 8232, Simpson to Colvile, May 31, 1824: "The only produce of the soil that the Coy. can take off the hands of the settlers to any extent is Indian corn" and Ibid., 26 p. 8279, Colvile to R. P. Pelly, June 4, 1824: "The grain however that will be most readily sold to the Company is Indian corn which I am glad to hear succeeds so well. You ought therefore to encourage its cultivation on a large scale".

[2] Ibid., 22, p. 7095, Colvile to Alex. Macdonell, Feb. 24, 1821; Oliver, Canadian North-West, I, pp. 213-214.

[3] S. P., 26, p. 8232, Simpson to Colvile, May 31, 1824.

[4] The first windmill was erected in 1825 upon Point Douglas.

[5] S.P., 26, p. 8317, R. P. Pelly to Colvile, Aug. 26, 1824.

the settlers were not anxious to cultivate it.[1] To emphasize his point, Pelly stated that of all the crops sown in 1824, only corn had failed, a victim of frost.

The evolving situation in Red River arable farming during the mid 1820's was sufficiently encouraging to lead Simpson to close down the supply posts on the Upper Assiniboine and transfer the focus of local food supply for the fur trade to the colony and make grain, as well as "plains-provisions", "the staple article of living".[2] Tributary to an area exhausted of furs, the provisioning posts on the Assiniboine had only been maintained at a considerable expense. By closing them down Simpson hoped to save at least £2,000 for the Company and give the depleted fur bearing areas a chance to recover.[3] This decision lay well within Simpson's basic thesis that the colony would never have overseas commercial possibilities[4] and indicates that the Red River Settlement was at last beginning to find its "place", one it subsequently occupied until 1870.

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[1] Ibid., 26, p. 8353, R. P. Pelly to Colvile, Oct. 23, 1824. See also W. H. Keating, II, pp. 225-226.

[2] S.P., 24, p. 7603, Simpson to Colvile, May 20, 1822; Ibid., 26, pp. 8250-8251, Simpson to Colvile, May 31, 1824; Ibid., 26, p. 8280, Colvile to R. P. Pelly, June 4, 1824.

[3] Brandon House was closed down in 1824. Henceforth, the Company's activities on the Upper Assiniboine were to be centred at Fort Pelly, built in the same year.

[4] S.P., 26, p. 8232, Simpson to Colvile, May 31, 1824: "flour cannot become an article of export from the Settlement as it would not pay the expence of transport." See also "Diary of Nicholas Garry," p. 145 and W. H. Keating, II, pp. 46-48.

Conclusions

The slow expansion of the cultivated acreage at Red River was as much a consequence of the lack of adequate farm implements and in some years the scarcity of seed, as of the small population. The irregular pattern of good and bad crop years, but particularly the intensity of the latter, gave the colony a stringent subsistence economy which was only partly based on agriculture. The high proportion of poor harvests resulted from the unusual concentration of natural disasters that struck the colony at a time when it was not long established. Arable farming was characterised by the cultivation of three basic crops, wheat, barley and potatoes, with additions from kitchen gardens. This reliance on these crops resulted from the generally better yields they provided and was also partly a reflection of the seed available for the colony from outside sources. It was also partly based on the experience taken over from the fur post gardeners, who had for many years before the establishment of the settlement, successfully cultivated the same crops. Attempts to cultivate crops with commercial possibilities had failed largely because of the demands on the arable acreage for food crops. Only after the good harvests of the early 1820's was the colony able to sell a small surplus of agricultural products and begin to fulfill the role envisaged for it. The realisation of this role led to the incorporation of the colony into the food supply side of the Hudson's Bay Company.

# CHAPTER V

## LIVESTOCK 1812 - 1827

### Introduction

A discussion of livestock in these years must focus on the various efforts that were made to secure livestock for the colony, rather than on a consideration of the part they played in the settlement's farm economy. It was only towards the end of this period that farm animals were present in sufficient numbers to make any significant impact on Red River agriculture. The difficulties of obtaining livestock were closely associated with its isolation and great distance from the populous areas of North America. Domesticated animals were present at some of the trading posts but in too small numbers to be able to stock a growing agricultural settlement. Britain and the settled areas of the United States were the obvious alternative sources of supply but they were so distant that transportation became an acute problem The major types of livestock present in the colony will be discussed in decreasing order of importance to the colonial economy.

Cattle:- Attempts to supply the settlement with cattle were numerous and often determined for they would be a valuable addition to its meagre and precarious food supply. But the problems involved in such a task were many and at times the difficulties involved seemed insurmountable. It

was planned to bring cattle from Britain along with the immigrants of 1812, but these had been left behind to make room for water for the voyage.[1] As a result the settlement's first cattle had to be brought from the trading posts. As Macdonell's party moved inland from York Factory to Red River during the summer of 1812, they acquired a bull and a yearling heifer at Oxford House, the colony's first livestock.[2] The following spring, a bull, a cow and a yearling heifer, purchased from the Northwesters at For la Souris for what Macdonell considered an extravagant cost of £100, arrived at the Forks.[3] The bull from Fort la Souris became so vicious it was killed for beef in the fall of 1813 and the following January the Oxford House bull was drowned in the colony's water hole. The count of summer 1814 revealed a total of six cattle; three cows, a one year old bull and two bull calves.[4] To add to this small herd, it was arranged with Company officials in 1815 to have 10 head of cattle dispatched from

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[1]A. S. Morton, History of the Canadian West to 1870-71 (Toronto, 1939), pp. 543,582.

[2]S.P., 62, p. 16,717, Miles Macdonell's Journal, Aug. 1, 1812. A bull and several cows had been brought to Oxford House from the Orkney Islands, soon after its construction in 1798. See D. Geneva Lent, West of the Mountains: James Sinclair and the Hudson's Bay Company (Seattle, 1963), p. 9.

[3]S.P., 3, p. 782, Macdonell to Selkirk, July 17, 1813.

[4]Ibid., 4, p. 1,198, Macdonell to Selkirk, July 25, 1814.

Fort Albany on James Bay, inland to Red River. They moved no further than Osnaburg House on Lake St. Joseph, and on the dispersal of the colony in 1815 were retained there, where part of the herd was killed by Indians. To the four cattle that survived the destruction of the colony in 1815, were added a further eight head sent out with the Kildonan settlers arriving that year.[2] Most of this small herd did not survive the outbreak of violence in 1816. After the recapture of the colony in January 1817, the settlement lacked both people and livestock. The colonists were still at the northern end of Lake Winnipeg and the settlement's only stock were three cows, one bull, three oxen and five horses taken from the North West Company fort at Rainy Lake as part of the spoils of war.[3] Their numbers were soon depleted; cattle were left unwatered throughout much of the winter and the bull died out on the plains. To the few survivors of this small herd were added two cows transported from York Factory in 1818 and a further two calves, offspring of Orkney's black cattle, arrived in 1820.[4]

These early attempts to supply the colony with cattle were obviously unsatisfactory for livestock at the forts

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[1] Ibid., 63, p. 17,094, Macdonell to Selkirk, Sept. 9, 1814; Morton, Canadian West, p. 582.

[2] J. P. Pritchett, The Red River Valley (Toronto, 1942), p. 163.

[3] S.P., 14, p. 4572, W. Laidlaw to Selkirk, Mar. 6, 1817.

[4] Ibid., 17, p. 5699, W. Laidlaw to Selkirk, Jan. 9, 1819; Ibid., 19, p. 6393, W. Laidlaw to Selkirk, July 1819; Morton, Canadian West, p. 646.

were too few and such livestock could not be transported from Europe in adequate numbers. The United States was the alternative source and both Detroit and Prairie du Chien had been suggested as possible settlements that could forward cattle to Red River.[1] It was not until 1817, however, that Selkirk began serious negotiations with American merchants about driving cattle north to his colony.

He first began discussions with Joseph Rolette, trader at Prairie du Chien and Michilimackinac, who offered to drive 200 cattle and a few oxen to Red River in 1818, for $100 per head.[2] Selkirk found Rolette's prices too high,[3] and acting through the trader Robert Dickson whom the Earl regarded as his agent in the Northwest, he began negotiations with Michael Dousman, a trader at Michilimackinac.[4] The final contract was

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[1] S.P., 2, p. 663, Selkirk to Macdonell, June 12, 1813; Ibid., 63, p. 17,094, Macdonell to Selkirk, Sept. 9, 1814.

[2] Ibid., 9, p. 3064, J. Rolette to Selkirk, Jan. 12, 1817. Rolette blamed the high prices on the large number of troops on the Mississippi, the havoc caused by the Indians during the War of 1812 and on the recent influx of Tennessee settlers into Missouri Territory, but cautioned Selkirk that he was the only man in the country who would undertake such a job.

[3] Ibid., 14, p. 4822, Selkirk to Fowler, April 20, 1818; Ibid., 17, p. 5705, Selkirk to James Wood, Jan. 9, 1819. Rolette later changed his offer to 100 head at $100 but at this time Selkirk was only willing to pay out a total sum of $5,000 for cattle. At Rolette's prices Selkirk was ready to purchase only 40 cows and four pairs of draught oxen. Selkirk also offered to give the successful drovers a grant of land at Red River.

[4] Ibid., 16, p. 5511, R. Dickson to Selkirk, Nov. 3, 1818; Ibid., 17, p. 5705, Selkirk to James Wood, Jan. 9, 1819.

signed by Dickson and Dousman, on June 28, 1819.[1] Dousman undertood to deliver at least 76 good milch cows at $80 per head and 20 oxen and four bullocks at $100 per head, plus a number of breeding mares not to exceed six and one stud horse. The whole herd was not to exceed 120 head and the delivery point would be Big Stone Lake, at the watershed of Red River and Mississippi drainage, since for fear of Indians, the American drovers were unwilling to travel any further north. Having made this agreement, Dousman immediately sold his contract to Adam D. Stewart, collector of customs at Michilimackinac, for $1,800.[2] By October 1819, Stewart was purchasing a herd of cattle in the St. Louis area.

Moving north, this herd spent the 1819-1820 winter somewhere in Northern Illinois. It had originally been arranged to winter the cattle at Prairie du Chien but on hearing that hay and adequate shelter were scarce there Stewart wintered them further south. The herd was expected to reach Big Stone Lake by the following July but the whole 284 head perished during the 1820-1821 winter at Prairie du Chien, for want of sufficient feed.[3] A second herd purchased at St. Louis in 1821 was expected to arrive at the delivery point later that year or early in 1822.

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[1]For this agreement see Ibid., 20, p. 6797; also Ibid., 21, p.6985, R. Dickson to Colvile, Sept. 7, 1820.

[2]Ibid., 21, p. 6891, Adam D. Stewart to Selkirk, June 1, 1820; L. A. Tohill, Robert Dickson, British Fur Trader on the Upper Mississippi (Ann Arbor, 1927), p. 94.

[3]S.P., 23, p. 7464, Alex. Macdonell to Colvile, Nov. 13, 1821.

Part of it reached Lake Traverse, at the head of Red River, but all were lost during the 1821-1822 winter.[1] It was not until the late summer of 1822, when 170 head of cattle reached the colony, that Stewart was able to fulfill his contract.[2]

While Stewart was trying unsuccessfully to deliver cattle from the American frontier, others had delivered small herds from the northern fringes of that country. J. P. Pritchett states that "about the year 1819 British traders had driven a few head of cattle from Sault Ste. Marie through the United States Indian country to the settlement."[3] In 1821 a second herd reached Red River, delivered by Rolette. The demand was great, the herd was small, and consequently prices were high. A total of 20 head were sold to a few wealthy, retired traders at prices ranging from £25 to £30 per head.[4] The rest of the herd were auctioned off to those

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It is just not clear what hindered the movement of this herd so that it got no further north than Prairie du Chien during 1820 but Stewart had anticipated trouble from both civilian and military authorities. The size of this herd was well above the 120 head contracted for, since Stewart argued that after having paid out large amounts for the contract and for wintering his herd, he could only make a profit by selling a larger herd.

[1] Ibid., 24, pp. 7616-7617, Simpson to Colvile, May 20, 1822.

[2] Having sent out four parties from the colony to meet the herds expected in 1820 and 1821, Governor Alex. Macdonell finally decided to leave the drovers to bring the cattle all the way to the settlement.

[3] J. P. Pritchett, The Red River Valley, p. 252.

[4] S.P., 23, p. 7464, Alex. Macdonell to Colvile, Nov. 13, 1821; Ibid., 24, pp. 7616-7617, Simpson to Colvile, May 20, 1822; Ibid., 24, p. 7729, A. Bulger to Colvile, Aug. 4, 1822.

who could afford them.[1] As a result of these acquisitions of cattle in 1819 and 1821 there was a total of 93 in the colony in spring 1822, most of them owned by a few of the wealthier residents.[2]

But it was the successful drive of 1822 which was most significant for Red River stock farming, for having completed that trip, Stewart's drovers were able to make drives in each of the following three years.[3] They had finally solved the problems involved in bringing cattle from their sources of supply to Red River in one year without having to winter them somewhere in the northern plains. The 120 head delivered on contract (96 milch cows, one bull and 23 oxen) were sold for a total of $10,080, and the other 50 were

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[1]Of the animals auctioned, Governor Macdonell purchased two oxen for £52, two white cows for £26, one branded cow for £13, one black cow for £18, two bull calves for £8: Ibid., 23, p. 7469, Memorandum for Mr. Rolette's Acct. with Red River Settlement, November 1821.

[2]Ibid., 24, p. 7673, This total was made up of 45 cows, three bulls, 39 calves and six oxen.

[3]For the arrival of cattle in 1822 see: Ibid., 24, p. 7743, A Bulger to Colvile, Sept. 1, 1822; Ibid., 24, pp. 7746-7747, A. Bulger to Colvile, Sept 8, 1822; Ibid., 24, p. 7753, Andrew Bulger, R.R.S., Sept. 5, 1822; Ibid., 24, p. 7754, A. Bulger to Musick and Dickson, Sept. 6, 1822; W. H. Keating, Narrative of an Expedition to the Source of St. Peter's River (London, 1825), II, p. 66; Alexander Ross, The Red River Settlement (London, 1856), p. 73; Grace Lee Nute (ed.), Documents Relating to the Northwest Missions, 1815-1827 (St. Paul, 1942), p. 373. The drovers were Lewis Musick and Frederick Dickson.

auctioned off. The whole herd was distributed by lot to those that had claims on the colony: firstly the married men of the de Meurons who had Lord Selkirk's promise of cattle in writing; secondly, the Scots who had been longest in and suffered most for the colony; thirdly, the married French Canadians who came from Montreal in 1818; fourthly, the Swiss who had suffered greatly since their recent arrival; and finally three German families and the unmarried men of all countries.

In August 1823, another 210 head of cattle arrived at the colony.[1] Of these 60 cows (at £9 per head) and two bulls (at £11 per head) were sold by a contract made the previous year, while the rest were brought on speculation. All were sold at good prices, expecially to the "Company's rich servants", now arriving at the colony in considerable numbers. Simpson was able to report in 1823 with some satisfaction that "the colony is now well supplied with black cattle and in the course of another [year] many of the settlers will be enabled to slaughter". No contract was entered into that year but in October 1824 the drovers again arrived at Red River, this time with a small herd of 90 head, for part of the original herd had been slaughtered by Indians.[2] This was a period of rapid population growth

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[1] S.P., 25, p. 8058, Mr. Kempt's Journal, Aug. 30, 1823; Ibid., 25, p. 8067, R. P. Pelly to Colvile, Nov. 1, 1823; Ibid., 25, p. 8081, Simpson to Colvile, Nov. 1, 1823; E. H. Oliver, (ed.), The Canadian North West: Its Early Development and Legislative Records (Ottawa, 1914), I, p. 248.

[2] S.P., 26, p. 8353, R. P. Pelly to Colvile, Oct. 23, 1824.

and all were sold at prices from £4 to £10 each. In 1825 the drovers made their fourth and final trip to Red River.[1] This herd is variously estimated at between 400 and 500 animals. But the returns on this stock were not so good; the demand for cattle, now that many of the settlers possessed a few head was less, prices were lower (milch cows sold for £6 and a pair of oxen for £4 to£10), and there was a shortage of money in the colony that year. From that time newcomers to the settlement were to buy their foundation stock from the colonists themselves.

During the years 1819 to 1825, six cattle drives had been attempted from far south in the United States, four of which had reached their destination at Red River. As a result perhaps 800 to 900 animals had been brought into the colony and it was from these herds that most of the Red River cattle were derived. Apart from the isolated trip to Prairie du Chien during the 1819-1820 winter, these long cattle drives were the first trading links forged between the Red River Colony and the American frontier settlements. The traffic had so far been one way, but soon furs and later livestock were to move south down the Red River trails to American markets. Most of the animals reaching the colony were purchased on the southern fringes of the Middle West; St. Louis

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[1] Ross, Red River Settlement, pp. 82-83; G. L. Nute (ed.), pp. 434, 437; S.P., 27, p. 8402, D. McKenzie to Colvile, Feb. 5, 1826; G. A. Belcourt, "Department of Hudson's Bay". Minn. Hist. Col. I, 1850-1856, p. 220.

and its vicinity, and the Illinois Territory are the locations most frequently mentioned. W. H. Keating specifically mentions Clarksville as the source of the 1822 herd.[1] The early Red River cattle were almost certainly descendants of the old French Canadian stock brought into the Illinois country in the eighteenth century. Little is known about the quality and character of the stock, but they were probably hardy, dual purpose animals of nondescript breed. Alexander Ross describes the arrivals of 1822 as a "large-boned and fine breed of cattle"[2] but detailed contemporary descriptions are lacking. They are simply termed "black" cattle.

By the introduction of cattle into the settlement a more varied and balanced farming economy had been established, as well as a more diversified and satisfactory colonial diet. The ownership of livestock gave the colonists a feeling of greater security and well-being.[3] Alexander Ross, entering the colony in 1825 after many years in the wilderness, described "a small herd of tame cattle" on the edge of the settlement, "as being the most satisfactory sign I have yet seen of civilisation in Red River."[4] By this time the Scots

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[1]W. H. Keating, II, p. 66, This is presumably Clarksville, Missouri, a small town north of St. Louis, on the west bank of the Mississippi.

[2]Ross, Red River Settlement, p. 73.

[3]G. L. Nute (ed.), Northwest Missions p. 420, Provencher to Plessis, June 1, 1824: "We have two cows that are giving milk, two spring calves, and one yearling, twelve hens, some chickens and some pigs; in short we are beginning to establish ourselves."

[4]Alexander Ross, The Fur Hunters of the Far West: A Narrative

especially were well supplied with cattle; all had at least five or six head while some had more than 20.[1] Indeed, some of the farmers already owned too many animals for the quantity of feed available during the winter. Towards the end of the long and severe 1825-1826 winter some of the colony's animals were slaughtered because of a lack of feed.[2] The establishment of a pastoral side to the Red River, meant that the farmers would soon be in a position to supply the fur trade with beef. While Simpson welcomed this encouragement to the farmer, he feared that it might lead to conflict with the métis. He envisaged that the colony would soon be independent of the plains, thus depriving the hunters of their readily available market for "plains-provisions."

The stock from the United States included a number of oxen. They were not the first oxen in the colony for three had been taken from the Northwesters at Rainy Lake during the 1816-1817 winter and six are recorded in the 1822 census. But they only appeared in significant numbers at Red River during the years 1822-1825 and a comparison of the numbers of oxen and horses in the 1831 census shows a predominance of the former in the ratio of more than two to one, 887 as against 410. Oxen were generally preferred to the horse for ploughing

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of Adventures in the Oregon and Rocky Mountains (London, 1855), II, p. 255.

[1]J. P. Pritchett (ed.), "The Red River Settlement in 1825", North Dakota Historical Quarterly, V (3), April 1931, pp. 172-176.

[2]Marcel Giraud, Le Métis Canadien (Paris, 1945), p. 639.

and other farm work and soon formed the main element in the settlement's draught animals. A yoke of oxen was invaluable for breaking the prairie sod, and it is no coincidence that the increase in the numbers of oxen took place at about the same time as the introduction of plough agriculture into the colony.[1]

Horses:- Of all the animals sought by the colonists only horses were present in any numbers within the North West. Yet although many had horses they were not numerous and proved surprisingly difficult to acquire in sufficient numbers. Necessary for the hunt and as a means of transport on the plains, the horse was almost essential to survival, so that those who possessed them, Indians, métis or fur traders, were often unwilling to part with their animals. In the Red River Settlement, where all colonists felt the pull of the hunting economy of the plains, the horse was more important for running the buffalo or carting meat from the plains than for pulling the plough (absent for most of these early years) or hauling hay. A necessity for the Indians and métis who lived almost entirely by the chase, the horse was also essential to the new colonists who were compelled to live partly by it, because of the failure of their crops in many years. As a result, the horse was initially as much, if not more, an aid to the hunting aspect of the Red River economy than to the new sedentary,

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[1] D. Gunn and C. R. Tuttle, History of Manitoba From the Earliest Settlement (Ottawa, 1880), pp. 242-243.

agricultural way of life.

The settlement's first horses, six in number, "all of them small horses with sore backs", were traded from the Indians in the Brandon House area, in the fall of 1812.[1] Macdonell had been advised that horses could be acquired from the Company posts, especially at Brandon House and Pembina, for these places were reported to have large stocks of horses, "tolerably domesticated and accustomed to draw in carts."[2] The Company men were unwilling to give up their horses and most of the colony's horses in the early years were traded from Indians and half-breeds. In the spring of 1813, two of them were pulling the plough on Point Douglas, preparing the ground for turnips and buckwheat. It was, however, during the winter months, when the colonists had to move south to Pembina to live by the hunt, that the horse proved most valuable to them. Unfortunately, the colony's first precious stock of horses were dispersed or stolen during the disturbances of 1815 and 1816.[3]

Following the re-establishment of the settlement in 1817 complaints about the absence or scarcity of horses were numerous. The shortage of horses, as much as the lack of

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[1] S.P., 62, pp. 16,752, 16,756, Miles Macdonell's Journal, Sept. 15 and 26, 1812.

[2] Ibid., 1, p. 176, Instructions to Miles Macdonell, 1811.

[3] Ibid., 63, p. 17,108, Macdonell to Selkirk, June 20, 1815: "The enemy have taken all our horses".

farm implements, was considered one of the great disadvantages of the colony and a drawback to the progress of its agriculture.[1] The lost horses were only slowly replaced; four were taken from the North West Company at Rainy Lake House during the 1816-1817 winter; two were brought to Hayfield Farm during 1817, one from Jack River and one from Ras de la Rivière, and by 1818 there were six horses there. In the spring of 1818 there may have been a total of 20 to 24 horses in the colony.[2] They were brought from far and wide to overcome what was described as "the famine for horses." In 1818 a party of four men went on a horse trading mission to the Mandan villages on the Missouri and returned with eight excellent ones as well as 170 beaver for the Company; six horses were moved in from the Qu'Appelle Valley and on June 22, 1819, 32 horses arrived from the Saskatchewan River country, the largest single acquisition during these early years.[3] In 1819 a total of 131 horses were counted but by 1822 this total had fallen to 78.[4] Numbers were reduced by theft, and though the horses

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[1] S.P., 64, p. 17,252, Miles Macdonell's Journal, April 26, 1817: "We are greatly straitened for horses to get in the crop".

[2] Ibid., 12, p. 4281, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, Jan. 24, 1818.

[3] Ibid., 78, pp. 20,524-20,526, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, Jan. 9, 1819; Ibid., 17, p. 5702, W. Laidlaw to Selkirk, Jan. 9, 1819; Ibid., 78, p. 20,532, Capt. Matthey to Selkirk, Jan. 10, 1819; Ibid., 19, p. 6542, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, Nov. 8, 1819.

[4] Ibid., 19, p. 6558, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, Nov. 8, 1819; Ibid., 24, p. 7673, Abstract of Settlers, Cattle and Seed, Spring, 1822.

were hardy, they suffered from disease and shortages of hay during the winter months. Losses were especially heavy during the 1819-1820 winter. Many died from "a disease hitherto unknown", at Red River and the snow was so deep in the valley that winter, the horses were unable to reach the grass beneath. As a result trees had to be cut down so that they might feed on the branches.[1] Such setbacks were temporary and numbers later increased. A few horses accompanied the cattle driven up from the United States, others were probably obtained from the Plains Indians, and natural increase accounted for the rest. They were used primarily for riding and to a lesser extent as draught animals.

Pigs and Poultry:- Pigs and poultry were relatively late additions to the colony, after which they played a subsidiary and minor role in its farming economy. Six pigs may have accompanied the immigrant party of 1815[2] but if so they do not seem to have survived the violence of the following year. Most of the settlement's pigs were derived from 18 of unknown breed, shipped from Britain, which arrived at York Factory in September, 1817. Unfortunately, only seven of this "most valuable cargo" could be carried to Red River. The York Factory boat was late that year and the rivers had set

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[1]S.P., 21, p. 6944, Alex. Macdonell to Colvile, Aug. 8, 1820.

[2]J. P. Pritchett, Red River Valley, p. 163.

fast much earlier than usual. The pigs were moved with great difficulty by boat to Jack River but from there were wrapped in blankets and buffalo robes, strapped to sledges, and moved over the ice of Lake Winnipeg.[1] These original seven multiplied rapidly and by 1819 there were 69 pigs at the settlement, including at least 18 on Selkirk's model farm of Hayfield.[2] For reasons not known, their numbers declined during the next three years and only 12 were counted in the 1822 census. W. H. Keating, visiting the colony in 1823, did not consider pigs to be a success there.[3] Despite their small numbers, winter sustenance was a serious problem. No grain or potatoes could be spared for them during the grasshopper years, and after the failure of the potato crop in 1819 the settlers were forced to feed their 70 or so pigs on acorns gathered by Indian women from the timbered fringes of the rivers.[4] But for most of the time the pigs were left to forage for themselves during the hard winters of the early 1820's and sometime later in that decade they began to increase rapidly.

Information about poultry is scanty but 1820 seems to be the year when they reached the colony in significant

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[1]S.P., 12, p. 4288, W. Laidlaw to Selkirk, Dec. 28, 1817.

[2]S.P., 17, p. 5699, W. Laidlaw to Selkirk, Jan. 9, 1819; Ibid., 19, p. 6588, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, Nov. 8, 1819.

[3]W. H. Keating, II, pp. 66,226; also S.P. 25, p. 8081, Simpson to Colvile, Nov. 1, 1823: "There are very few swine".

[4]Ibid., 19, p. 6422, Capt. Matthey to Selkirk, Aug. 2, 1819; Ibid., 19, p. 6552, Suggestions for Mr. Logan, Aug. 2, 1819.

numbers. Chickens formed part of the cargo from Prairie du Chien and in the same year geese and ducks were brought in through York Factory.[1] According to Bishop Provencher, writing in 1836, there were only two hens in the area in 1822 and it was from this couple that all the hens of the settlement were derived.[2]

Sheep:- Lord Selkirk's vision of a viable agricultural colony in the heart of North America was in part based on converting some of the prairie of the Red River Valley from buffalo country to sheep country.[3] Light in weight and therefore relatively easy to transport, high in value and in great demand by the growing factories of Yorkshire's West Riding, wool seemed the ideal product on which to base the prosperity of an agricultural settlement founded at the edge of one of the world's great grassland areas. Selkirk was anxious to point out the commercial possibilities of his colony. Consequently, a small pioneer flock of 21 Merinos (17 ewes and four rams), purchased in Spain, accompanied the emigrants of 1812.[4] In 1813 a fold was traced out for them on Point

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[1] Morton, Canadian West, p. 646.

[2] G. Macewan, Between the Red and the Rockies (Toronto, 1952), p. 19.

[3] "Lord Selkirk's Advertisement and Prospectus of the New Colony, Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, II, 1908, p. 137.

[4] S.P., 3, p. 768, Macdonell to Selkirk, July 17, 1813. The export of Merinos had formerly been restricted but during the

Douglas, where they were placed under the charge of a shepherd, for they were considered too valuable to be distributed amongst the colonists.[1] In the following year, 28 fleeces were shipped to Britain, the first export of the Red River Settlement.[2] But early efforts at sheep raising were not a success. One ewe had died on the passage to York and another ewe and two rams did not survive the first winter. Thereafter, the half wild dogs that roamed around the fringes of the settlement began to reduce their numbers; five sheep and one lamb were savaged in 1813.[3] The few survivors fell victim to the violence between the colonists and the métis. By 1817 sheep are absent from Red River agriculture.

They did not reappear until 1821 when another 20 Merinos (15 ewes and five rams), purchased in Saxony at some expense, were shipped to York Factory.[4] They fared no better than the earlier flock and suffered from careless handling. Placed on their arrival at York Factory on a small island

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Napoleonic Wars, when Spain was overrun by French troops, these restrictions had broken down in practice: P. W. Gates, The Farmer's Age: Agriculture 1815-1860 (New York, 1960), p. 222.

[1] S. P., 63, p. 16,840, Miles Macdonell's Journal, July 3, 1813.

[2] Ibid., 4, p. 1198, Macdonell to Selkirk, July 25, 1814.

[3] S. P., 63, p. 16,860, Miles Macdonell's Journal, Oct. 15, 1813, For 1813, 18 sheep are recorded (15 ewes, two rams and one lamb) and for 1814, 15 sheep (nine ewes, two rams and four lambs).

[4] Ibid., 23, p. 7414, Alex. Macdonell to Colvile, Sept. 13, 1821; Oliver, Canadian North-West, I, pp. 212-215; G. L. Nute (ed.), Northwest Missions, p. 375.

opposite the fort, five ewes, all of the rams and two lambs born on ship were drowned and only ten sheep reached Red River.[1] A ram was fortunately born in 1822 and a second one was brought to Red River from Fort William in 1824. But again dogs, disease, winter cold, lack of adequate husbandry and the disinterest of most of the settlers in sheep farming took their toll and once more sheep gradually disappeared from the colony.[2] During these early years sheep rearing had never gone beyond the experimental and the small scale, and apart from a few individuals like Selkirk, nobody had shown any enthusiasm for it. The possibility of driving a large flock from Detroit at the conclusion of the War of 1812 had been considered and the American merchants supplying the colony with cattle in the early 1820's had also offered to bring sheep. In the winter of 1823-1824, fur trader Colin Robertson had suggested to Simpson the formation of a large scale sheep venture, to be known as the Assiniboine Sheep or Wool Company. But the American frontier was considered too distant[3] and Simpson dismissed Robertson's scheme as that of a fanciful dreamer.[4] Not until Simpson reversed his opinion would the colony be stocked with sheep.

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[1] S. P., 23, p. 7393, Simpson to Colvile, Sept. 8, 1821.

[2] Ibid., 26, p. 8310, R. P. Pelly to Colvile, July 29, 1824; Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, II, p. 257.

[3] S. P., 23, p. 7416, Alex. Macdonell to Colvile, Sept. 13, 1821: "I do not think we can have sheep from the States not at least until the Americans establish themselves near us and that may take some time."

[4] Ibid., 26, p. 8248, Simpson to Colvile, May 31, 1824.

Conclusions

Until about 1822 all efforts to establish a pastoral side to the farming economy of Red River must be considered a failure. The early agriculture of the colony was almost entirely concerned with the production of crops. Farm animals were few and concentrated either on Point Douglas or at Hayfield Farm. Most of the settlers had no animals of their own. Only after 1822, when a rapid increase of the colony's livestock population took place, was a mixed farming economy commenced. In many ways the hunting economy and the meat it provided was a substitute for the lack of adequate numbers of farm animals. Other substitutes had been tried or suggested; attempts had been made to domesticate the buffalo and the possibility of herding reindeer and musk oxen had been discussed. Domesticated cattle had been mated with the buffalo and at one time Selkirk had urged Macdonell to encourage the settlers to drink mares' milk but both schemes met with no success.

The few animals at the Red River Settlement before 1822 had suffered from a lack of adequate care. During the years of meagre harvests, there was nothing to spare for animal feed. Grain and potatoes were in short supply, and hay making was a casual affair, not the well organised and regulated activity it later became. Livestock farming was never to be an easy thing at Red River, with its long, severe winters. But the few animals at the nascent colony were not

sufficiently protected against the ordeal of winter. Winter feed was scarce, stables were either inadequate or absent, and most of the settlers were away from the colony during the cold season, hunting buffalo out of Pembina. Only the few horses at the settlement were usually able to fend for themselves throughout a Red River winter.

Sometime soon after 1822 the numbers of cattle, oxen, pigs, poultry and horses began to increase. Until 1825 much of the increase of cattle, and partly that of oxen and horses, was the result of the cattle drives from the United States, but after that year most of the increment of all types of livestock was a natural one. The absence of detailed quantitative information prevents an analysis of the various rates of increase. However, the 1831 census, when 410 horses, 887 oxen, 2,066 cattle and 2,362 pigs were counted, shows its results. Poultry were not recorded in this or any of the later colonial censuses, but they were also probably present in considerable numbers. Only sheep were absent and had likely disappeared by about 1825. They did not re-enter the agricultural scene at Red River until 1833. The beginning of this rapid multiplication of the colony's livestock, perhaps coinciding with the good harvests of the years 1822-1825 and probably stimulated by them, helped to give the colonists a feeling of greater security and prosperity. The cattle, hogs and poultry diversified and helped to stabilise the colony's food supply, whilst the sturdy oxen enabled the settlers to

extend their agricultural operations as animal labour replaced hand methods in the task of clearing and ploughing the land. A large proportion of the farm animals were owned by the European immigrant colonists, especially the Scots, and not until later were most of the métis families at Grantown and St. Boniface to acquire a few animals. By 1827, most of the Red River farmers probably had a horse for riding in summer and pulling sledges in winter plus a pair of oxen for ploughing and for carting hay and wood. Many of them also had a small herd of cattle and a number of pigs and poultry. The metis, little interested in agriculture, continued to live largely by the chase, but the acquisition of domesticated animals, as well as the increasing number of successful harvests, allowed the farming families at Red River to discontinue their hunting activities.

# RED RIVER SETTLEMENT

1827 - 1857

## CHAPTER VI

## POPULATION AND SETTLEMENT 1827 - 1857

### Population Growth

There was a steady and substantial increase of population at the colony during the 1830's. In 1834 one resident enthused that, "abundance of weddings are...the order of the day, and our population is increasing with an accelerated speed that far outstrips the highest calculus of Malthus or Adam Smith."[1] The total of 4,688 for 1840 represented an approximate doubling of the population in eight years.[2] This rate of increase was not maintained during the 1840's. The colonial census had counted 5,391 people in 1849, which represented an increase of 15 per cent in the previous nine years. However, the rate of growth increased again in the early 1850's and by 1856 the total number of Red River settlers had reached 6,691.

Much of the growth of population during the 30 year period under consideration resulted from natural increase.

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[1] G. P. de T. Glazebrook (ed.), The Hargrave Correspondence 1821-1843. (Champlain Society; Toronto, 1938) p. 160.

[2] The population totals quoted in this chapter are derived from the Red River censuses. The Red River censuses were made in 1832, 1833, 1838, 1840, 1843, 1846-1847, 1849 and 1856. All but the 1856 census are found in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg. For a detailed study of the censuses see J. Clarke, "Population and Economic Activity -- a Geographical and Historical Analysis Based upon Selected Censuses of the Red River Valley in the Period 1832 to 1856." (unpublished

By far the greatest proportion of new families were those of discharged fur traders who annually arrived at the settlement, ready to take up land alongside the Red or the Assiniboine, and anxious to expose their children to the benefits of school and church. This movement reached a peak during the 1830's.[1] At the same time many métis continued to drift into the colony from all parts of the Northwest, joining their friends or relations and helping to swell the number of settlers at the White Horse Plain and the Upper Settlement. Immigration was of little importance to the colony after 1821, for though settlers continued to pour into other parts of North America in their thousands, the flow of migrants from overseas to Red River came virtually to a halt. Not until 1874, with the migration of Mennonites into the newly created Province of Manitoba was there any further large scale immigration directly from Europe. After 1821 the only immigrants were the 13 Lincolnshire families that arrived at Red River in 1837 and the parties of pensioners that came out from Britain in 1848 and 1850. The families from Eastern England had been engaged as servants for the Hudson's Bay Company's experimental farm

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M. A. thesis of the University of Manitoba, 1966). The 1856 census, made in May, is reprinted in H.Y. Hind, Report on a Topographical and Geological Exploration of the Canoe Route Between Fort William, Lake Superior, and Fort Garry, Red River, Etc. (Toronto, 1858), Appendix 3, Tables 1-7.

[1]M. Giraud, Le Métis Canadien (Paris, 1945), p. 768.

on condition that they would receive their own land at the termination of their five year period of service.[1] The pensioners, veteran-soldiers sent to Red River to replace the Sixth Regiment of Foot, which had been present at the colony for two years during the Oregon crisis, came as settlers as well as soldiers. The two parties totalled some 76 men -- English, Irish and Scottish -- plus an unknown number of wives and children, for unlike the regular soldiers that they replaced, the pensioners came as families. But they made little impact on Red River life as either military men or as farmer-colonists. Alexander Ross dubbed them as "a second edition of the de Meurons."[2] The comparison was apt for they proved to be as unruly a body of men as the colony's first group of soldier-settlers. The veterans had been promised from 20 to 40 acres of land, according to rank, within two miles of the Upper Fort but available land close to the Forks was by then scarce and most of them were granted smaller lots along the lower reaches of the Assiniboine in what was soon to be the parish of St. James. Dissatisfied with conditions at the colony, many returned to Britain or moved to Canada. By 1855 there were only about 25 families or about one-third of the

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[1] United Kingdom, Select Committee on the Hudson's Bay Company, (Dondon, 1857), p. 14; Evidence of Lieut.-Colonel J. H. Lefroy; W. J. Healy, (ed.), Women of Red River (Winnipeg, 1923), p. 103; Nor'-Wester, Dec. 28, 1859; J. J. Hargrave, Red River (Montreal, 1871), p. 203.

[2] Alexander Ross, Red River Settlement (London, 1856), p. 365.

original total left at Red River.[1] "They were", in the words of W. L. Morton, "by 1857 simply another element, largely Irish, in the varied population."[2]

The unimportance of immigration was partly the result of the policy of the Hudson's Bay Company, which recognised the incompatibility of agricultural colonisation and the fur trade. The Company was not ready to encourage the movement of immigrants to the Red River Settlement at the risk of jeopardising their own fur trading interests.[3] In fact, according to the Company, the only reason for the existence of an agricultural colony at Red River was to supply their trading posts with provisions and their boat brigades with men. Once the settlement was able to meet these requirements, as far as agricultural colonisation was concerned, the Hudson's Bay Company was unwilling to go beyond allowing those discharged employees who so wished to take up land there.

The increase of population at Red River would have been more impressive but for the inroads caused by emigration and occasional epidemics. The departure of colonists had reached a peak in 1826 but it was a continuing

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[1] United Kingdom, Select Committee on Hudson's Bay Company, 1857, p. 308; Evidence of Lieut.-Colonel W. Caldwell.

[2] W. L. Morton, The Critical Years: The Union of British North America, 1857-1873 (Toronto, 1964), p. 24.

[3] United Kingdom, Select Committee on Hudson's Bay Company, 1857, p. 41; Evidence of George Simpson.

process that removed many other families from the settlement, though the improving harvests and the removal of the more openly discontented elements in the year of the flood, had slowed down the flow after 1826. One estimate puts the total number of emigrating colonists who passed through Fort Snelling between 1821 and 1835, on their way south, as 489.[1] These population movements seem to have intensified in the period 1835 to 1845.[2] According to Alexander Ross, 114 persons left the settlement in 1835[3] and the departures during the early 1840's were sufficient to cause a drop of 5 per cent in the total population between the censuses of 1843 and 1846.[4] The Scottish Presbyterians of St. John's and St. Paul's contributed the largest part to this emigration. Their exodus was the culmination of a growing restlessness and disillusionment among many of the Highlanders, which became increasingly more evident after 1835. There was no one single, compelling reason that determined many of the Scots to seek new homes. However, the cause of their unrest can be traced largely to

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[1] E. D. Neill, "Occurrences in and Around Fort Snelling, from 1819 to 1840," Minn. Hist. Col., II, 1860-1867, p. 127.

[2] Hargrave Correspondence, pp. 207, 227, 250, 341, 348; E. E. Rich (ed.), McLoughlin's Fort Vancouver Letters, 1st Series, 1825-1838. (Champlain Society; Toronto, 1941), pp. 217-218; Nor'Wester, April 28, 1860, "Our Friends in Illinois".

[3] Ross, Red River Settlement, p. 184.

[4] The epidemic of 1843 was probably a contributing factor.

two factors. Firstly, the continuing failure of the Scottish Presbyterians to obtain a minister of their own faith, was a source of discontent and the cause of this irritation was not removed until 1851, when the Reverend John Black arrived at Red River. Secondly, there was a growing realisation among the Scots farmers of the instability of their economic position. If their crops were good there was an insubstantial market for the surplus products of their land, while in an unfavourable season their crops were likely to fail. There were meagre harvests in 1836, 1837, 1840, 1844, 1846, 1847 and 1848. Faced with such an unfavourable set of circumstances, many of the Scots decided to try to make a new life for themselves in the United States. The relatively higher imigration of the Scots among the colonists at Red River, further diluted the European and agricultural element in the population and further hastened the development of a predominantly half-breed society. To ease the problem of transportation and to give themselves greater protection against possible attacks from hostile Plains Indians, the departing families organised themselves into parties. Their direction of movement was south, up the Red, across the international frontier, and down the upper Mississippi. Their intended destination were the isolated settlements on the Mississippi, such as that around Fort Snelling, or the newly opened farm lands deeper in the Middle West. By at least the late 1850's ambitious young men were taking the same direction and finding winter employment in Minnesota, where, according to Donald Gunn, they

were valued as "dextrous axe-men and able industrious servants."[1]

Somewhat different in its organisation and intended destination was the party of 121 Red River settlers (23 families) that left the colony in 1841 under the guidance of the half-breed free trader James Sinclair, and trekked west across the plains and over the Western Cordillera to the Pacific seaboard.[2] Their goal was the Puget Sound lowlands of the Oregon country.[3] The emigrants had been actively recruited by the Hudson's Bay Company, which had provided them with assistance in their passage west and promised them land and other aid on their arrival there. The motives of the Company in encouraging the shift of people from one part of their territory to another were largely political. By moving settlers into the Puget Sound lowlands the Hudson's Bay Company hoped to counter American migration into the same area and to strengthen their claim to the land north of the Columbia River. At the same time, the Company hoped to siphon off from the Red River population troublesome persons who had begun to compete in the fur trade. But the venture was far from being a success. The settlers, placed on poor land in the vicinity of Fort Nisqually and getting meagre crops, had, as a result, all

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[1] United Kingdom, Select Committee on Hudson's Bay Company, 1857, Appendix 7, p. 383; also H. Y. Hind, Narrative of the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition of 1857, and of the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition of 1858 (London, 1860), I, p. 178.

[2] The best account of this "assisted emigration" is in J.S. Galbraith, The Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor, 1821-1869 (Toronto, 1957), pp. 207-213.

[3] 116 persons (21 families) arrived in Oregon. Two families

moved south by the autumn of 1843 to the more fertile Willamette Valley. When the boundary treaty of 1846 was signed political control of all the territory north of the Columbia as far as the 49th parallel passed to the United States. However, the trip was repeated in 1854 when a further 100 or so settlers from Red River, again led by Sinclair, moved to the by then American controlled Oregon Territory.[1]

The southward flow of people over the frontier was not matched by a movement of people in the other direction, for American land seekers were unwilling to move to an isolated, high latitude settlement on the Red River of the North as long as much of the fertile prairies of their own Middle West remained unoccupied. Simpson gave evidence in 1857 that, "two or three Americans have gone from St. Paul's, who have seated themselves down as small dealers and opened shops".[2] The first American settlers at the Red River Colony came in the middle 1850's, and like those who where to follow them, they came as traders rather than farmers, ready to compete with the Hudson's Bay Company on their own doorstep and hopeful of quick profits.[3] There they built their stores close by

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had turned back somewhere en route.

[1] D. Geneva Lent, West of the Mountains: James Sinclair and the Hudson's Bay Company (Seattle, 1963), p. 235.

[2] United Kingdom, Select Committee on Hudson's Bay Company, 1857, p. 51.

[3] A. C. Gluek, Minnesota and the Manifest Destiny of the Canadian Northwest (Toronto, 1965), p. 153.

the Forks, symbols of the growing trans-border trade which increasingly linked the colony, especially after 1840, with American commercial interests on the Upper Red and the Upper Mississippi.

Another factor to be considered in the net rate of increase of the population are the periodic outbreaks of disease which in some years considerably raised the death rate. Mortality figures are not available but it would appear from the records that the years 1834, 1835, 1843 and 1846 stand out as those of highest mortality. In each of these years the settlement was stricken by disease. Following an epidemic of whooping cough and an outbreak of "bowel complaints" in the autumn of 1834, in the summer of 1835 the colony was racked by an epidemic of influenza "which occasioned a very considerable mortality".[1] In August 1843, an epidemic of scarlet fever, originating in the Lower Settlement, swept through the population and even at the end of the year was reported to be "continuing to carry of a few among the Canadians."[2] Three years later, in 1846, outbreaks of influenza, measles, and dysentery (bloody flux) followed in rapid succession. The latter disease, first striking down the Indians at the White Horse Plain, spread to other parts of the colony and claimed many victims. From June 18 to August 2, at the height of the catastrophe, 321 persons or one sixteenth of the total

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[1] Hargrave Correspondence, pp. 158, 180, 184, 207, 209, 211.

[2] Ibid., p. 452.

population died. Alexander Ross tells us that whole families were wiped out.[1]

Expansion of the Settled Area

The outer limits of the Red River Settlement were virtually fixed by 1827. These limits were outlined by the former Northwester John Pritchard, writing to Miles Macdonell in June 1825:

> "The Country is completely settled from the Stinking River to Nettly Creek on this River. Cuthbert Grant has formed a Settlement at White Horse Plain from whence downward to the Fort [Fort Garry] The Assiniboine River is tolerably well settled."[2]

The northern and western extremities of the colony were extended during the 1830's by the establishment of two Indian mission settlements, one Protestant and the other Roman Catholic. They represented attempts to Christianize the Indians and lead them from a nomadic, hunting existence to a sedentary, agricultural one. Under the energetic leadership of the Reverend William Cockrane, the founder of St. Andrew's, a number of Swampy Cree families formerly camped at Netley Creek were persuaded to settle down just above the Red River delta in what later became the parish of St. Peter. The first settlement was attempted at Sugar Point, just below

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[1] Ross, Red River Settlement, pp. 362-363.

[2] J. P. Pritchett (ed.), "The Red River Settlement in 1825. A Letter From John Pritchard to Miles Macdonell, June 16, 1825", North Dakota Historical Quarterly, V (3), April 1931, pp. 172-176.

the northern boundary of St. Andrew's in 1833, but was later moved to a point lower down where Joe Cook's Creek joins the Red from the east.[1] A school was soon built at this new site and in 1836 a church was completed. A windmill soon followed. Progress there was steady if unspectacular and by 1856 there were 596 persons resident at the Indian Settlement. The Catholic counterpart was the mission of Baie St. Paul, founded by Father G. A. Belcourt in 1833, 10 miles upstream from Grantown, on a tract of land five miles by two miles in extent.[2] A number of Saulteaux families collected there and began to cultivate the soil. A school was opened in 1834 and by 1837 a chapel was completed, but the Baie St. Paul settlement was neither as successful nor as enduring as Cockrane's mission. The Saulteaux were less amenable to agriculture and the settled way of life than the Crees and the population at Belcourt's mission fluctuated widely. A total recorded population of 98 (25 families) in 1840 had risen to 187 (33 families) in 1843 but this had fallen to 95 (27 families) by 1846. The mission was discontinued and the settlement broken up in 1848-1849 when its founder, after becoming involved in the fight against the Hudson's Bay Company's trading

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[1] T. C. Boon, The Anglican Church From the Bay to the Rockies (Toronto, 1962), pp. 38-39.

[2] Ross, Red River Settlement, pp. 285-288; J. M. Reardon, George Anthony Belcourt, Pioneer Catholic Missionary of the Northwest, 1803-1874 (St. Paul, 1955), p. 36.

monopoly, left to reconstitute the mission at Pembina, (1849).[1]

The increase of population at Red River resulted in an expansion of the settled area and the colonisation of new land. Much of the land within the limits given by Pritchard was still vacant, even along the rivers, and during the 1830's and 1840's the settlement in effect "filled up". By 1833 Simpson could report that, "nearly all the valuable land on the banks of the river, within 10 miles of the heart of the Settlement is now occupied."[2] A majority of the discharged fur trade employees who annually arrived at the colony continued to move down into St. Andrew's where they were quietly assimilated into the life of the settlement. The original nucleus of settlement around the Grand Rapids was gradually extended north towards Sugar Point and south towards the limits of colonisation in St. Paul's. St. Andrew's, with its long frontage on the Red, soon became the most populous of the Protestant parishes and the number of persons resident there had reached 1,207 by 1856. Population densities also increased on the Assiniboine below St. François-Xavier, as some retired fur traders, agricultural labourers released from service with the Company's experimental farm, migrants from other parts of the colony, as well as many of the

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[1] J. W. Bond, Minnesota and its Resources (New York, 1853). p. 345.

[2] S.P., 27, p. 8500, Simpson to Colvile, May 15, 1833.

pensioners of 1848 and 1850, chose to take up land there. Most of these colonists held their land by long-term leases entered in the registers of the Company. Yet there were many settled at the colony who had no such title to the land they held. As early as 1833 Simpson stated that "on the banks of the Main [Red] and Assiniboine rivers there are at present many squatters who have no good title to the lands they occupy".[1] A preponderance of the squatters were métis and Canadians who were still finding their way into the Red River Valley from all parts of Rupert's Land east of the Rocky Mountains. There they joined their kin or kind already settled along the Red or at Grantown. Métis and Canadians, "promiscuously settled together", constructed their rude cabins on both sides of the Red above the Forks or on the lower stretches of its tributaries -- the River Seine, the Rivière Sale and Oak Creek. Some of the half-breeds from the Upper Settlement worked as boatmen for the Company but the majority made up the "main river party" of the annual buffalo hunts. The colonists in this part of the settlement practised a form of land rotation, valuing the land chiefly for the timber it provided, rather than for its potential for agriculture. Once the timber on their land was denuded, it was customary for the half-breed hunters to abandon their chosen lot, and squat elsewhere where timber along the

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[1] Ibid., 27, p. 8502, Simpson to Colvile, May 15, 1833; also United Kingdom, Select Committee on Hudson's Bay Company, 1857, p. 96; Evidence of George Simpson.

prairie streams was still abundant. By this practice, complained Alexander Ross, "the upper and best wooded part of the settlement has been entirely ruined, and rendered treeless."[1] Other French speaking half-breeds and Canadians continued to collect at Grantown, the home of the White Horse Plains hunt and the most important and characteristic métis settlement in the Northwest. It supplied the colony and the fur trade with "plains-provisions" and functioned as an outfitting centre for travellers moving west across the prairies. The skilled hunters, horsemen and fighters of St. François-Xavier also acted as a bulwark of the colony against possible incursions of the hostile Sioux from the plains to the south.[2] The number of families settled there more than trebled between 1831 and 1849 and in 1856 the population at St. François-Xavier had increased to 1,101 persons (178 families). French speaking half-breeds made up 85 per cent of this total, the rest being Canadians. By at least 1850 a third but smaller métis settlement was emerging at a point some 11 miles up the Assiniboine from the Forks, close by the Passage where the half-breed hunters crossed over the river on their way south to the Pembina River and the Souris plains. This settlement was soon to be formed into the parish of St. Charles.

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[1] Ross, Red River Settlement, p. 199.

[2] M. A. MacLeod and W. L. Morton, Cuthbert Grant of Grantown (Toronto, 1963), pp. 105, 113.

Following the establishment of the Indian mission settlements during the 1830's no new parishes were formed at the colony until the 1850's, though many of the original wooden churches were rebuilt in stone.[1] In 1851 the Scottish Presbyterians at last acquired their own minister and the parish of Kildonan was created between St. John's and St. Paul's. Up to the 1850's there were no parishes on the Assiniboine below the White Horse Plain or on the Red upstream from St. Boniface. As settlers spread out along the rivers their religious needs had been met by missionary priests travelling between the various settlements. As the population gradually increased, given areas were made into parishes. The parishes as of 1856 are shown in Figure 5. Beyond the reserve of land attached to Upper Fort Garry the parish of St. James was created in 1853, some two miles upstream from the Forks. In 1856 there were 414 settlers resident there, and with its considerable mixture of English, Scottish and Irish families was the most British of the colony's parishes. In the same year a second Protestant church was founded in the wooded northern fringe of the Assiniboine.[2] This was Trinity Church, Headingley constructed below St. François-Xavier to serve a small community of about 20 families. Between these two Protestant settlements the Roman Catholic

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[1] A stone church was completed at St. Boniface in 1832, at St. John's in 1834, at St. Andrew's in 1849 and at St. Peter's in 1854.

[2] United Kingdom, Select Committee on Hudson's Bay Company, 1857, p. 138; Evidence of Reverend G. O Corbett.

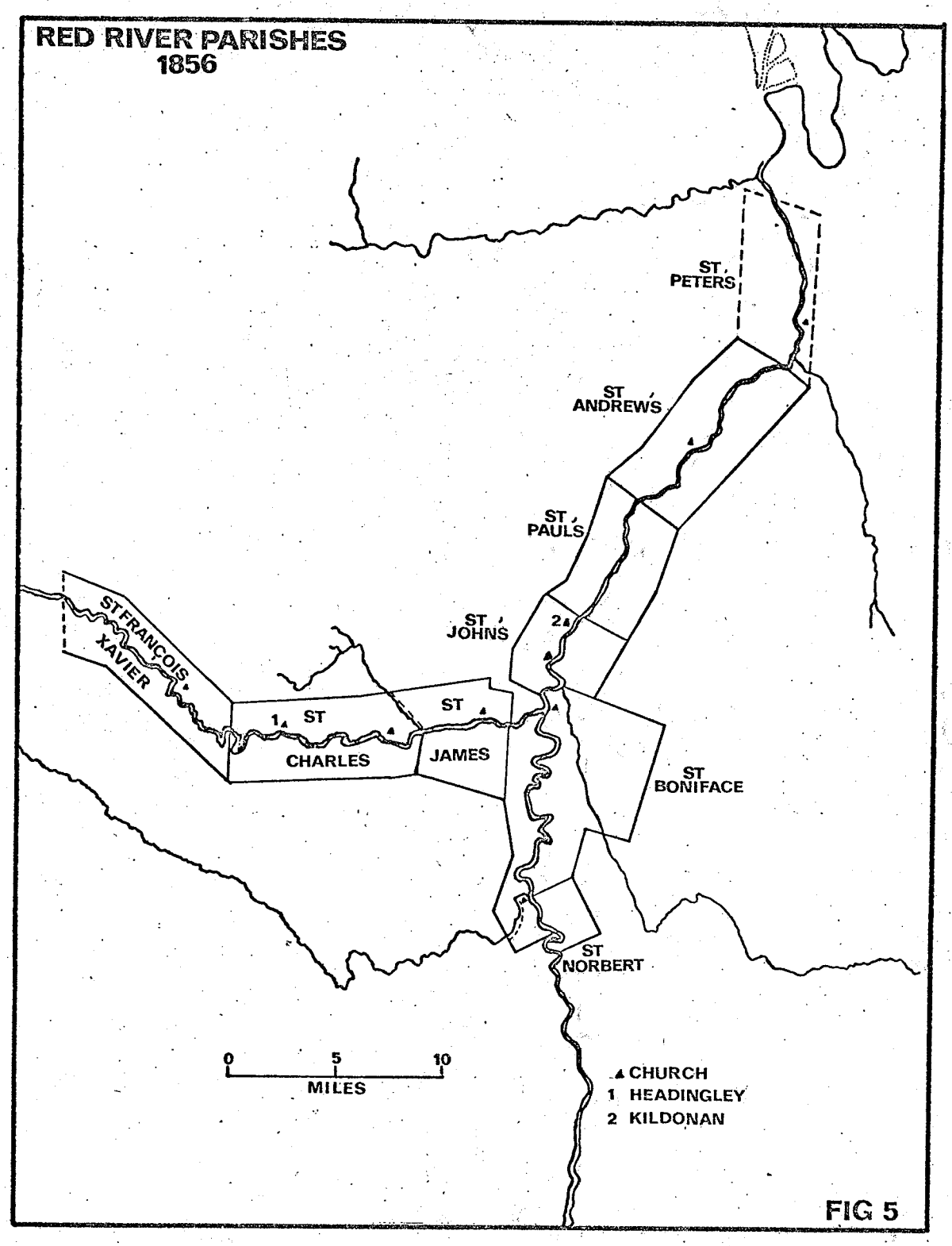
RED RIVER PARISHES
1856
ST. PETERS
ST. ANDREWS
ST. PAULS
ST. JOHNS
ST FRANÇOIS XAVIER
ST CHARLES
ST JAMES
ST BONIFACE
ST NORBERT
0 5 10
MILES
▲ CHURCH
1 HEADINGLEY
2 KILDONAN

FIG 5

parish of St. Charles was formed to meet the needs of about 40 predominantly métis families settled just beyond the Sturgeon Creek. It had a population of about 200 in 1856. But the main direction of growth of the Catholic community was upstream from the Forks and St. Boniface. In 1854 a church was erected near the junction of the Red and the Rivière Sale to form the focus of the parish of St. Norbert. By 1856 there were 101 métis and Canadian families (total population of 625) settled within its boundaries.

The property boundaries at Red River continued in the state of disarray that the 1826 flood had thrown them until well into the 1830's, causing numerous disputes between neighbours. This situation, as well as the rapid rate at which new land was being taken up in the thirties, made it imperative that the colony should have its own surveyor. The next survey of the Red River Settlement was not begun until 1836 and completed in 1838. It was made by Mr. George Taylor, who surveyed 1,542 lots in all, and the plan he produced is thought to have been the basis of all the later land grants made by the Hudson's Bay Company to incoming settlers.[1] Taylor continued as colonial surveyor until 1844. The settlement did not have a permanent, resident surveyor until 1855 when Mr. W. Inkster was appointed to the position.[2] In the

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[1] H. E. Beresford, "Early Surveys in Manitoba", Papers Read Before the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba, Series III, No. 9, Winnipeg 1954, p. 8; Nor'-Wester, June 11, 1863.

[2] E. H. Oliver (ed.), The Canadian North-West: Its Early Development and Legislative Records (Ottawa, 1914), I. p. 404.

following year Mr. R. Goulet was appointed as a second surveyor with special responsibility for that part of the colony "south of the River Assiniboine & Red River".[1] The methods used by these various surveyors were essentially very simple. The lots appear to have been laid out in blocks or groups, from a base line usually several miles in length which ran roughly parallel to the direction of the river. The lots were projected at right angles from this base line at measured intervals onto a second parallel base line, two miles back from the river. This second base line formed the rear boundary of the settlement and delimited the "settlement belt". The number of base lines was determined by the twisting of the rivers; where the river changed direction another base line was laid out. Within each grouping of lots, the meandering of the river caused individual lots to diverge from the "ideal" two mile length.

Many Red River farmers provided for their sons by dividing their lands and perhaps in some cases by reclaiming more. But new land was also colonised by the inhabitants of the old-established settlements, for as population rose and farms were divided into smaller units, the Red River parishes became increasingly congested. Alexander Ross, writing in about 1852, predicted that:

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[1] Ibid., p. 420.

> "The time cannot be far distant, therefore, when the Scotch themselves, if they wish to keep together, must remove to some other part of the colony, in order to have elbow room. The scarcity of wood and hay will likewise render a flitting soon necessary."[1]

In 1857 Lieutenant-Colonel W. Caldwell gave evidence that:

> "The demand [for land] arises from the increase of families; the families increase very largely, and the original allotments are too small, and they go further up the Assiniboin as squatters...because when the family is too large for the estate they go off and take land, and squat themselves in some instances."[2]

It is clear that by the 1850's the empty lands along the Assiniboine were functioning as a "safety valve" for the increasingly overcrowded and congested areas along the Red River. Some of the migrants moved to the Assiniboine below St. François-Xavier, but after 1852 a growing proportion of them went beyond to the new settlement at Portage la Prairie, some 60 miles up the river.

Much of the impulse for the migration to the Assiniboine came from the depletion of the timber resources of the longer settled areas, largely the consequence of 20 or 30 years' exploitation for firewood, fencing material, and constructional timber. During the early years of settlement many of the colonists were able to find most of their timber requirements on their own land or across the river from it, but by the late 1840's and more and more during the 1850's,

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[1] Ross, Red River Settlement, p. 201

[2] United Kingdom, Select Committee on Hudson's Bay Company, 1857, p. 308.

it was being cut at distant locations.[1] Timber could still be found along the rivers yet much of it was being rafted down after the spring break-up from places along the middle Assiniboine or the Upper Red, at distances of up to 60 miles from the Forks.[2] Heavy building timber and wood for fencing was also felled and hauled during the winter months from the isolated hills, ridges and rises that paralleled the lower Red on its eastern side. Each of these wooded places played an important part in the local economy and had acquired a regional name -- the First Pines, Second Pines, Far Pines and the Cedars.[3] But many of these areas were distant from the riverfront settlements and it was the growing inconvenience of obtaining essential timber supplies that determined some of the colonists in the Lower Settlement to migrate to other locations where solid stands of trees still rimmed the rivers.

One of the most important developments during these years was the beginning of agricultural settlement on the plains of Portage, the site of La Vérendrye's Fort la Reine (1738) and a later post of the North West Company. Beginning during the 1850's the physical resources of the site at the Portage drew migrants from the Red River Settlement in quest of more

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[1] W. J. Healy, (ed.), Women of Red River, pp. 97-98: "When the men went for fuel it was only a day's work, but when they went for building wood it was an expedition."

[2] United Kingdom, Select Committee on Hudson's Bay Company, 1857, p. 56; Evidence of George Simpson; Nor'Wester, Oct. 1, 1861.

[3] These names occur frequently in the Journals of Peter Garrioch and of Samuel Taylor. Both of these journals are to be found in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

ideal living conditions. The location for the settlement had been carefully selected by its founder Reverend William Cockrane, who had scanned the country between the western limits of Assiniboia and Fort Ellice on the upper Assiniboine during 1850 before making his selection.[1] The attractiveness of the land at Portage la Prairie was based largely on the availability in close proximity of four elements: fertile prairie ready for the plough, abundant hay land, water from the river for drinking purposes and for livestock, and largely unexploited stands of timber, especially oak, ash, elm and basswood, on the deep points of the middle Assiniboine. In addition, the northward bend of the river at the Portage brought it within easy reach of the fisheries at Lake Manitoba. Among these various attractions, it would seem that the timber resources were the most important. Giving evidence in 1857, the Reverend G. O. Corbett, founder of Headingley parish, stated that the settlers at Portage la Prairie had moved there "on account of the timber".[2] A few persons went up to the Portage in 1851 but the main movement began in the years 1852-1853. Most of the early migrants were English speaking half-breeds from St. Paul's and St. Andrew's. Overcrowding and the depletion of timber resources had created a growing discontent

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[1] Nor'-Wester, Feb. 9, 1863.

[2] United Kingdom, Select Committee on Hudson's Bay Company, 1857, p. 138; Evidence of Reverend G. O. Corbett.

amongst some of the settlers of those parishes but the more immediate cause of the migration to the Portage was the major flood of 1852, which converted large areas of the Red River Valley above the Grand Rapids into a lake and left much of the back-country of the parishes on the lower Red, especially on their western side, as swamp (the "Big Swamp"). The higher land about the Portage promised freedom from any future inundations. The steps in the development of the Portage settlement were such as had characterised the earlier missions; a school was in operation by 1851 and the chapel of St. Mary was completed in 1855.[1] The settlement survived and prospered despite the opposition of the Hudson's Bay Company, which tried to direct western migration to places lower down the Assiniboine. Portage la Prairie was some ten miles beyond the jurisdiction of the Council of Assiniboia, and the Company feared the new settlement might become a refuge for free traders.[2]

The expansion of the settled area was only one of several changes that accompanied the growth of population. It also resulted in increasing population densities in regions settled earlier. As the number of colonists increased

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[1] T. C. Boon, The Anglican Church, p. 43.

[2] United Kingdom, Select Committee on Hudson's Bay Company, 1857, pp. 137-138; Evidence of Reverend G. O. Corbett; Ibid., p. 309; Evidence of Lieut.-Col. W. Caldwell; W. L. Morton (ed.), Alexander Begg's Red River Journal and Other Papers Relative to the Red River Resistance of 1869-1870 (Toronto, 1956), p. 408.

new household were to a large extent, at least until about 1850, accommodated in the old settlements. It was this increase which led to the axial subdivision of the long lots as time passed. Farms were split up to provide for children and holdings were often divided two or three times. This phenomena was observed in the Scottish section of the colony by Alexander Ross who commented that:

> "The country not being suitable for back or second concession of lands, as the young marry, the lots become divided; and there are now, not only one establishment, but sometimes two, and even three on the same lot, giving them a ribbon-like appearance."[1]

The partitioning of the original holdings was partly a result of the desire to ensure each farmer frontage on the river and access to water, and partly because of the wish of families or friends to stay close together. It was normal, especially at haying and harvest time, to find neighbours cooperating for mutual convenience. They were drawn together by the sheer necessity to cooperate in order to complete farming tasks before the advent of early frosts or autumn rains. It was all the more advantageous, since farm labour was scarce and expensive at Red River, if a farmer had a number of sons of working age settled on adjoining lots to help him finish the work of mowing and reaping. Alexander Ross, after complaining of the chronic shortage of hired help remarked in 1856 that "it is only families strong within themselves that can carry on any kind of work."[2]

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[1] Ross, Red River Settlement, p. 201; also United Kingdom, Select Committee on Hudson's Bay Company, 1857, p. 177; Evidence of Colonel J.F. Crofton.

[2] P.A.M., Ross Papers, Alexander Ross to James Ross, Sept. 8, 1856.

The marked fragmentation of the original land holdings had the effect of lessening the distance between individual farmsteads as well as reducing the average size of the Red River farms. By the 1850's many of the lots were long, narrow strips with great differences between their breadths and lengths. The proportion of breadth to length varied from 1:20 in a lot with eight chains frontage on the river to 1:80 in one with two chains frontage. Hence the jibe by incoming settlers from Ontario that the Red River colonists were "farming on lanes" or "streets".[1] Visitors to the colony, lacking the terminology of the modern geographer, attempted to describe the resulting settlement pattern. Several descriptions of the Red River landscape include a comparison with that of Quebec.[2] To Governor Alexander Ramsey of Minnesota, entering the settlement from the south in 1851, the line of river-front farmsteads appeared as "a long suburban village"[3] and to J. W. Bond, visiting at the same time and aware of the twists and turns of the river, the colony appeared as "a long serpentine village."[4]

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[1] R. G. MacBeth, The Selkirk Settlers in Real Life (Toronto, 1897), p. 34; W. J. Healy (ed.), Women of Red River, p. 55; J. Trow, Manitoba and North-West Territories (Ottawa, 1878), p. 17.

[2] For example J. Ryerson, Hudson's Bay, (Toronto, 1855), p. 158; Nor'Wester, Oct. 1, 1861.

[3] A. Ramsey, "Report of a Visit to Red River Settlement", Senate Journal, State of Minnesota, 1857-1858, Appendix VIII.

[4] J. W. Bond, Minnesota and its Resources, pp. 286, 325.

Factors Influencing the Distribution of Population

In the years after 1827 much new land was colonised but the settlement showed no tencency anywhere to extend more than one farm deep from the river front. It was a riparian settlement firmly fixed to the timbered land bordering the banks of the Red and the Assiniboine and some of their tributary creeks. Expansion everywhere took place along the rivers and not back from them. The open prairies, though widely exploited for their hay, were strictly avoided as a place for settlement. The original land grants were divided and subdivided, and to relieve the pressure on the river front land in the older settled areas, there was some migration to other riverine locations, but there was no move to the interior. "There is no second tier of farms" declared John Ryerson in 1855, "they all front on the river, are deep, narrow, and much like those of the French on the River St. Lawrence."[1] Miles Macdonell's early prediction that the Red River Valley was not suitable for second-line settlements had proved to be correct.

One resident of the colony recollected that "all the early settlement was planned in the belief that the land back from the rivers was not good for farming",[2] and the historian Alexander Begg remembered in 1884 that "it was generally supposed that settlement could not be successful on

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[1] J. Ryerson, Hudson's Bay, p. 158.

[2] W. J. Healy (ed.), Women of Red River, p. 56.

the prairie at any distance over a mile from the river."[1] "In this Settlement," reported the Nor'-Wester in 1863," the houses are all on the river-bank; and crowd as we may, nobody dreams of breaking away from the stereotyped system", and commented that "this is always the case in new settlements, and only with an increase of population and scarcity of land do the settlers push bravely into the interior, and disregard the claims of the river."[2]

The great objections to the open prairies as a place for settlement during these years were the absence of wood and water.[3] So long as river front land was available for colonisation, the settlers were able to obtain lots that consisted of both wood and prairie land. A consideration of early settlement in the Red River Valley supports the thesis of Terry G. Jordan that most of the initial colonisation in the North American prairies took place "between the forest and the prairie", in the areas of mixed vegetation which included both timber and grass.[4] In the case of the Red River region the timbered land was virtually restricted to the galeria forests of the rivers. Beyond stretched the open

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[1] Quoted by W. L. Morton, "Agriculture in the Red River Colony", C.H.R., XXX, 1949, p. 318.

[2] Nor'-Wester, Feb. 9, 1863.

[3] S.P., 27, p. 8500, Simpson to Colvile, May 15, 1833: "The principal objections people have to the back country are a scarcity of wood and that there is little or no running water".

[4] Terry G. Jordan, "Between the Forest and the Prairie," Agricultural History, XXXVIII (4), Oct. 1964, pp. 205-216.

prairie, either wet or dry, with here and there isolated clumps of light timber growth ("îslets de bois"). The advantages offered for settlement at the edge of the rivers were stated by the surveyor-explorer David Thompson in 1798. After commenting on the favourable conditions existing for the development of agriculture in the Pembina area of the Red River Valley, he modified his statement by adding that for "want of woods, for buildings and other purposes, [cultivation] must be limited to near the River. The open Plains have no Woods and afford no shelter."[1] The timber land bordering the rivers provided fuel and fencing material, lumber for construction, some mast for pigs, and protection from prairie winds, storms, and fires. It has already been noted that when local timber supplies were depleted some people were ready to move and start anew at other sites where timber was still plentiful. The prairies adjacent to the wooded areas provided land for tillage, abundant range for livestock, and a supply of winter forage free for the gathering. Settlement in the timbered belt by the rivers also ensured each settler easy access to water routes and the river fisheries.

Water was perhaps the most important single factor that kept settlement fixed on the rivers. Out on the prairie, beyond the streams, running water was scarce and travellers

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[1] R. Glover (ed.), David Thompson's Narrative 1784-1813 (Champlain Society; Toronto, 1962), p. 187.

often had to rely on the stagnant supplies of swamp and slough. Underground water supplies remained untapped, for it was generally believed that water could not be obtained by digging wells. The Nor'-Wester stated flatly in 1861 that "there is not a well dug in the country".[1] It was only after 1870 that most settlers discovered that water could be found almost everywhere on the prairies by digging wells.

The problem of prairie fires must also be considered in a discussion of the location of settlement. The plains were swept almost annually by great fires, often several hundred miles wide, which would have presented a great danger to isolated homesteads out on the open prairies. Even the Red River farmsteads, located in the comparatively sheltered river's edge, were frequently threatened by fire, and reports of the destruction of hay, timber, fencing, crops and livestock are numerous.[2]

There are other reasons why the settlement of the prairie presented many problems. Much of the Red River Valley back from the main rivers was naturally poorly drained land. The reclamation of this wet land was well beyond the technical capacity, will and means of the Red River pioneers. The wetter portions of the first prairie level continued to be avoided even after the flood of settlers into Manitoba after 1870 and indeed the drainage of much of this swamp land

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[1] Nor'-Wester, Oct. 15, 1861.

[2] For example Ibid., Aug. 18, 1864, "Destructive Fires".

was not completed until well into the next century. These poorly drained areas made transportation on the plains difficult, espacially just after the spring melt and particularly in the years following a major Red River flood. Even in the areas of dry prairie the tough, matted roots of the grasses presented a hindrance to cultivation that could not be overcome by the Red River settlers with their light, flimsy ploughs and other primitive implements. The colonists had good reason to confine their settlement and cultivation to the edge of the rivers, where the sod was less tough and the relatively light, well drained soils of the natural river levees could be ploughed and worked more easily. In the opinion of some, the cultivation of the plains was made a virtual impossibility by the thinness and sterility of the prairie soils. According to this view agriculture and settlement would remain restricted to a narrow belt along the rivers where there were fertile alluvial soils.[1]

The avoidance of the open prairies by the Red River pioneers has often been commented upon but there was another characteristic of early settlement which has been little noted. Settlement was heavily concentrated on the west bank of the Red and on the north bank of the Assiniboine. Here the timber belt bordering the rivers was narrow, perhaps up to half a mile in depth. In these areas it was comparatively

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[1]This was the opinion of George Simpson: United Kingdom, Select Committee on Hudson's Bay Company, 1857, pp. 45, 51. It should be noted that different views were given before this same committee.

easy to lay out lots which combined both timber and prairie. Settlement largely, though not wholly, avoided the east side of the Red and the south side of the Assiniboine where the timbered area ran back in places two miles from the river's edge. Clearing such land for the plough presented an initial problem to settlement. Furthermore, in those parts of the colony where the river banks were deeply forested it was difficult to lay out lots which combined both prairie and woods, as well as river frontage. Thus, although the open prairies were wholly avoided, the thickly wooded areas were largely avoided. These wooded areas were preserved as wood lots for settlers on the opposite banks. The preferred areas for settlement were those im which timber, prairie and frontage on the river could be combined into a lot two miles in length.

The distribution of population and the direction of settlement expansion can be partly explained with reference to environmental conditions. But the facts of physical geography were strengthened by the force of tradition and the desire of settlers to keep together for mutual defense and for the social benefits that such a communal life offered. To leave the riverfront communities would have meant isolation and removal for many years from the facilities of school and church.

Earlier we have seen that the policy of the Hudson's Bay Company also influenced population distribution and the direction of settlement, but once the riverine locations became crowded compactness was sacrificed for river front location and the Portage settlements came about despite objections on the part of the Company.

The Red River Settlement in 1856-1857

This chapter has so far concentrated on the increase of population and the expansion of the settled area. By way of conclusion it seems appropriate to reconstruct some aspects of the settlement geography of the Red River Colony at the end of the period under discussion. Data is available for the years 1856-1857 to make such a geographical description possible. There is much information, on a parish basis, in the Red River census for 1856 and the reports and maps resulting from the Hind and Palliser expeditions provide detailed descriptions of the colony at a little later time.

The limits of the settled area will first of all be outlined. The Swampy Village at St. Peter's clearly marked the northern limit of settlement and colonisation on the Red River. Upstream, beyond the edge of St. Andrew's and Lower Fort Garry, by 1857 the farmsteads of English speaking half-breeds, Orkneymen, and Kildonan Scots ran in almost uninterrupted succession along the western side of the Red as far south as the Hudson's Bay reserve land at the Upper Fort. The colony's southern branch was not so long. South of the Forks the restless métis and Canadians were settled on both banks of the Red to a point beyond the mouth of the Riviere Sale. Hind's description places the southern limit of colonisation at a distance of 13 miles from Upper Fort Garry.

By 1857 settlement stretched for 33 miles along the north side of the Assiniboine. This river was closely settled

as far as the White Horse Plain, but west of Grantown settlement thinned out. Beyond Grantown, the most conspicuous feature was Lane's Post at Pigeon Lake, erected 22 miles upstream from the Upper Fort as an outlying post during the early 1850's and named after its founder William D. Lane. A considerable farm was attached to this post, which also functioned as a shipping point for timber being rafted down to the Forks. Upstream from Lane's Post there were only nine houses and farms in the next 11 miles. Around the northern bend of the Assiniboine and past Long Lake, the land was still largely empty, for since the dispersal of Belcourt's mission in the late 1840's, there had been no further attempts at colonisation. In this stretch the river was deeply rimmed with forest, with much swamp beyond, for spring flooding was frequent. Although the land was virtually unsettled it was not unused. The grass grew tall and thick around Long Lake and settlers moved up there to mow, while in dry years some of the colonists drove up their cattle to winter them. Timber was also felled in this area and dispatched to the settlements below. Moving west the next agricultural settlement was at Portage la Prairie. In 1857 it was a small community of about 120 persons, separated by some 30 largely unoccupied miles from the western limits of close settlement on the Assiniboine.

Within the limits thus outlined population was unevenly distributed. Figure 6 shows this distribution, using

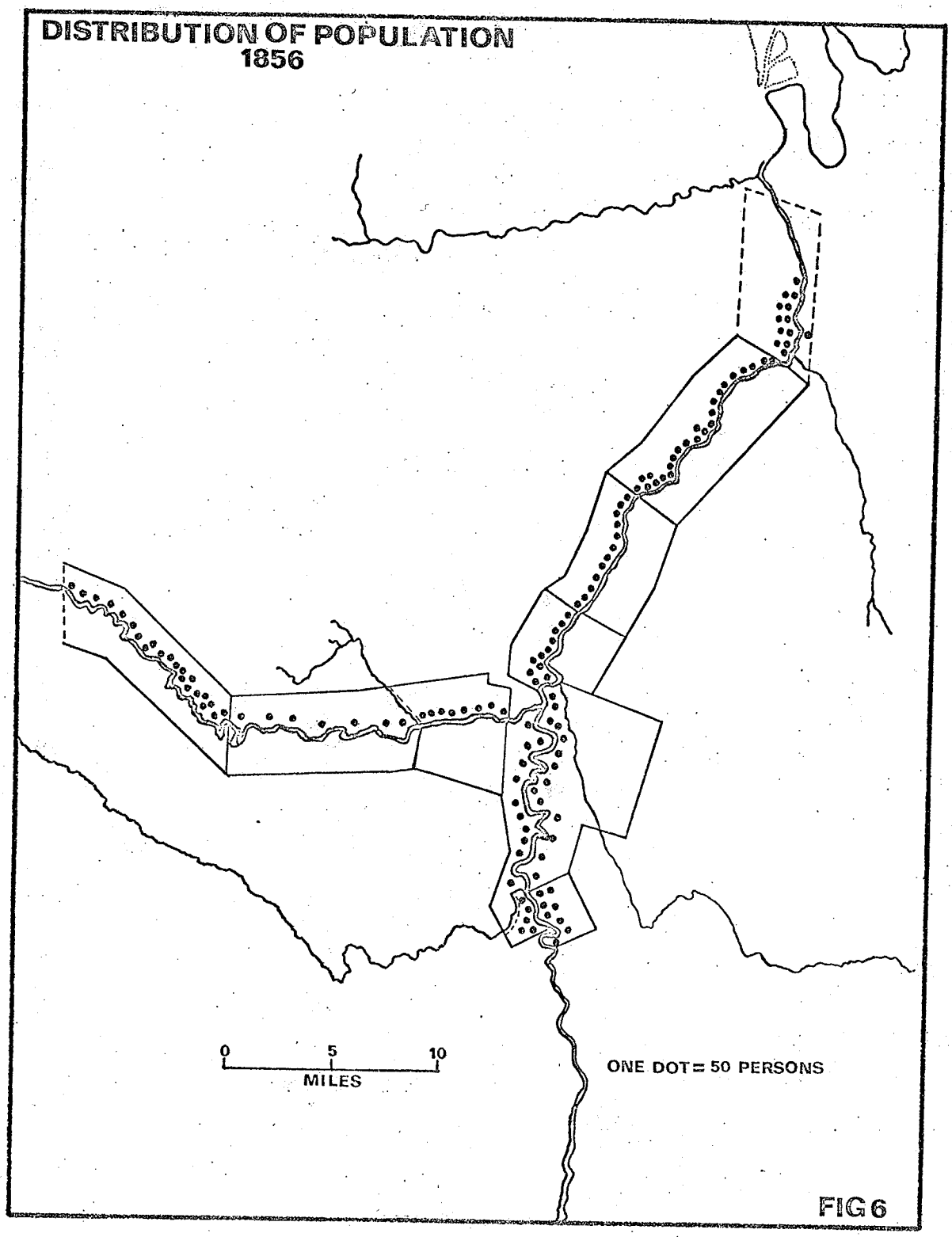
DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION
1856
0
5
10
MILES
ONE DOT = 50 PERSONS

FIG 6

the population data in the 1856 census. The unit areas within which the dots were placed are the parishes. These are shown separately and named in Figure 5. The dots have been located, rather than evenly distributed over the parishes, to conform as near as possible with the contemporary surveys and descriptions of the colony that tell us where the population was to be found. The map emphasizes the riverine location of the population. Dividing the colony into three main divisions, certain generalisations can be made about the broad distribution of population within Assiniboia. There were 2,955 persons in the Lower Settlement (parishes of St. John, St. Paul, St. Andrew and St. Peter) or 44 per cent of the total recorded population of 6,491 in 1856. There were almost equal numbers of persons living in the Upper Settlement (parishes of St. Boniface and St. Norbert) as along the Assiniboine (parishes of St. James, St. Charles and St. François-Xavier), 1,873 as against 1,883. Each had about 28 per cent of the total population. In 1856 the east side of the Red below the Forks and the south side of the Assiniboine were very sparsely settled. It was only at the Forks, where the British colonists of St. John's faced the French of St. Boniface, and at the Upper Settlement that colonisation had taken place to any considerable extent on both sides of the rivers. Except at its northern and southern extremities, settlement on the lower Red was almost completely confined to the west bank of the river. The Swampy Village centred partly on the

east side of the river and there were a few scattered farms on the east bank in St. John's. On the Assiniboine settlement was on the north bank, following the river and linked by the Saskatchewan Trail that paralleled it.

There was a tendency for higher population densities to occur in the longer settled parts of the colony. Along the Red it was the oldest settled stretch of the river between Point Douglas and Middlechurch, the agricultural centre of the whole settlement and the section where the fragmentation of the original holdings was at its most extreme, that population densities were highest. In general the Assiniboine was not so closely settled. Densities were probably still greatest at St. François-Xavier, for in 1856 this parish had over 55 per cent of the population living beside the Assiniboine. Below in Headingley, St. Charles and St. James, where even in 1856 much of the settlement was still recent and where there were still areas filling up with new colonists, densities were not generally as high as in the longer settled areas. In this stretch of the Assiniboine densities were highest and settlement most continuous in the Sturgeon Creek area. The relatively high, well drained land of that vicinity, free from the dangers of flooding, made it attractive for farming.

# CHAPTER VII

## AGRICULTURE 1827 - 1857

### Introduction

This part of the thesis considers the agrarian side of the Red River Colony during the middle years of its existence. It is based on a variety of sources -- the descriptions of visitors and of scientific exploration parties, private letters and journals, as well as on the Red River censuses. These censuses present a good deal of information on agriculture, but with one exception, in a way that prevents the geographer from taking a comprehensively spatial viewpoint of the settlement's agriculture. The information in the 1856 census is the first reliable data on agriculture suitable for anything like precise and accurate mapping. In this census data is given for the first time by parishes. Until then information had been collected and presented for sub-areas such as Grantown, Saulteau Village (Baie St. Paul), Swampy Village (St. Peter's), and the Lower Settlement. The problem of using this material lies in the delineation of these census subdivisions for which the data was gathered. The Indian mission settlements and the Grantown colony can be fairly accurately identified but the whole of the rest of the settled area is recorded under the sub-area, Lower Settlement which seems to include the parishes of the Upper and Lower Red as well as the settlements on the Assiniboine below White Horse

Plain. Because of these difficulties it is only the information from the years 1856-1857 that enables one to take a geographical view of settlement and agriculture at Red River. As a basis for that geography there is the census of 1856, supported by the reports and maps resulting from the Hind and Palliser expeditions of 1857-1858. The parish boundaries used in the construction of the maps in this section of the thesis are those given in the Hind journals.[1]

In terms of agriculture, the years immediately after 1826 were dominated by recovery from the great flood, as the land dried out, farmsteads were rebuilt (and in some cases re-sited) and out buildings and fences were reconstructed.[2] By about 1830 the settlement was back to its pre-flood condition and from that reconstituted position the colony entered upon a period of slow but steady growth. Each of the years 1827-1835, with the partial exception of 1832, was favoured by a good growing season and abundant crops, uninterrupted by the disasters that had previously impeded the development of a stable, colonial agriculture. It was during these nine years of good returns for the farmer that certain essential facets of the life and economy at Red River finally came into sharp focus. Firstly, the basic patterns of land use, initiated in the early years of colonisation, were at this time

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[1] Map in Province of Canada, Journals of the Legislative Assembly, 1858, Appendix 3.

[2] Alexander Ross, Red River Settlement (London, 1856), p. 110.

firmly established and were not to change much until after 1870. Secondly, the differences between the ways of life of the farmers and hunters settled together within the one colony at Red River became clearly discernible for the first time. Until then the distinction between the two had been somewhat obscured by the participation of the farmer-colonists, along with the semi-nomadic métis settlers in the Pembina winter hunt. However, the period of greater stability which followed the disasters of 1826 enabled the colonial farmers to feed themselves almost wholly by working the land and caring for their animals. By contrast, the half-breed hunters, despite their permanent habitations in the colony and their attempts at agriculture, organised their lives around the biannual buffalo hunts.

By 1830 there were two distinct economies within the Red River Colony, the one based largely on hunting and fishing, the other almost wholly on agriculture, but they existed more in interdependence than in isolation and separation.[1] This was a consequence of the periodic failure of both the hunt and farming. The buffalo herds were sometimes distant, the Sioux a trouble, and as a result the spoils of the chase were in some years meagre. On such occasions, the farmer helped provide for the needs of the métis hunters whose agrarian interest rarely went beyond a garden patch. If,

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[1] For an interesting discussion of agriculture which stresses its interdependence with the hunt see, M. Giraud, Le Métis Canadien (Paris, 1945), pp. 775-782.

however, the returns from the settlement's tilled land were poor, though some farmers kept reserves of grain on hand, the produce of the annual hunting expeditions had to suffice for most of the settlement's dietary needs. When both failed, as in 1836, 1840, 1844, and 1855, distress and hunger resulted amongst all elements of the Red River population.[1] On the other hand, there was general well-being and abundance only when both the hunter and the farmer were successful, as in 1834, 1835, 1841, 1849 and 1853.[2]

After 1827 good harvests were more frequent, but as M. Giraud has stressed agricultural operations at the Red River Settlement could never escape completely the uncertainty of the early years.[3] Years of scarcity continued to be interspersed with years of plenty. The succession of good crop seasons in the 1830's was abruptly interrupted in 1836 when a severe August frost destroyed the almost mature crops[4] and in the following year a combination of early summer drought and heavy rains and frosts in August and September drastically

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[1] Ibid., p. 781

[2] Ibid.,

[3] Ibid., p. 779. As Giraud has demonstrated in great detail, the continuing uncertainty of agriculture meant that the proceeds of the buffalo hunts were still an essential part of the food supply of the colony.

[4] Ross, Red River Settlement, p. 188; G. P. de T. Glazebrook (ed.), The Hargrave Correspondence 1821-1843 (Toronto, 1938), p. 251.

reduced crop yields.[1] The 1840's were often hungry years at Red River for in five years of that decade the returns from agriculture were slight. Prolonged drought and heat during the growing season stunted the growth of crops and prairie grasses in 1840, 1846, 1847, and 1848, and for reasons not known the crops all but failed in 1844.[2] In sharp contrast the fifties were generally wet. Local flooding in both 1850 and 1851, especially destructive at Pembina, was followed by the major flood of 1852, which was only slightly less severe than that of 1826.[3] In the succeeding spring the Hudson's Bay Company was forced to distribute 700 bushels of seed wheat amongst the needy in order to ensure a full year's seeding.[4] Two years later in 1855 and again in 1857 over-abundant precipitation and early frosts reduced crop yields.[5] In addition to these occasional climatic hazards, prairie fires and migrating birds constituted an annual menace to the agrarian side of the colonial economy.

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[1] Giraud, Le Métis Canadien, p. 778.

[2] P.A.M., W. D. Lane Papers, Richard Lane to William Lane, Dec. 31, 1844, reporting both the crop and hunt of 1844 to be a failure.

[3] David Anderson, Notes on the Flood at the Red River, 1852 (London, 1852); Ross, Red River Settlement, pp. 413-416.

[4] E. H. Oliver (ed.), The Canadian North-West: Its Early Development and Legislative Records (Ottawa, 1914), I, pp. 390-391.

[5] Giraud, Le Métis Canadien, p. 779.

Arable Land

One result of the growth of population outlined in the previous chapter was a steady and continuous expansion of the cultivated area at the expense of the prairie.[1] In the virtual absence of trees and stones, it was a relatively easy task to convert the plains into farm land. By 1831 over 2,000 acres had been cleared and put to the plough. Between 1831 and 1841 the arable acreage roughly doubled and had doubled again by 1856 when there were 8,371 tilled acres in the settlement. (See Table IV). The enlargement of the total

TABLE IV

RED RIVER SETTLEMENT - TOTAL CULTIVATED ACREAGE

| Year | Acreage |
|---|---|
| 1831 | 2,152 |
| 1832 | 2,631 |
| 1833 | 3,237½ |
| 1838 | 3,862½ |
| 1840 | 4,041½ |
| 1843 | 5,003 |
| 1846 | 5,380½ |
| 1849 | 6,392½ |
| 1856 | 8,371 |

[1] S.P., 27, p. 8480, D. McKenzie to A. Colvile, Aug. 1, 1829: "The fields are this year much more extended than they were." See also D. Gunn and C. R. Tuttle, History of Manitoba From The Earliest Settlement (Ottawa, 1880), p. 256.

cultivated area was matched by a slow and irregular increase in the amount of arable land per head of population. The 0.8 acres per person in 1831 had increased to 1.2 acres for every man, woman and child in the colony by 1856.

The arable land, like the population, straggled for many miles along the edge of the rivers, but there was no great depth of cultivation. By the 1830's there was an arable fringe of perhaps a quarter to a half a mile in depth,[1] which may have been pushed back to about a mile in some parts of the Lower Settlement by the mid 1840's.[2] George Simpson gave evidence in 1857 that "there has never been any cultivation a mile from the river."[3] As in the initial years of settlement, cultivation was confined to the relatively warm and well drained soils of the natural river levees. The riparian character of Red River agriculture was clearly recognised and explained by Palliser who wrote that:

> "of the prairies along the Red River only narrow strips on top of the banks have been brought under cultivation by the colonists, as there the land is naturally rather higher and better drained than that lying in the rear."[4]

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[1]A. Simpson, Life and Travels of Thomas Simpson (London, 1845), pp. 85-86.

[2]P.A.M., Diary of Colonel J. F. Crofton, May 5, 1847.

[3]United Kingdom, Report of the Select Committee on the Hudson's Bay Company, (London, 1857). p. 51; also Ibid., pp. 307-308; Evidence of Lieut.-Col. W. Caldwell.

[4]United Kingdom, Journals, Detailed Reports and Observations Relative to the Exploration by Captain Palliser (London, 1863), p. 8.

Almost all the cultivated land, like the other features of the cultural landscape -- farmsteads and farm buildings, mills and churches -- was crowded into the narrow strip between the main rivers and the dirt roads that paralleled them. Even within the settlement belt much of the land remained unimproved wet or dry prairie beyond the ploughed fringe or along much of the river front, timbered land of varying densities.

There were, however, some internal variations in this basic pattern. In the Lower Settlement, especially in the densely peopled section between Upper and Lower Fort Garry, the arable fringe was both more continuous and of a greater depth than elsewhere. At the other extreme, in the métis areas of St. François-Xavier and St. Norbert, the small cultivated patches were separated by long wooded stretches, which gave the passing traveller the impression of a colony which was thinly peopled and in a primitive state.[1] The 1856 census clearly brings out these contrasts. Figure 7, which shows the distribution of arable per capita in 1856 gives some indication of the geography of agricultural achievement in the different sections of the settlement. Whereas there were 2.4 acres of arable land per person in the parish of St. Paul and 2 acres and 1.8 acres in St. John and St. Boniface respectively, there were only 0.8 acres in St. Norbert and a mere 0.5 acres per person in St. Peter's and St. François-Xavier. The arable was still heavily concentrated in the

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[1]Giraud, Le Métis Canadien, pp. 772, 845.

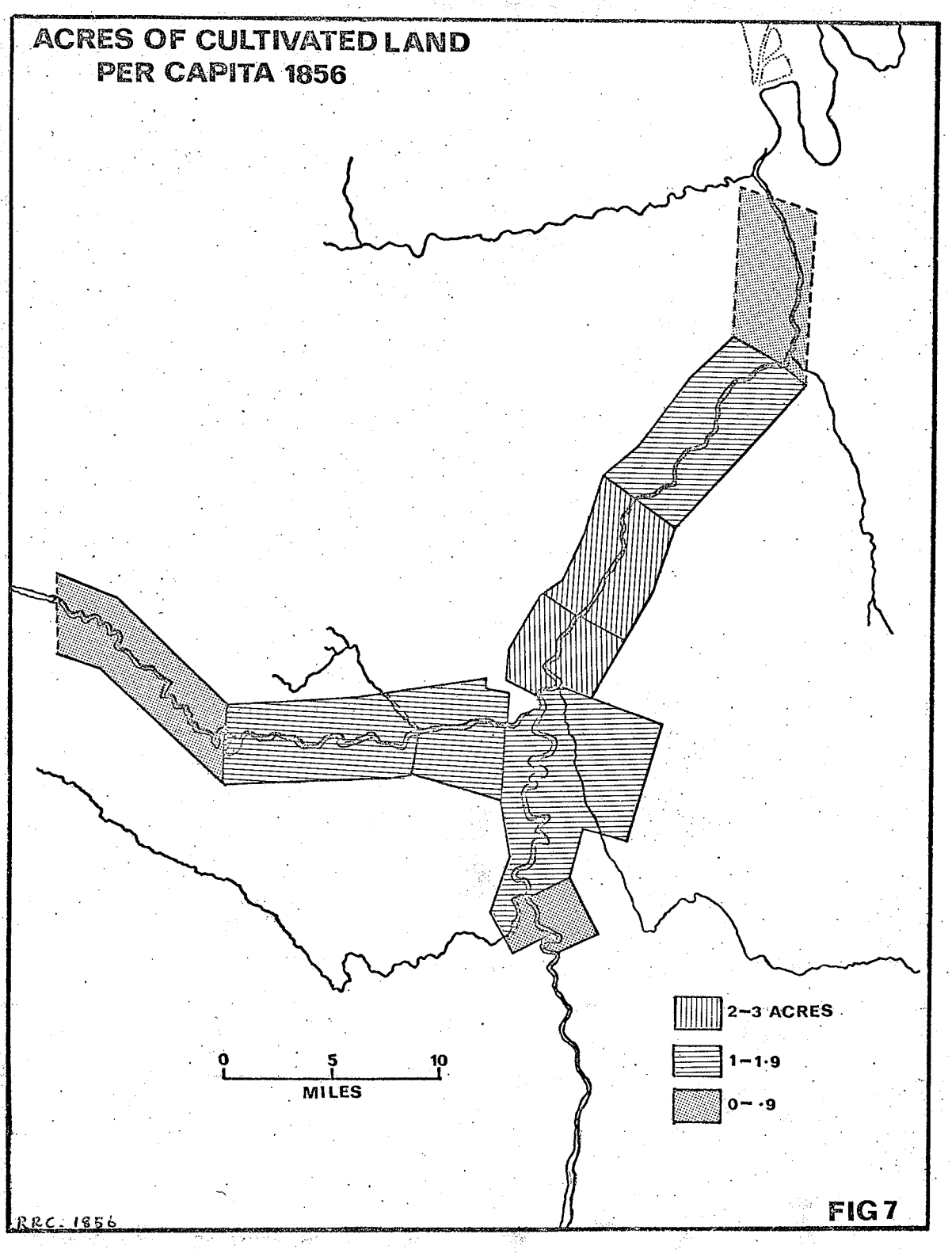
ACRES OF CULTIVATED LAND
PER CAPITA 1856
2–3 ACRES
1–1·9
0–·9
0
5
10
MILES
RRC. 1856

FIG 7

longest settled parishes of St. Paul, St. John and St. Boniface, where the Scots especially and some French Canadian families conscientiously tilled their fields year by year.

The tilled areas within the individual long lots were fenced to keep out the livestock, in what were known, at least among the Scots as parks, and according to their location in relation to the farmstead, the colonists distinguished between home parks and out or outer parks.[1] Most of the fenced areas were in arable, but there are also references to hay parks.[2] It seems that the word park designated any fenced or enclosed area within the river lot, whether for tillage or pasture.[3] Individual enclosed areas were small, perhaps three to five acres.

Crops

The nature of the source material makes it impossible to adequately describe with any precision the patterns of land use within the settlement. No statistics are available as to the acreages of the different crops cultivated nor are there any figures for the volumes of the crops produced. The Red River censuses unfortunately only give information on the amount of arable land, so that one cannot examine in detail the distribution of individual crops within the settlement

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[1]These are repeated items in the Samuel Taylor Journal.

[2]P.A.M., Ross Papers, Alex. Ross to James Ross, Aug. 25, 1854: "I have extended our outer hay park to double its usual length."

[3]It has the same meaning in Scotland, Ireland and Northern England.

or compare the acreages and distributions of different crops. The writer must, therefore, rely heavily on the verbal descriptions found in private journals and letters, and on the accounts of travellers and exploring parties, some of which give details of agriculture.

Crop selection underwent no significant change in the course of these years. There was no discernible alteration of cropping and no new crops appeared, for the settler's continued to rely on the traditional crops, those that had yielded best in the early years. The cultivated crops can be divided into field crops, especially wheat, barley and potatoes but also smaller amounts of oats and peas, and a diversity of garden produce. The important and significant crops in terms of acreages cultivated or volume harvested were those of the field. Wheat, barley and potatoes, the early staples, remained the most characteristic products of Red River arable farming and formed the major food crops of the colonial farmers.

Field Crops:- Although precise acreages are not available it is clear from the observations of several writers that wheat was the main grain and ranked first among the field crops of the settlement.[1] Wheat was the bread-corn of the colony. It dominated Red River agriculture and may

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[1] Ross, Red River Settlement, p. 112; J. J. Hargrave, Red River (Montreal, 1871), p. 176; H. Y. Hind, Narrative of the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition of 1857, and of the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition of 1858 (London, 1860), I, p. 226.

have made up as much as 60 or even 70 per cent of the total cropland. The early experiments with fall sown wheat had failed and the whole of the crop was sown in spring, though Alexander Ross, for one, still maintained that winter wheat, with proper cultivation, might be a success. The Red River farmer began to prepare his land for wheat as soon as possible after the break up of the rivers. The actual time of seeding varied widely from year to year and ranged from the second week of April to the second week of May, depending on the relative favourability of the early spring weather and the condition of the ground. The time of harvesting varied equally widely. If the spring had been backward and/or the summer wet and cool, the reaping period would often stretch into the second or third week of September but with a warm, dry spring and a favourable growing season, the harvesting of the wheat would begin in the second week of August and be completed by the beginning of September.

The grain sown included those strains brought from England, the United States and the fur posts, that had survived the frosts, droughts, grasshopper plagues and flooding that had severely reduced the volume of the crops in the early years of settlement. To keep alive the memory of the remarkable trip down into Wisconsin Territory during the 1819-1820 winter, the surviving strains were known collectively as Prairie du Chien wheat. It was a soft, spring wheat that matured early.[1] No evidence of the importation of specific

[1] W. L. Morton, "Agriculture in the Red River Colony", C.H.R. XXX, Dec. 1949, p. 311.

varieties of wheat has been discovered until the drought years of 1846-1848.[1] Then, because of the shortage of seed wheat and the deteriorated state of the surviving grain, Black Sea wheat was imported from both England and Canada, and became one of the standard wheat types of Red River agriculture. It was generally considered as an improvement over the older varieties and was likely disseminated throughout the settlement, at least among the better farmers, as its superior qualities became evident. One resident who was impressed by the new seed was free trader Andrew McDermot who explained in 1848 that, "the best grain for this country is the black sea wheat. The little that is in the country is very fine in comparison to our old wheat."[2]

Since figures are scattered it is difficult to obtain more than a general picture of wheat yields, for they varied sharply from year to year and from one part of the settlement to another, being generally highest in the more efficiently cultivated Lower Settlement and lowest in the metis settlements of the Upper Red and White Horse Plain. Hind gives 40 bushels per acre as the common return on newly broken land and quotes the example of one superior farmer who was getting as much as 56 bushels per acre.[3] Donald Gunn, a conscientious farmer from St. Andrew's, claimed that yields of wheat were often as high as 60 bushels per acre and that

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[1]Oliver, Canadian North-West, I, p. 338.

[2]P.A.M., G. M. Cary Papers, Andrew McDermot to G. M. Cary, July 24, 1848.

[3]Hind, Exploring Expedition, I, pp. 150, 226.

"when the average returns fall below 40 bushels to the acre, we are ready to complain of small returns."[1] In 1860 the Nor'-Wester acquired accurately measured figures on the returns of wheat on five farms in the Lower Settlement in order to ascertain the precise capabilities of the Red River soil.[2] The area under wheat ranged from four acres on three farms, to eight acres on another and 18 acres on the fifth holding, whilst yields varied from 35 to 50 bushels per acre.[3] In the same sample the seed-to-yield ratio ranged from 1:17 to 1:30. These ratios are high and suggest that the Red River farmers, at least in the parishes on the Lower Red, were getting very good returns for their labour, despite the generally unprogressive methods of most colonial farmers and the fact that the year in which they were attained, 1859, the wheat harvest had been slightly damaged by a wet fall and an early frost.[4] The figures quoted are testimony to the high natural fertility of the virgin land. The samples were obtained from the best farmed section of the colony and the Nor'-Wester rightly cautioned, "that in the upper half [of the settlement] the returns will not run so high on an average."

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[1]Donald Gunn, "Statistics of Red River", United Kingdom, Select Committee on Hudson's Bay Company, 1857, Appendix 7, p. 381.

[2]Nor'-Wester, May 28, 1860.

[3]Total wheat production on these five farms, in bushels, was 153, 170, 180, 401 and 753.

[4]Nor'-Wester, Dec. 28, 1859.

Wheat was the major crop of the colony and on its success or failure depended, in large part, the creation and maintenance of a partly agricultural settlement at Red River. There have been some sharp differences of opinion amongst historians over the relative success of early wheat growing in the Canadian Northwest. A. S. Morton put forward the view that because of the nature of the wheat sown by the early farmers at Red River and other places, agriculture there was a hazardous and precarious means of existence, constantly poised on the brink of disaster.[1] In this view, such an agriculture could never form the basis of large scale settlement on the Canadian prairies. Central to A. S. Morton's contention is the belief that the spring wheat cultivated at Red River and elsewhere was a long season variety that took from 135 to 137 days to mature, and which was consequently often destroyed by early autumn frosts. This gloomy view of early agriculture was largely a defense of the opinion of George Simpson expressed in 1857 at the Parliamentary Select Committee in London,[2] and suffered from special pleading and

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[1] A. S. Morton, The History of the Canadian West to 1870-71 (Toronto, 1939), pp. 701-702, 832-833, and A. S. Morton and Chester Martin, A History of Prairie Settlement and Dominion Lands Policy (Toronto, 1938), pp. 28, 70.

[2] United Kingdom, Report From the Select Committee on Hudson's Bay Company, 1857, pp. 45, 59.

an arbitrary use of the available source material. This interpretation was repeated by M. Giraud in his authoritative study of the métis and received wider circulation when it was included in the standard one volume "Canadian Economic History" by W. T. Easterbrook and H. G. J. Aitken.[1]

A different view was presented by W. L. Morton in 1949.[2] He produced eight statements, including one by Simpson, "showing facts or informed opinion in support of a shorter season" for Red River wheat than that put forward by A. S. Morton, down to as low as 90 days. From a careful analysis of this evidence W. L. Morton concluded that,

> "the crop season -- for Red River wheat from 1850 on was, on conservative figures, from 110 to 120 days. The better Red River farmers at least grew wheat without much fear of early fall frosts."

He envisages a progressive shortening of the growing season under the influence of two factors. Firstly, the process of "adaptation by natural selection to environmental conditions" had produced a tested, acclimated early maturing strain of wheat as the standard variety sown at the Red River Colony. Secondly, the conscious experiment with quicker maturing wheat types, such as the Black Sea variety, had helped to shorten the growing season of the Red River wheats. This

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[1] Giraud, Le Métis Canadien, p. 777; W. J. Easterbrook and H. G. J. Aitken, Canadian Economic History (Toronto, 1956), p. 343.

[2] W. L. Morton, "Agriculture in the Red River Colony," pp. 308-312. This view was supported, along with further confirmatory evidence by F. G. Roe, "Early Agriculture in Western Canada in Relation to Climatic Stability," Agricultural History, XXVI, 1952, pp. 104-123.

interpretation does not deny that in some years the wheat crop was damaged by frost and seems essentially right. It is based on a more careful and judicious analysis of all the surviving evidence than A. S. Morton's viewpoint and conforms more closely to the reality of day to day farm life at the colony as presented in the Samuel Taylor Journal.

Barley was second to wheat among the grains grown at Red River and in terms of cultivated acreage almost certainly the second crop of the colony. The ability of the barley plant to mature in a short growing season enabled it to reach maturity between the drying-out period in spring and the onset of autumn frosts. The scattered evidence suggests that the settlers were sowing one fifth, or one sixth the amount of barley as of wheat. In 1845 Peter Garrioch records the sowing of 3½ bushels of barley as against 23 3/4 bushels of wheat on one Red River farm, and in 1866 Samuel Taylor sowed two bushels of barley and nearly 10 bushels of wheat in his parks, from which he harvested 550 sheaves of barley and 2,400 sheaves of wheat.[1] Barley was sown late in May or early June, at about the same time as the potatoes, and as soon as possible after the wheat crop was in the ground. This crop grew well and ripened quickly during a Red River summer though Donald Gunn explained that if the soil was too rich or the summer too wet "it throws up too much straw, lies

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[1] P. A. M., Peter Garrioch Journal, V, Home Journal 1845-1847, Entries May 5 - May 23; P.A.M., Journal of Samuel Taylor, May 1866, Sept. 1866.

down, and does not meat."[1] It was the first crop to be harvested at the settlement, reaping beginning in the last week of July or early in August. Barley bread was not eaten by the colonists, whose bread - corn was wheat. A little barley was used as animal feed but most of it went into the making of barley broth, always a dietary staple.[2] Part of the farmers' barley harvest was also intended for malting purposes in a number of illicit distilleries that produced spirits for local consumption or for the increasing numbers of free traders in the settlement.[3]

Potatoes had been a major subsistence crop at the colony since the beginnings of settlement and were by far the most important non - grain crop cultivated. They were grown not only as a field crop but in gardens. Potatoes were generally a sure crop at Red River, though sometimes damaged by grubs and grasshoppers, and reduced in volume during years of heat and drought. Most commentators on Red River agriculture agreed that the settlement was good potato growing country, for they did well in the fertile, stone-free soil and generally suitable climate. They were normally planted about the third week of May. "New" potatoes were dug in July

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[1]Donald Gunn, "Statistics of Red River", United Kingdom, Select Committee on Hudson's Bay Company, 1857, Appendix 7, p. 381.

[2]W. J. Healy (ed.), Women of Red River, (Winnipeg, 1923), p. 149.

[3]Oliver, Canadian North-West, I, pp. 316, 541; Giraud, Le Métis Canadien, pp. 788-789.

and August but the winter supply was rarely lifted before the beginning of October by which time their leaves had usually been blackened by Autumn frosts. For winter storage some of the farmers placed their potatoes and other roots in cellars or root houses dug in the river banks.[1] Hind was especially impressed by the quality of the potatoes produced at Red River. He described them as far surpassing "in quantity, quality and size, any I have ever seen before," and as "a round, white-skinned variety like those known in Canada as the English white."[2] The isolation of the colony seems to have protected it from the ravages of the potato blight which swept large parts of North America during the 1840's.

Potatoes were one of the few crops at Red River which were planted in rows. In 1862 Samuel Taylor's potato patch was "16 drils of potates 110 yards long."[3] In bushels they easily outyielded the grain crops and the farmers could cultivate enough for family needs on relatively small acreages. Most farmers probably planted about one acre of potatoes for with little other attention than hoeing and weeding yields of up to 300 bushels per acre were not uncommon. Potatoes were the only one of the major crops which were consumed almost wholly within the settlement. The fur trade rarely ordered potatoes, for they are a bulky crop, difficult to transport

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[1] Hind, Exploring Expedition, I, p. 149.

[2] Ibid., p. 150.

[3] Taylor, Journal, June 1862.

and even the most northerly trading posts were usually able to grow sufficient for their own use.[1] Potato surpluses were sometimes fed to pigs and sheep and some of the farmers' wives made starch from them.[2]

As well as the major staples of wheat, barley and potatoes, smaller quantities of oats and peas were also grown as field crops, but because of the sparcity of information on these two crops, it is difficult to determine their acreage-strength in relation to that of other crops. Oats, so favoured by the Scots Highlanders in other parts of North America, do not seem to have been of more than secondary importance at Red River. Besides recording the presence of oats and peas in the settlement's cropping patterns, the sources provide very little other information about these crops. Colonel J. F. Crofton estimated that the grains being cultivated by the colonists were in the ratio of one of oats to two of wheat or barley[3] but the present writer is of the opinion that this judgment greatly overestimates the amount of oats grown at the settlement. Oats matures best in cool, moist conditions and the fairly frequent occurrence of hot, dry summers at Red River perhaps discouraged its widespread cultivation. It is suggestive that there is no mention of oats or peas in either the Garrioch or Taylor Journals.

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[1] The Company ordered 40 kegs of potatoes in both 1839 and 1840.

[2] W. J. Healy (ed.), Women of Red River, p. 99.

[3] E. E. Rich (ed.), London Correspondence Inward From Eden Colvile, 1849-1852, (London, 1956), p. XXVII. The introduction to this book is by W. L. Morton.

Garden Crops: - In addition to the main field crops many Red River farmers also grew a wide selection of garden vegetables. These included carrots, cabbages, cauliflowers, celery, onions, turnips, radishes, cucumbers, asparagus, beets, beans, shallots, broccoli and tomatoes. As well as these common European vegetables some of the staple crops of the sedentary Indian tribes of the Upper Missouri had also found a place in the kitchen gardens of some settlers. Indian corn, squashes, melons, pumpkins and tobacco also played a minor role in Red River agriculture and each occupied its separate plot in many a river-front garden.

Among these garden crops only Indian corn has been discussed at any length in the various descriptions of the colony's agriculture. The presence of this crop at such northerly latitudes was used by both Hind, and Lorin Blodget in his "Climatology of the United States" (Philadelphia, 1857) to support their belief that much of the Canadian prairies were suited to large scale agricultural colonisation. Hind gives a somewhat distorted view of the Red River crop agriculture, for whilst corn is discussed at greater length than any other crop, with the possible exception of wheat, barley and oats, both certainly more important than corn in the settlement's cropping patterns, are briefly dismissed as being "not much cultivated".[1] More recently, in W. L. Morton's

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[1] Hind, Exploring Expedition, I, p. 227.

analysis of Red River agriculture, wheat and corn are the two crops which are discussed in detail.[1] Yet there is nothing in the record to suggest that corn was anything more than a minor crop, merely one of the many products of Red River gardens.[2]

Of all the crops cultivated it was probably the one most stringent in its physical needs, and the location of the farmer's corn patch had to be selected carefully. Hind's comments make it evident that corn was planted in the light, well drained soils of the "dry points" of the rivers, rather than in the heavier prairie soils beyond.[3] Like potatoes, corn was sown in rows. Samuel Taylor records in his journal for June 1862 that, "we hoed our corn, say put up the earth about it on the 21st it was 36 drils 11 yards long."[4] Taylor's description suggests that corn may have been planted in mounded earth, "hilling" in the terms of the American farmer, probably to facilitate further drainage. Corn was normally planted about May 20, later when the spring was wet and backward.[5] Some of the corn harvested was ripe corn but

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[1]W. L. Morton, "Agriculture in the Red River Colony", pp. 312-313.

[2]Senate Journal, State of Minnesota, 1857-1858, Appendix No. VIII: "Indian corn was not planted as a field crop, though it was grown in their gardens."

[3]Province of Canada, Journals of Legislative Assembly, 1858, paras. 227, 232, 233, 234, 242, 243; Hind, Exploring Expedition, I, pp. 225-226.

[4]Taylor, Journal, June 1862.

[5]Garrioch Journal, V, May 20, 1845: "Sowed 4 or 5 bushels of potatoes and 2 gallons Indian corn" and Taylor, Journal, May 1865: "put down most of our corn 20th."

much of it was probably picked whilst green and still soft.[1]

The corn grown by Red River farmers was not the luxuriant, warm weather plant typical of the American Corn Belt which required hot days and nights and a long growing season to come to maturity. It was a small, tough, compact plant about four feet high, which matured quickly and had some resistance against both frost and drought. Hind refers to it as Mandan or Horse-teeth corn. This dwarf variety of corn had been developed by the village Indians of the Upper Missouri (Mandans and Arikaras), who by "the work of acclimating, adapting, selecting and developing varieties of plants" had produced corn suitable for the conditions of the northern plains.[2] Hind concluded that such varieties were a "sure" crop at Red River, though others were less convinced of this. J. Wesley Bond, for example, wrote that, "Indian corn matures, but is not raised to much extent, a small variety is grown, but the situation is too near Lake Winnipeg, which influences their climate and the late spring frosts are apt to injure it," and Palliser noted that, "Indian corn is sometimes destroyed."[3]

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[1] United Kingdom, Select Committee on Hudson's Bay Company, 1857, p. 132; Evidence of A. Isbister: "Maize, or Indian corn, is cultivated in what is called its green state, between the parallels of 49° and 51° ...it ripens very well at Red River"; Canada, Sessional Papers (No. 83), A. 1863: "Indian corn is not claimed as a profitable staple. It is chiefly cultivated in small garden patches for the green ears."

[2] G. F. Will, "Indian Agriculture at Its Northern Limits in the Great Plains Region", 20th International Congress of Americanists (Rio De Janeiro, 1922), pp. 202-205.

[3] J. W. Bond, Minnesota and its Resources (New York, 1853), p. 325; United Kingdom, Journals, Detailed Reports.....Palliser,

It seems likely that the tobacco, melons, pumpkins and squashes cultivated at the colony were also hardy and early varieties from the Upper Missouri area. The small quantity of tobacco raised for home use was low grade and much inferior to the imported article.[1] Hind was particularly enthusiastic about the several varieties of melons at Red River and saw their cultivation as further evidence of the warmth of the summers at the settlement.[2]

Some settlers also planted rhubarb and varieties of currants in their gardens but there were few attempts, and these unsuccessful, to introduce cultivated fruits.[3] The colony depended on the wild berries of the plains - several varieties of cherries, raspberries, saskatoon berries, strawberries, bearberries, gooseberries and cranberries - all of which could be gathered, especially at the forest margins and from recently burnt-over land. Some berries were dried for winter use and choke berries were made into a jelly which was eaten with pemmican.

In review, cropping at the Red River Settlement was characterised by its emphasis on grains. Wheat and barley

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p. 55. Also Nor'-Wester, Oct. 15, 1861: "Indian corn grows very well; but it is little used."

[1] Hind, Exploring Expedition, I, pp. 151, 227; Nor'-Wester, Oct. 9, 1862.

[2] Province of Canada, Journals of Legislative Assembly, 1858, Para 240. By 1860 some farmers were growing melons under glass: Nor'-Wester, Aug. 14, 1860.

[3] Nor'-Wester, Aug. 14, 1860; Ross, Red River Settlement, p. 388; J. J. Hargrave, Red River, p. 176.

together may have occupied as much as 80 per cent of the cropland. The field crops, few in number, were those typical of mid-latitude European farming. The wider range of garden crops included not only the characteristic Western European vegetables, but also a number of crops taken over from the sedentary village Indians of the Missouri Valley. Non-food crops were notable chiefly for their absence; a little tobacco was grown but attempts to introduce flax and hemp as commercial crops during the 1830's had been a failure. In the absence of quantitative information it is not possible to determine whether cultural differences among the settlers were of any significance in determining the types of crops cultivated in the various parts of the settlement. W. L. Morton has suggested that Indian corn was planted especially by settlers with Indian blood but this is a contention impossible to prove. A general and characteristic pattern of land use had developed largely in relation to four basic factors: the riverine location of the whole of the settlement; the conservatism of the people, engendered by their isolation and lack of commercial opportunities, which resisted change to a large degree; an unvarying dependence on three main crops, wheat, barley and potatoes, with no real effort or need to diversify this basic pattern; a general uniformity of climate and soil.

Agricultural Methods and Techniques

The natural fertility of the Red River soil enabled

the early pioneers to secure good crops in most years by the simplest methods of cultivation. Constant cropping without rotation or fertilisation seem to have been the normal practices. Crop rotation was rarely tried and most settlers grew the same crop year after year in the same ground, never attempting to rest it or plant a different crop. There is no evidence of the appreciation of the importance of maintaining the fertility of the soil in the early history of Red River agriculture. Animal manure found little place in that agriculture for prairie land was considered as being virtually inexhaustible in fertility, and its application to the land was thought by the majority to be unnecessary, a waste of time and energy and even a sign of weakness. Stable manure and straw were left in piles on the river's edge, used for banking up the farmsteads, or simply thrown into the river. In 1846 Colonel J. F. Crofton described the settlement as being "squalid, the houses of the best settlers have heaps of dung and dirt near their doors. They seem idle and not to care for manuring their lands."[1]

Other comments of Red River farming are often equally as critical of the methods employed, and an impression of an untidy, careless and slovenly agriculture is created.[2] Yet

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[1] P.A.M., Diary of J. F. Crofton, Sept. 15, 1846; also United Kingdom, Select Committee on Hudson's Bay Company, 1857, pp. 52, 141; Evidence of G. Simpson and Rev. G. O. Corbett; Hind, Exploring Expedition, I, p. 223.

[2] Nor'-Wester, Sept. 14, 1861: "One great drawback on farming in the upper part of the French Settlement is that a great

there were actually very good reasons why Red River farming was as it was and it would be surprising if it had been otherwise. There was simply no need for progressive methods of cultivation. The farmer could usually grow all he needed by the traditional methods, and indifferent cultivation usually sufficed to secure him a living. A large commercial outlet may have stimulated the colonists to adopt better methods but there was only a small market for agricultural produce. Furthermore, the settlement's crops had to be planted and tended as quickly as possible. The shortness of the growing season, the scarcity of hired labour and the absence of labour saving machinery meant that farming operations were done in a rush and often carelessly. Thirdly, a majority of the colonists had only a minimal interest in tilling the soil, and most of the others were lacking in agricultural skill. The métis, with few exceptions, continued to rely on the hunt for many of their needs and were largely disinterested in farming. They spent too little time on the land to do anything more than an elementary kind of gardening. Having ploughed or dug their small plots and sown their crops, most of the métis left for the plains and the hunt, and did not return until the time for harvesting. Throughout the growing season their crops were largely unhusbanded, choked by weeds and open to the ravages of both wild and farm animals.[1] Many of the fur

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many go to the plains. Thus, there is not the same attention paid to farming operations as would be, if they were always at home."

[1]For métis agriculture see Giraud, Le Métis Canadien, pp. 831-846.

traders who had retired to Red River had taken up the agricultural, way of life with some enthusiasm but few of them had much experience in growing crops or rearing livestock. Even the Scots, whose superiority in matters agricultural is recorded in several descriptions of the colony, had come from a remote part of upland Britain where the ancient infield-outfield system of farming persisted, unaffected by the improved methods of the new husbandry of the agricultural revolution. Furthermore, the traditional methods of cultivating the soil at Red River were preserved by the isolation of the settlement, which successfully protected it from the influence of new ideas and the forces of change.

Until the late 1850's the agricultural equipment available to the Red River farmer was simple, limited in amount, and made largely within the settlement itself from local timber. Since the 1820's the plough and the harrow had been added to the few hand tools formerly available to the colonists, but much of the farming was still hand work. A plough, a harrow, a spade, a hoe, a scythe or sickle, a hand rake and a cart, these were the essentials for the limited farming operations carried on by many of the settlers. Ploughing, which usually commenced about April 20, but later when the spring was wet or late, was shallow and the seed was sown with little careful preparation of the soil. The Red River plough was "light" and apart from the iron tipped share and mould-board, made entirely out of timber. Such a plough did

little more than scratch the surface of the heavy Red River Valley soil. Contrasting English farming with that practised at the colony the English farmer Oliver Gowler wrote that,

> "in England they clear away all stubble and rubbish from their fields before they sow the grain: in Red River this is never done. Further the farmers in England plough their land thoroughly, while in Red River farmers plough theirs indifferently".[1]

Once his land was ploughed, the farmer usually prepared it for seeding with his harrow, and once seeding was complete, the harrow was used again to cover over the seed. The harrows were wooden and home made[2] and probably triangular in shape. The farmer sowed his small grain by hand, potatoes were planted with hand and spade.

These were the normal methods used by Red River farmers in preparing their land for cropping, yet throughout the settlement, but especially in the parishes of St. François-Xavier, St. Norbert and St. Peter, there were many families that owned neither plough nor harrow. This is yet another indication of the limited importance of agriculture in many parts of the colony. In these areas many families either did no farming at all and lived entirely off the hunt or the fisheries or merely did a little gardening in which the spade and the hoe were the necessary farm implements. The methods

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[1] Nor'-Wester, April 28, 1860.

[2] Taylor, Journal, April 1861: "I made a harrow for Edward Kipling upon the 24th" and May 1866: "on the 4th I made a fine harrow."

employed were more like those of the Indian farmers of the Upper Missouri than those of the farmer-colonists at Red River.

The weeks between the end of sowing and the commencement of the hay making was a comparatively quiet time. All crops were weeded and the row crops were frequently hoed during the summer. Up to the late fifties the grain crops were harvested entirely by sickle and scythe, the latter as the generally more efficient implement probably gradually replacing the former. Potatoes were lifted by spade but some found it easier to simply run the plough through the potato patch.[1] Once the grain was cut and stacked the hardest tasks of the farming year were complete, for threshing operations lacked the particular urgency of harvesting. Threshing was a year round activity, the grain being threshed by the flail, usually on the ice floor of a barn, though sometimes out in the open air, as it was needed. The cross draught of a barn was the simple way of winnowing out the chaff and other litter. Such methods often produced a dirty, impure, inferior product.[2] The grain was stored in the lofts of the farmhouses, and later taken as needed to the local windmill or watermill.

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[1] Ibid., Oct. 1866: "He ploughed his Aunt Elizabeth's potates on the 13th."

[2] Ross, Red River Settlement, pp. 116, 120-121.

# CHAPTER VIII

## LIVESTOCK FARMING AND THE HAYING ECONOMY

### Introduction

Out of the years of uncertainty up to 1827 a mixed cropping-herding agriculture had come in which livestock as well as crops played an important role. Domesticated animals were found on almost every holding, though it was the Scots of the Lower Settlement who were the most pastoral minded of all the colonists at Red River. Cattle, horses, sheep, oxen, pigs and poultry had an important part in the economy of the settlement. Cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry provided food and a little clothing whilst the horses and oxen were kept as workstock and as a means of transport. Livestock numbers are shown in Table 5.

### Cattle

Most settlers had a number of cattle which ensured them a supply of fresh milk and meat and a few also made a little low grade butter and cheese. The original herds had multiplied rapidly, increasing more than threefold between 1831 and 1856. (Table 5). Although the cattle had increased in numbers there had been no corresponding increase in the quality of the stock. This was in large part because of the

TABLE 5

LIVESTOCK POPULATION OF THE RED RIVER SETTLEMENT

| Year | CATTLE | | SHEEP | | PIGS | | HORSES | | OXEN | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | % Total Live-stock Pop. | Total | % Total Live-stock Pop. | Total | % Total Live-stock Pop. | Total | % Total Live-stock Pop. | Total | % Total Live-stock Pop. | Total Live-stock Pop. |
| 1831 | 2,066 | 36.10 | 0 | 0 | 2,362 | 41.25 | 410 | 7.16 | 887 | 15.49 | 5,725 |
| 1832 | 2,497 | 37.87 | 0 | 0 | 2,483 | 37.67 | 471 | 7.14 | 1,141 | 17.32 | 6,592 |
| 1833 | 2,572 | 40.75 | 0 (*250) | 0 | 2,033 | 32.18 | 492 | 7.8 | 1,219 | 19.27 | 6,316 |
| 1838 | 3,748 | 43.38 | 457 | 5.29 | 1,698 | 19.66 | 1,143 | 13.23 | 1,592 | 18.44 | 8,638 |
| 1840 | 4,166 | 37.02 | 1,897 | 16.86 | 2,149 | 19.10 | 1,292 | 11.48 | 1,749 | 15.54 | 11,253 |
| 1843 | 3,894 | 29.24 | 3,569 | 26.80 | 1,976 | 14.84 | 1,570 | 11.80 | 2,307 | 17.32 | 13,316 |
| 1846 | 3,842 | 23.14 | 4,223 | 25.43 | 3,800 | 22.89 | 2,360 | 14.22 | 2,376 | 14.32 | 16,601 |
| 1849 | 3,917 | 30.70 | 3,096 | 24.26 | 1,565 | 12.26 | 2,085 | 16.34 | 2,097 | 16.44 | 12,760 |
| 1856 | 6,609 | 33.94 | 2,245 | 11.53 | 4,929 | 25.32 | 2,681 | 13.77 | 3,006 | 15.44 | 19,470 |

continued reliance on the original, mixed breed frontier stock that had come from the United States during the 1820's. The few attempts to improve the breed did little to arrest the general and continuous deterioration in the quality of the Red River cattle. Sometime before 1833 a few Galloway cattle had been introduced, probably for the second experimental farm established by the Company in 1831.[1] In 1848 a shorthorn Durham bull of "extraordinary size" and two Ayrshire cows were brought out by the Company from Britain to upgrade the settlement's cattle but the colonists themselves showed little inclination to improve their stock.[2] For as with other aspects of farming there was a general prejudice against anything which was new or different from the traditional methods. Once the cattle were numerous enough there was little need to import them, for there was little emphasis on quality and the improvement of breeds was difficult on the open range.

The colonial cattle also suffered from an absence of careful breeding practices, a lack of adequate care and from poor feeding. Breeding was largely uncontrolled, in part the result of inadequate fencing, and no attempt was made to use

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[1]E. E. Rich (ed.), London Correspondence Inward From Eden Colvile, 1849-1852 (London, 1856), p. XXIX. The introduction to this book is written by W. L. Morton. See also Alexander Ross, Red River Settlement (London, 1856), p. 134.

[2]Minnesota, Journal of the Senate During the First Session of the Legislature, St. Paul, 1858, Appendix VIII, "A Visit to the Red River Settlement," p. 92; United Kingdom, Report From the Select Committee on the Hudson's Bay Company (London, 1857), p. 53; Ross, Red River Settlement, p. 390.

stud animals. The lack of careful breeding, with heifers producing their first calf at two years old, was also blamed for the rapid deterioration of Red River cattle. Cattle were left free to fend for themselves during the open season but were normally stabled during the winter months, being brought inside usually during the early weeks of November, and turned out again early in April. But the settlers rarely had enough hay to keep their animals in good condition throughout the winter and by spring the cattle were often in a deteriorated state.[1] In very cold winters, and especially after a dry summer, they often died in considerable numbers. In 1848 Andrew McDermot wrote that "in consequence of the most dreadful winter that was ever known in Red River at least one - sixth part of all the cattle was starved to death."[2] This also suggests that some of the colonists were keeping too many animals for the amount of feed available to them. The typical animal resulting from these often harsh conditions was probably a small, hardy, bony creature that provided a poor grade of beef.[3] The Red River cattle must also have been poor milkers for they were fed little else but grass and no distinction was made between beef and dairy animals.

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[1] Nor'-Wester, May 10, 1864: "Most of our cattle look more like death than life, particularly towards the spring....the rapid deterioration of the cattle is of course inevitable."

[2] P.A.M., G. M. Cary Papers, Andrew McDermot to G. M. Cary, July 24, 1848.

[3] For Red River cattle see Ross, Red River Settlement, pp. 73-74, 82-83, 389-390.

Yet even though the colony's cattle were thin and starved at the end of winter, they fattened up during summer, and autumn was the main time for butchering. The frequent scarcity of winter feed, the often heavy winter losses of stock, and the absence of a large commercial outlet for animal products, meant that individual herds were small. Alexander Ross asserts that the "best farmer and dealer in cattle in the colony, excepting one, has no more than forty - two head", and Hind states that "few of the better class of farmers keep more than thirty or forty head of cattle, in consequence of the want of a market for beef, tallow, hides, etc."[1]

In five of the seven Red River censuses cattle formed the largest element in the settlement's livestock population, and were normally 30 to 40 per cent of the total (Table 5). The distribution of cattle in the colony varied sharply from that of population in the 1856 census (Figure 8). There were variations in the ratio of cattle per 100 people from over 200 in the parish of St. John and 163 in St. Paul's to below 50 in the parishes of St. François-Xavier and St. Peter. These differences reflect the emphasis placed on farming operations by the settlers in the various parts of the colony. At one extreme it was the European colonists, and especially the Scots Highlanders of St. John's and St. Paul's, of all the elements of the Red River population, who

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[1]Ross, Red River Settlement, p. 390; H. Y. Hind, Narrative of the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition (London, 1860), I, p. 230.

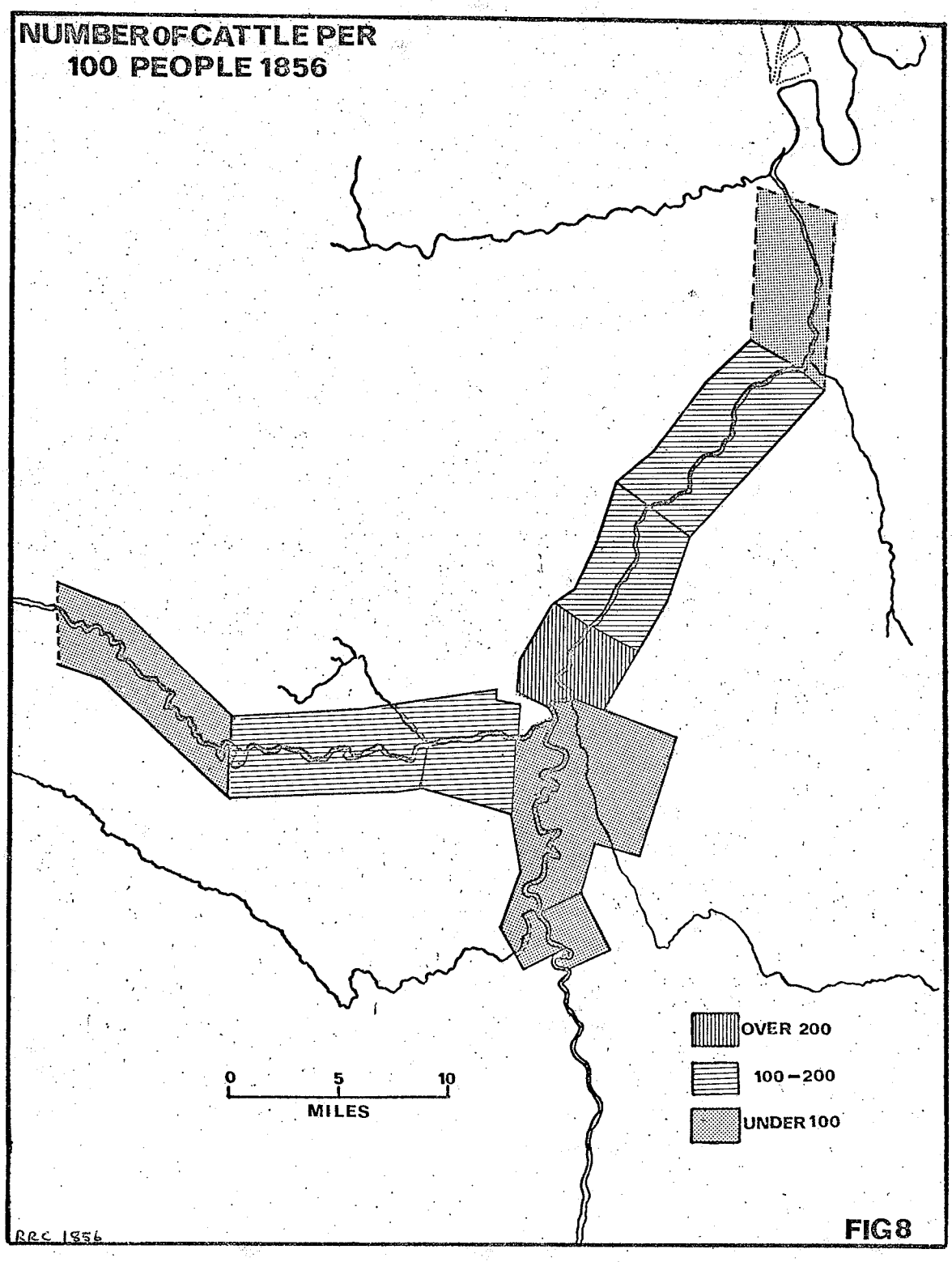
NUMBER OF CATTLE PER
100 PEOPLE 1856
OVER 200
100 – 200
UNDER 100
0
5
10
MILES
RRC 1856

FIG 8

showed an interest in the raising of cattle. This emphasis on cattle rearing by the Highlanders has been noticed in other parts of North America, for example in North Carolina and Georgia, and has been explained as a carry over of their prediliction for cattle raising in their homeland, where open range was plentiful.[1] At the other extreme, in the parishes of St. François-Xavier, St. Norbert, St. Boniface and St. Peter, with largely métis or Indian populations, interest in agriculture for the majority was slight, and the hunt, rather than domesticated cattle, served the people's meat requirements. The smaller size of the average holdings of cattle in the parishes of the lower Assiniboine, which contained some solid farming families, was probably a result of the relatively short time that had elapsed since settlers first moved into these areas in large numbers. The farmers of the Red River parishes had had a longer time to build up the size of their herds.

Sheep

Sheep were introduced into the Red River Settlement with commercial objectives, in an attempt to give the colonial farmers an export staple. Most of the initiative for their introduction came from George Simpson. As early as 1826 he had revived the schemes of Selkirk and Colin Robertson

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[1] H. R. Merrens, Colonial North Carolina in the Eighteenth Century (Chapel Hill, 1964), pp. 139-140.

to make wool the major agricultural staple of the colony, but it was not until 1833 that a flock of 250, one sixth of the original purchase, driven on foot from Kentucky, finally arrived at Red River.[1] A few Merinos and Leicesters from Britain were later added to this foundation stock, the latter suggesting some interest in mutton production.[2] Descriptions of Red River sheep are absent but the typical animal was probably long in the leg, rather light of fleece and thin in mutton. There was no incentive for improvement, for despite Simpson's hopes and energy, wool was produced primarily for home weaving and use. Donald Gunn declared that "when well fed, ewes produce fleeces weighing from 2 lbs. to 3½ lbs.; wethers produce fleeces much heavier; the wool is of good quality though not very fine".[3] As with the colony's cattle, there was little attempt at care in breeding.

After their introduction in 1833, Red River experienced a sheep boom and numbers increased rapidly during the next 13 years. In 1843 sheep formed the largest single element

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[1]Robert Campbell, "A Journey to Kentucky for Sheep", North Dakota Historical Quarterly, I (1), Oct. 1926, pp. 35-45; Ross, Red River Settlement, pp. 136-137, 146-150. An earlier flock purchased in 1828 in Missouri, had got no further than Big Stone Lake.

[2]A. C. Gluek, Minnesota and the Manifest Destiny of the Canadian Northwest (Toronto, 1965), p. 22; M. Giraud, Le Métis Canadien (Paris, 1945), p. 784.

[3]Donald Gunn, "Statistics of Red River", United Kingdom, Report From the Select Committee on Hudson's Bay Company, 1857, Appendix 7, p. 382.

in the colony's livestock population and by 1846 there were more than 4,000 sheep there (Table 5). But the boom was short lived and in the decade after 1846 numbers fell by over 40 per cent.

The introduction of sheep had stimulated the formation of a small domestic wool industry, especially among the Scots families, but the settlement continued to import most of its woolen goods and wool never became an export. As mutton was never a popular dish on Red River tables, there was no reason to keep sheep in large numbers. Simpson's initial venture had undoubtedly drawn many novices into the sheep business and later losses may be traced largely to inexperience and disinterest after the settlers realised there would be no ready market for their wool. Of all the livestock at the colony, sheep were least able to survive the environmental hazards. Despite the premiums offered by the Council of Assiniboia for the heads of wolves killed in the settlement, these animals constituted a perpetual menace to the sheep population. The presence of a large number of uncontrolled and often half-wild dogs running around loose in the colony made the ownership of sheep a precarious occupation. If the sheep suffered under the open range conditions of summer, flocks also fared badly during winter, for as the farmers lost interest in sheep rearing, they did not receive the necessary care and attention. Hind, for example, states that 184 sheep were lost during the very severe 1855-1856 winter.[1]

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[1]Hind, Exploring Expedition, I, p. 229.

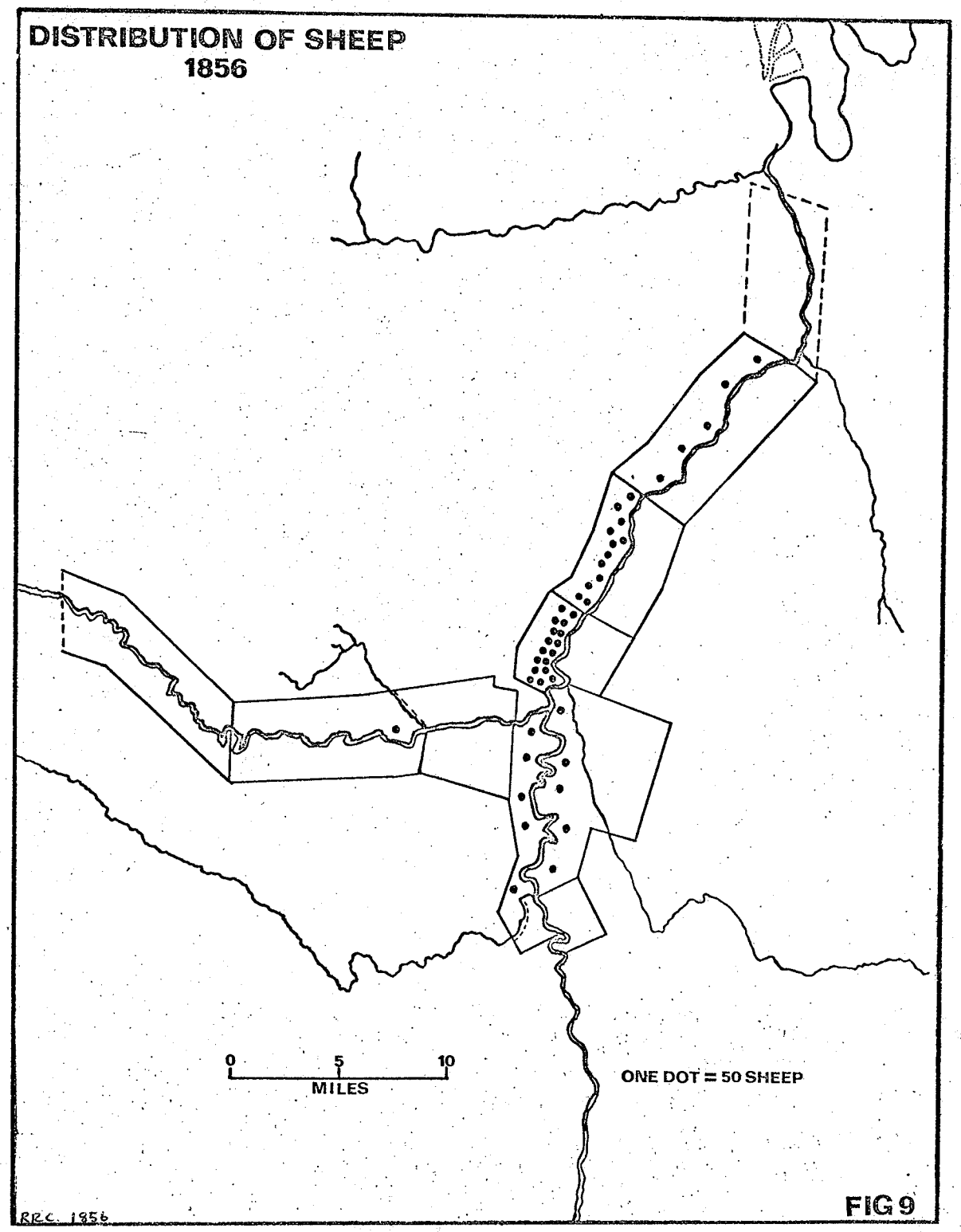
DISTRIBUTION OF SHEEP
1856
0
5
10
MILES
ONE DOT = 50 SHEEP
RRC. 1856

FIG 9

The distribution of sheep in 1856 (Figure 9), when sheep rearing was in sharp decline, shows that they were the most localised in their distribution of all the Red River livestock. Whereas most colonists owned cattle, horses and pigs, only a minority maintained flocks. In 1856 over 90 per cent of the total sheep population of 2,245 was in the four Red River parishes of St. John, St. Paul, St. Boniface and St. Andrew. Four of the other parishes had fewer than 20 sheep. The pattern of 1856 probably reflects the sheep densities in the various parts of the settlement at earlier times, for it is likely that the decline in sheep had been greatest in the parishes where earlier densities had been highest. The map clearly shows that even more than cattle, sheep were concentrated in the farming areas of the Lower Settlement and St. Boniface, for the métis and Indians at the extremities of the colony showed even less interest in sheep rearing than they did in cattle raising.

Pigs and Poultry

By the 1830's pigs were present on most farms. They had multiplied most rapidly of all the colony's livestock during the late 1820's and in 1831 they made up more than 40 per cent of the total animal population (Table 5). The numbers of pigs fluctuated widely from year to year for reasons related mainly to climate. Alexander Ross records a decline of one third during a single year.[1] Losses were

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[1]Ross, Red River Settlement, p. 391.

especially heavy during a severe winter, for pigs were largely unhusbanded and left to scavenge for themselves most of the time, feeding on the mast of the timbered river fringes or on the prairies beyond. Palliser observed that "pigs do remarkably well, and if turned out where there are oak woods require no looking after".[1] In the late fall they were shut up and some of the better farmers at least fattened those that were to be slaughtered, with surplus potatoes. According to Ross, the largest pig butchered in the colony had weighed 604 pounds but the average size was probably well below half that figure. Despite the regulations of the Assiniboia Council, they did much damage within the settlement, rooting up young trees and even destroying fences and crops.[2] Descriptions of the colony's pigs are absent for they appear to have been largely taken for granted and treated with the casual disregard that seems to have been typical of British agricultural pioneers in relation to their pigs in mid-latitude colonial areas.[3] Hogs were butchered for meat, but pork was never as popular as beef or pemmican, and the settlers were not skilled in making pork.[4] There was no

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[1]United Kingdom, Journals, Detailed Reports and Observations Relative to the Exploration By Captain Palliser (London, 1863), p. 55.

[2]E. H. Oliver, (ed.), The Canadian North-West: Its Early Development and Legislative Records (Ottawa, 1914), I, pp. 264-265.

[3]Andrew H. Clark, Three Centuries and the Island (Toronto, 1959), pp. 77, 114.

[4]Nor'Wester, April 17, 1869: "The art of pork making is not properly understood by our farmers". See also Ross, Red River Settlement, p. 391.

known attempt to introduce named breeds for their considerable numbers and the prevalence of range husbandry during the summer discouraged attempts to improve the stock.

Poultry, including fowls, ducks, turkeys and geese were present in considerable numbers but apart from a record of their presence little else is known about them. Eggs and domesticated fowl were undoubtedly eaten by many settlers but much of the fowl consumed was wild fowl. The spring and autumn goose hunts, as much as the buffalo hunts and the fall fisheries, were a regular feature of Red River life.

Horses and Oxen

Besides the animals which supplied him mainly with food, the Red River colonist also kept a number of horses and oxen. Most of the horses were the small Spanish type traded from the Indians. They were tough, hardy animals, hardened to withstand a prairie winter in the open air, for they normally spent the whole of it outdoors. They were able to paw away the snow and feed on the pasture beneath. Colonel J. F. Crofton noted that "there are many horses in the colony, but neither of fine figure, good blood, nor strong bone. They are, however, hardy and enduring, seldom fed with corn, and as seldom groomed".[1] To encourage the improvement of the colony's horses, the Government of Assiniboia imposed a fine of 20 shillings on the owners of stallions of two years or

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[1]London P.R.O., W.O./35/21. Col. J. F. Crofton, "A Report on the Colony of Red River."

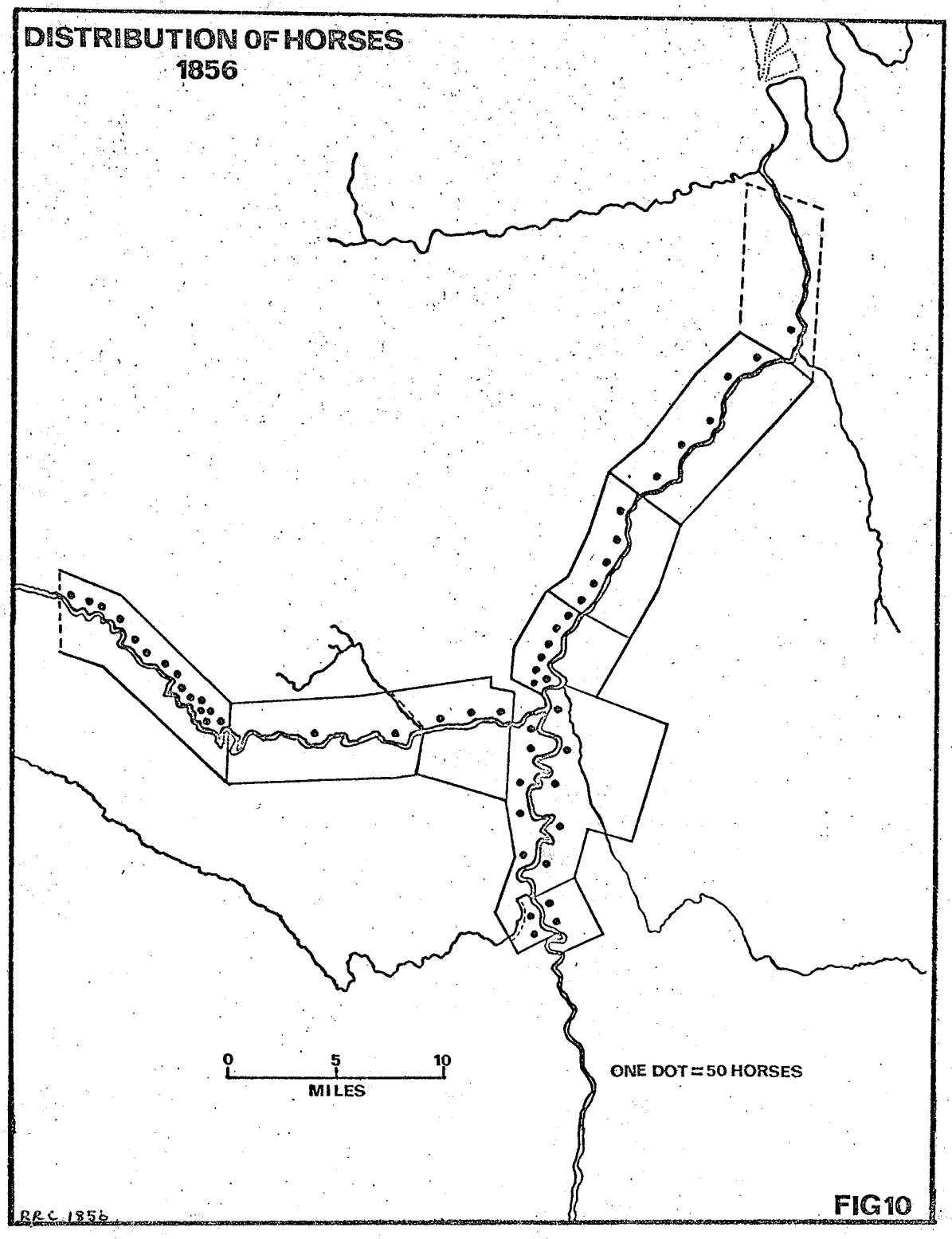
DISTRIBUTION OF HORSES
1856
0
5
10
MILES
ONE DOT = 50 HORSES
RRC 1856

FIG 10

over which were found wandering at large. Horse breeding had been given some impetus in 1831 when the Company imported from Britain, at a cost of £300, the English thoroughbred stallion, Fireaway, and when at about the same time a number of breeding mares had been driven up from the United States.[1] From this famous stallion came a line of horses which were regarded for a long time as the best in the Red River country. In 1848 a second blooded English stallion, Melbourne, "superior in size and bone to his predecessor, but inferior in model and action", along with an English grey mare, were brought out by the Company.[2] At the same time a number of broodmares were driven down from the Upper Assiniboine and the North Saskatchewan country, where the Hudson's Bay Company maintained large stocks of horses at both Fort Pelly and Fort Pitt. But this venture was not a success; the English mare and her foal died in 1850, most of the settlers were unwilling to pay even a small sum for mating their mares with the stallion, and the Company men found it difficult to mate the half-wild mares from the Northwest with the English thoroughbred.

Apart from a small drop in numbers in the late 1840's, the horse population showed a steady and consistent increase, almost sevenfold between 1831 and 1858. (Table 5).

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[1] Ross, Red River Settlement, p. 134; G. P. de T. Glazebrook, The Hargrave Correspondence, 1821-1843 (Toronto, 1938), p. 122.

[2] Ross, Red River Settlement, p. 392; Minnesota, Journal of the Senate, St. Paul, 1858, Appendix VIII, p. 92; E. E. Rich (ed.), Colvile Correspondence, pp. 33, 213, 218, 245.

Of all the domesticated animals at the colony horses were the most evenly distributed throughout it, for there were considerable numbers in the farming areas as well as in the essentially hunting communities. (Figure 10). But the horse meant different things to the farmer and the hunter. In the predominantly farming parishes, although the horse was likely sometimes used for light draught work, it was not an essential part of the farming operations. The farmers' horses were regarded more as a source of pleasure than of motive power, and were used mainly for riding, driving and racing. To the hunter, however, the horse was much more than a source of pleasure. It was an essential part of his chosen way of life. The half-breed hunter valued his buffalo runner above all else, for much of his food and some of his clothing depended on the successful completion of the hunt. In the parishes where the métis were predominant the horse was by far the most valuable of all the domestic animals.

In the more agricultural areas oxen were the most important part of the settlers' workstock. The ox was the preferred animal for field work in the Red River Settlement, and its purpose was to serve as a plough or draught animal. All farmers kept a pair of oxen for ploughing and for the pulling of carts or sleds, loaded with hay, timber or fish. The Red River oxen were small, averaging less than 1,000 pounds, but were heavier and stronger than the settlement's horses, and generally preferred for the breaking of new land, ploughing and for plodding through the mud or snow

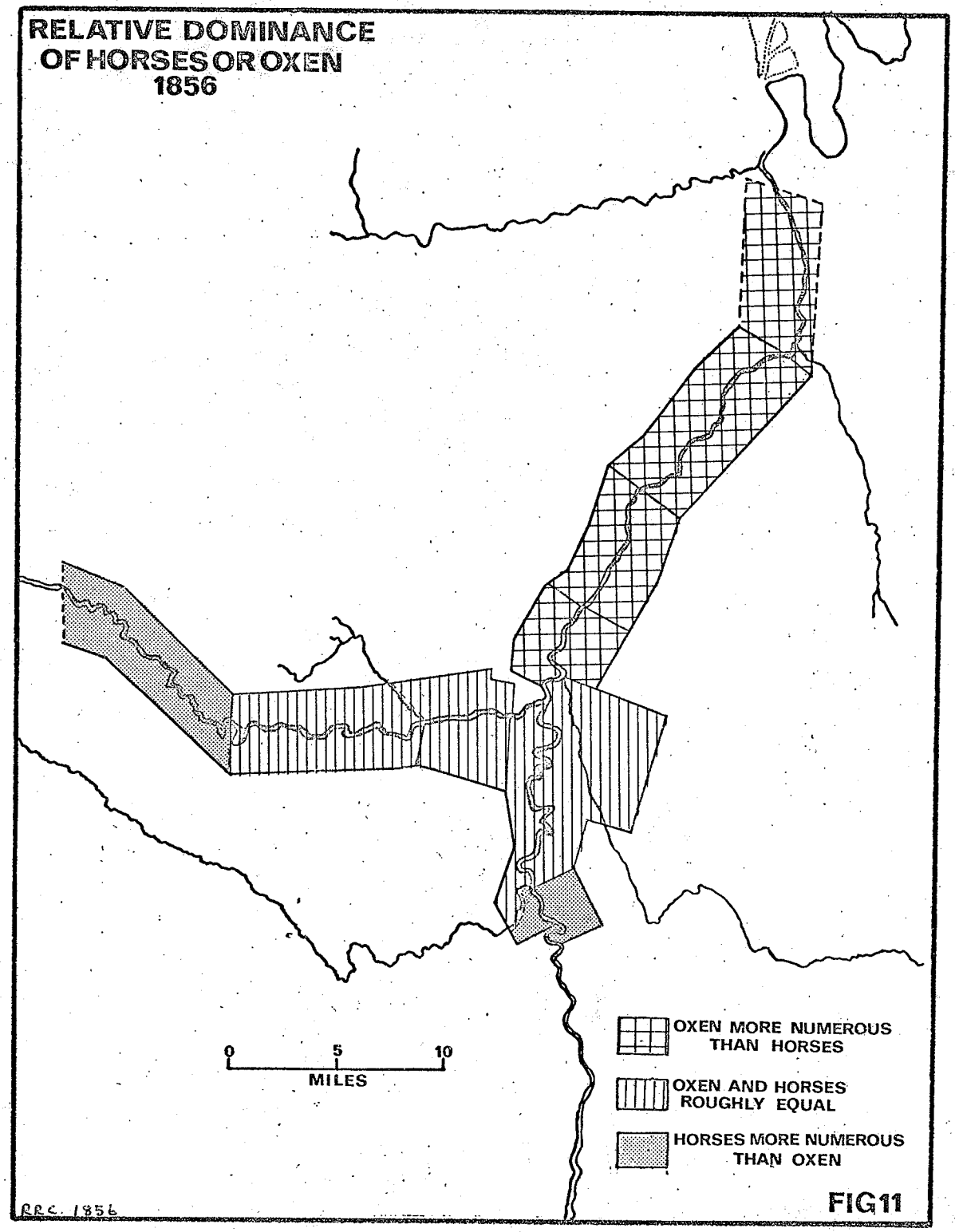
RELATIVE DOMINANCE
OF HORSES OR OXEN
1856
0
5
10
MILES
OXEN MORE NUMEROUS THAN HORSES
OXEN AND HORSES ROUGHLY EQUAL
HORSES MORE NUMEROUS THAN OXEN
RRC. 1856

FIG 11

of the back-country. Oxen steadily increased in numbers, multiplying more than three fold between 1831 and 1856, and they usually formed 15 to 20 per cent of the total livestock population. Throughout most of the colony there was roughly one ox for every two to three acres of tilled land.

It is instructive to compare the ratio of horses and oxen in the 1856 census (Figure 11). The métis interest in horses is shown by their dominance in the parishes of St. François-Xavier and St. Norbert at the western and southern extremities of the settlement. The high proportion of horses here as against oxen and other farm animals is symptomatic of the emphasis on hunting, as against agriculture, in the economy of these two parishes. In general the higher the proportion of oxen within a parish, the more advanced the farming economy in the parish. In St. John's, St. Paul's and St. Andrew's, where cultivated acreages were at a maximum and the haying economy most developed, oxen were roughly twice as numerous as horses. Surprisingly, oxen show a clear dominance over horses at the Indian Settlement, where cultivated acreages were small and other types of livestock few.

Haying

The greatest problem involved in raising a large number of animals at the Red River Settlement was to bring them safely through the long, severe winters. During the open season the settlers' livestock were turned out to graze on the unimproved land of their own lots, normally about

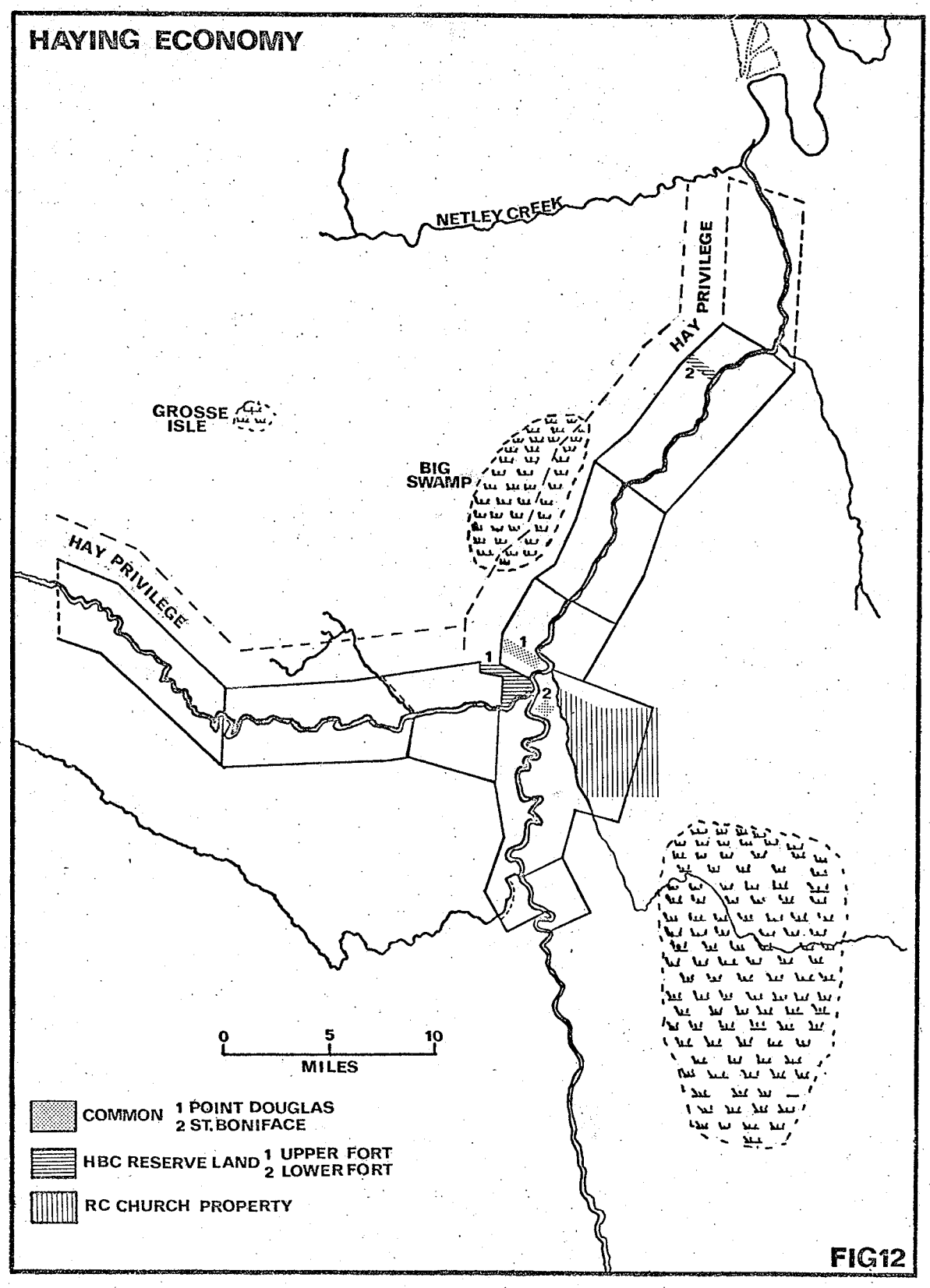
HAYING ECONOMY
NETLEY CREEK
HAY PRIVILEGE
GROSSE ISLE
BIG SWAMP
HAY PRIVILEGE
1
2
1
2
0
5
10
MILES
COMMON 1 POINT DOUGLAS 2 ST. BONIFACE
HBC RESERVE LAND 1 UPPER FORT 2 LOWER FORT
RC CHURCH PROPERTY

FIG12

two-thirds or more of the whole, or on the open prairies beyond. But the considerable animal population of the colony, except for its horses, had to be sheltered and fed during a five or six months' period. Some animal feed normally resulted from the settlement's arable farming; in good crop years a little barley and oats was used as feed, potato surpluses were sometimes used to fatten pigs and sheep, and straw was occasionally fed to oxen. But to feed their livestock the colonists depended very heavily on the wild hay that they could bring in from the plains. As long as the prairies afforded large amounts of wild grass for hay, there was little incentive to introduce tame hay and but few attempts were made to grow it. Experiments were conducted with the cultivation of red and white clover and timothy but met with little success and normally no kinds of tame grasses were grown for hay making.[1] Dependence on the prairie grasses was almost complete.

The importance of hay to the Red River economy is shown in the fact that its gathering was the most carefully regulated and organised of all the farmers' activities. The growth of population brought forth a number of regulations and restrictions affecting the gathering of hay. Being so carefully supervised, it was hoped to give each settler an

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[1] Ross, Red River Settlement, pp. 114, 388-389; New Nation, Feb. 4, 1870: "It is a new thing in this country to speak of raising hay."

equal and fair chance to mow sufficient quantities of hay to carry him over the winter months. Within "the settlement belt" each colonist was able to mow and graze his animals on his own two miles long lot, as and when he wished. Beyond this most settlers had the exclusive right to cut hay on the outer two miles immediately at the rear of their holding. This important right, recognised by the Company, was known as the "hay-privilege". This outer two miles was valued chiefly for the hay it provided, but some light timber was also cut there and by 1870 there was, in some parishes, considerable ploughed land in the "hay-privilege". This privilege was not, however, enjoyed by all settlers. In the parishes of St. James, St. Boniface and later in St. Vital, many of the colonists did not have the "hay-privilege", for there the outer two miles was partly cut off by the junction of the main rivers and the River Seine with the Red. In St. James the lots of some of the settlers abutted on the "hay-privilege" of St. John's and partly on the Company's reserve land at Upper Fort Garry[1] (Figure 12). In 1860 the residents of St. James were to petition the Council of Assiniboia to give them the same haying privileges enjoyed by the other colonists.[2] On the east bank of the Red, where the river lots were squeezed between the main river and the River Seine, much

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[1] New Nation, May 6, 1870, "Convention at Red River"; Reports of Mr. McKay and Mr. O'Donoghue. See also Archer Martin, The Hudson's Bay Company's Land Tenures (London, 1898), p. 213.

[2] Oliver, Canadian North-West, I, pp. 456-457.

of the land beyond was the property of the Roman Catholic Church.

Whilst most of the land within the "settlement belt" was held in severalty, there were two areas within the colony, both close to the Forks, which were held in common to which a number of settlers had equal rights. These were the Point Douglas and St. Boniface Commons. This right had been granted to the residents on Point Douglas with small lots and to those with small holdings in St. Boniface on the narrow neck of land at the junction of the Seine with the Red (Figure 12). Access to the open plains was difficult for both these groups of commoners and so they grazed their animals on the common, which represented the pastoral centre for the collecting or herding of the commonable animals. They may also have functioned to some extent as market and social centres. In many ways they resembled the village greens of the characteristic green villages of Western Europe. This valuable right of common was probably first granted by Lord Selkirk in 1817 and was later confirmed by the Council of Assiniboia.

Beyond the "hay-privilege" all colonists had equal rights to the hay and timber of the prairies. When haying time came around the farmer took his scythe, hand rakes and cart to the lower stretches of the plains where the slowly evaporating water had promoted an especially rich growth of grass. Sloughs, marshes and other wet spots were the favoured

places. There the farmer set up his tent and began to cut down the grass. In the early years the gathering of hay was probably a hit or miss affair, with the mower cutting a good growth of hay as he came across it. But with experience the colonists soon came to know the spots which would best reward their hard labours. The "Big Swamp" in the back-country of the Lower Settlement, the Netley Creek area on the edge of the Red River delta, Long-Lake beyond Baie St. Paul, the Grosse Isle northwest of Upper Fort Garry and the "Weedy Hills" (location unknown) are mentioned in the records as favoured haying locations. Some of these areas have been approximately delimited in Figure 12.

To pre-empt his haying area, the mower cut a circle around it with his scythe, and his right to this hay was usually respected. Once cut the grass was cocked and later made into large hay stacks, which were frequently fenced and covered with tree branches to protect them from fire, wind and wandering animals. Yields of the prairie grasses varied from year to year. One settler estimated that three to four tons of hay could be made from an acre of prairie.[1]

Despite the labour expended on haying, the regulations of the Council of Assiniboia, and the seemingly endless unenclosed prairies beyond the settlement, it was often with the greatest difficulty that the colonists succeeded in getting enough hay to keep their animals in good condition until

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[1] Canada, Journal of the House of Commons, Vol. X, 1876, Appendix 8, Evidence of J. Sutherland.

spring, and by then it was invariably in short supply and costly. At the end of winter the farmers' livestock were often thin and starving or even dying. In some years, but especially those with hot, dry summers, the growth of the prairie grasses was less rank, and it was at such times that the annual prairie fires ran farthest and most frequently, thus further reducing the already scanty hay supplies. Even when cut the hay was far from safe from fire, and in most summers some unfortunate settlers lost the whole of their supply of winter feed, and consequently had to rely on the generosity of neighbours to see them through to spring.[1] The quantity of hay each settler could cut was severely limited by the shortage of hired labour and the slow hand methods employed in mowing it. A few métis and Indian women usually helped out at this busy time but haying, like harvesting, was essentially a family affair in which both women and children took part. At Red River cutting the prairie grasses was largely a task of late July and early August, though a little inferior hay was sometimes cut after the harvesting of the crops. July 20 was the usual date when the prairies beyond the "hay-privilege" were thrown open to the farmers. But in dry years, when hay was scarce, some anxious farmers usually commenced mowing operations before the opening date, even though they ran the risk of sacrificing their haying privileges.[2] On the other hand, when spring and early summer

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[1] R. G. MacBeth, The Selkirk Settlers in Real Life (Toronto, 1897), p. 47.

[2] P.A.M., Journal of Samuel Taylor, July 1864: "Some people

had been wet, making movement on the plains difficult, the opening of haying was sometimes delayed until early August to give the prairies more time to dry out.[1] But whenever the settler began to cut his hay the problems involved were further complicated by the fact that the barley crop, the first to come to maturity in the colony, invariably ripened at the same time as the grasses were ready for cutting, thereby forcing the farmer to do his hardest tasks within a short, monthly period.[2] Haying, therefore, was a time of hard work and furious activity, in which not only had the hay to be hauled to the barns, but in dry years, when swamp water was scarce, river water had to be carried out to the workers on the plains.[3]

Haying activities were curtailed as the harvesting of the wheat crop got under way but were taken up again in autumn and continued throughout the winter, for the whole of the farmer's hay was rarely put away before the onset of the cold season. Some of it continued to lay out on the plains

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went down to Nettly Creek to cut hay on the 20th although it was settled there should be no hay cut till the 27th. Some did keep the law, hay is bad to find this year".

[1] P.A.M., Ross Papers, Alexander Ross to James Ross, Sept. 8, 1856. See also Nor'-Wester, July 28, 1860, Sept. 14, 1861.

[2] Nor'-Wester, May 14, 1862; Oliver, Canadian North-West, I, p. 510.

[3] Taylor, Journal, Aug. 28, 1863: "people had to cart out water to hay making & reaping".

and was carried to the riverside farms as it was required, by ox and sledge during the whole of winter. The Samuel Taylor Journal makes it evident that at that season the hauling of hay (and timber) was an almost daily activity of Red River farmers. The sledge was the usual form of transportation but when snow was scarce or absent the cart was used.[1]

In some years the normal haying routine broke down. When hay was especially short, as in the drought year of 1847, and had to be cut often at up to 60 miles away from the settlement, the farmers' cattle were sometimes wintered at the sources of supply, in preference to hauling home the hay.[2] The colonists hastily constructed rough sheds for their animals and kept them there until the spring thaw. This was known as "out-wintering",[3] and favoured places for it were the marshy Long Lake area and the southern fringes of Lake Manitoba.

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[1]Taylor, Journal, Nov. 1865: "They start off on 22nd with two oxen hauling carts, for their is not a spoonful of snow yet", and Ibid., Dec. 1866: "people cannot haul hay, nor wood for want of snow".

[2]P.A.M., Red River Correspondence, 1845-46-47, pp. 83-84, Alex. Christie to George Simpson, July 30, 1847; Nor'-Wester Aug. 18, 1864, Nov. 2, 1864, Nov. 9, 1864: W. L. Morton (ed.), Alexander Begg's Red River Journal and Other Papers Relative To The Red River Resistance of 1869-1870 (Toronto, 1956), p. 352.

[3]Nor'-Wester, Dec. 6, 1864.

## CHAPTER IX

## COMMERCIAL ASPECTS OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural change at Red River was limited by a number of factors, and not least by the restricted market the farmers were able to serve. The lack of a substantial market for their products became a continual source of grumbling among all classes of settlers. Efforts to establish an export staple at the colony had failed, despite the enthusiastic support of Simpson, largely because of the settlement's isolation and its poor transportation links with potential markets.[1] From a commercial viewpoint, Red River agriculture played a significant part in feeding the fur trade and provided a minor contribution to the exports of the settlement. The market for agricultural produce was internal and largely centred on the limited but regular demands of the fur trade conducted through Upper and Lower Fort Garry. After the subtraction of the seed corn and provisions for the local population, the fur trade was fed from the combined surplus of all the farms.

Beginning during the early 1830's, the orders made by the Company for farm products increased both in amount and variety. (Table 6). The early demands on Red River

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[1]For a recent survey of the attempts to provide the colony with an export staple see, A. C. Gluek, "Industrial Experiments in the Wilderness: A Sidelight on the Business History of the Hudson's Bay Company," Business History Review, XXXII (4), Winter 1958, pp. 423-433.

TABLE 6

ORDERS OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE FROM THE RED RIVER SETTLEMENT, 1823 - 1845

| Product | Unit | 1823 | 1824 | 1825 | 1826 | 1827 | 1828 | 1829 | 1830 | 1831 | 1832 | 1833 | 1834 | 1835 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Flour | cwts. | | 200 | 200 | 200 | 200 | 200 | 200 | 500 | | 1200 | | | 800 |
| Barley | bu. | | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 300 | | 110 | | | |
| Indian Corn | bu. | 700 | 1000 | 1000 | 1000 | 1000 | 1000 | 1000 | 200 | 40 | 110 | | | |
| Peas | bu. | | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | | 30 | | | | |
| French Beans | bu. | | | | | | | | | | 10 | | | |
| Onions | bu. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Potatoes | kegs | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Salt Cab. | casks | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gdn. sds. | assortments | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Butter | firkins | | 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 | | | | | 30 | 50 | | 50 |
| Eggs | kegs | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cheese | lbs. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Prm. beef | cwts. | | | | | | | | | | 16 | 20 | | 10 |
| Pork | cwts. | | | | | | | | | | 60 | 60 | | 40 |
| Hams | | | | | | | | | | | | 50 | | 50 |
| Dried meat | Bales | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Corned beef | cwts. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Table 6 Continued....

| Product | Unit | 1836 | 1837 | 1838 | 1839 | 1840 | 1841 | 1842 | 1843 | 1844 | 1845 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Flour | cwts. | 1000 | 1000 | | 650 | 650 | 6000? | 600 | 600 | | 750 |
| Barley | bu. | | | | 30 | 30 | 30 | 35 | 35 | | 30 |
| Indian corn | bu. | | | | | | | 10 | 10 | | 10 |
| Peas | bu. | | | | | | | | | | |
| French beans | bu. | | | | | | | | | | |
| Onions | bu. | | | | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | | 8 |
| Potatoes | kegs | | | | 40 | 40 | | | | | |
| Salt Cab. | casks | | | | | | | | 2 | | |
| Gdn. seeds | assort. | 15 | 15 | | 12 | 15 | 12 | 12 | 10 | | 12 |
| Butter | firkins | 50 | 50 | | 55 | 45 | 60 | 65 | 55 | | 75 |
| Eggs | kegs | | | | 15 | 15 | 13 | 15 | 15 | | 15 |
| Cheese | lbs. | 3 | 3 | | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 240 | | 220 |
| Prime beef | cwts. | 10 | 10 | | | | 12 | 12 | | | 3 |
| Pork | cwts. | 10 | 10 | | 35 | 45 | 46 | 45 | 45 | | 70 |
| Hams | | 30 | 30 | | 70 | 70 | 70 | 60 | 60 | | 50 |
| Dried meat | bales | | | | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | | 110 |
| Corned beef | cwts. | | | | 12 | 12 | | | 12 | | 12 |

Sources:- Fleming, R. H. (ed.), Minutes of the Council, Northern Department of Rupert's Land, (1940), pp. 50, 80, 110, 149, 182, 208, 239, 257, 277.; Oliver, E. H. (ed.),

Table 6 Continued.....

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Sources Continued.....

The Canadian North-West: Its Early Development and Legislative Records (1914), II, pp. 696, 715, 731, 764, 780, 804, 821, 841, 857, 870.

agriculture, apart from requests for small quantities of butter, had been restricted to its arable products, but commencing in 1832, animal products were included in the orders of the Hudson's Bay Company's Northern Department, and formed an increasing part of the commerce of the colony in later years. A variety of meats, includinb beef, pork and ham, as well as dairy products, butter, cheese and eggs, were regularly requested for the fur trade posts. Until 1830 the settlement had been unable to meet even the small demands made on it. However, by that time, the increasing extent of tilled land and the growing livestock population of the colony, coinciding with a series of good harvests in the late 1820's and early 1830's, enabled the settlement at last to play out its part in the operations of the fur trade. In addition to supplying their own needs and those of the fur trade, the Red River farmers after 1833 also contributed to the maintenance of a year's reserve of flour, kept in depot by the Company to protect the colony and the fur trade from a run of crop failures or a sudden increase in the settlement's population.[1] In 1848 the Assiniboia Council began a public granary.[2]

Several factors combined to limit the volume of the sales of agricultural products made to the Hudson's Bay

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[1] E. H. Oliver (ed.), The Canadian North-West: Its Early Development and Legislative Records (Ottawa, 1914), II, p. 696; G. P. de T. Glazebrook (ed.), The Hargrave Correspondence 1821-1843 (Toronto, 1938), pp. 386-387.

[2] Oliver, Canadian North-West, I, p. 350.

Company. Firstly, the active encouragement which the Company had given their trading posts to cultivate as much of their own agricultural needs as possible inevitably reduced the volume of trade in foodstuffs. Secondly, this policy, coupled with the establishment of the Red River Settlement as a supply base had reduced but not eliminated the imports of flour coming into York Factory, for the Company's coastal bases, and perhaps some interior posts, continued to rely partly on provisions from overseas.[1] This was in part a result of the low grade and inferior products prepared at Red River. Alexander Ross, after describing the carelessly processed farm goods being dispatched from the settlement in the 1830's commented that "the consequence was, English produce was again called for, and again imported".[2] Thirdly, the introduction of domesticated animals into the farm economy had not eradicated the purchases of "plains-provisions" made by the Company from the buffalo hunters. The half-breed hunters formed a large and increasing proportion of the colonial population and the produce of their economy competed with that of the farmers in the small, local outlet available to both.[3] In the words of W. L. Morton,

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[1] Hargrave Correspondence, pp. 386 - 387.

[2] Alexander Ross, Red River Settlement (London, 1856), p. 116.

[3] Ibid., pp. 272-273, 334-335.

> "neither hunt nor agriculture could displace the other, and each depressed the price of the other's produce in a limited local market. From the fatal check of this internal equipoise of the hunting and farming economy, only the development of an export market for agricultural produce could have freed Red River."[1]

In response to this situation the Red River farmers calculated to produce only a small surplus, little more than was necessary to meet family needs. As a consequence even a small and temporary increase of population was enough to reduce an existing surplus of grain, or if it was a time of shortage as a result of poor crops, even to extinguish it. Such an unfavourable set of circumstances occurred in the years 1846-1848, when the presence of 347 men of the 6th Regiment of Foot (the Warwickshires) at the settlement during the Oregon crisis, coincided with a succession of very hot, dry summers and meagre crops. To avoid famine in 1847 the Hudson's Bay Company were compelled to bring in flour and seed from England via York Factory, from the United States via Rainy Lake, as well as from Canada.[2]

In an essentially closed economy such as existed at Red River, where almost all consumers were also producers, abundant years produced many sellers but few buyers, bad years many buyers

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[1] W. L. Morton, "Agriculture in the Red River Colony", C.H.R. XXX, Dec. 1949, p. 316.

[2] P.A.M., Red River Correspondence, 1845-46-47, pp. 83-84, Alex Christie to George Simpson, July 30, 1847 and pp. 88-89, Alex. Christie to Archibald Barclay, Aug. 9, 1847; United Kingdom, Select Committee on Hudson's Bay Company (London, 1857), pp. 45, 49-50; Evidence of George Simpson; M. Giraud, Le Métis Canadien (Paris, 1945), p. 779.

but few sellers. In good seasons both farmers and hunters were competing in large numbers for a small market, whilst in poor years the farmers' and hunters' margin for sale vanished and then the colonists had difficulty in meeting even the small needs of the fur trade.[1] When the crops were abundant the market was soon glutted, and the Company was unable to absorb the total agricultural surplus of the settlement. On such occasions the Company was forced to limit the sales of farm produce made by each settler. In 1841, for example, following the favourable growing season of that year, Governor Duncan Finlayson was forced to restrict each farmer to "the sale of 8 cwts. of flour only".[2]

Livestock driving was another form of trade engaged in by the Red River colonists. American awareness of the possibility of purchasing livestock from the settlement had been created by the southward moving emigrants from the colony during the middle 1830's, who had sold their animals to settlers in the Fort Snelling area.[3] Beginning apparently in 1839 and with the approval of the Hudson's Bay Company, the settlers themselves began to drive livestock over the political frontier to military and mission posts in the northern United

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[1] Giraud, Le Métis Canadien, p. 786

[2] Hargrave Correspondence, pp. 386-387. See also Ross, Red River Settlement, p. 115 and John McLean, Notes of a Twenty-Five Years' service in the Hudson's Bay Company Territories (Toronto, 1932), pp. 381-382.

[3] E. D. Neill, "Occurrences in and Around Fort Snelling, From 1819 to 1840", Minnesota Historical Society Collections, II,

States.[1] The colonists at first traded cattle for horses,[2] but it is clear that during the 1840's and 1850's herds of cattle and also of horses were fairly regularly driven south from Red River to at least as far as St. Paul.[3] The number of animals involved in this trade is unknown. The southward movement of live animals tended to be overshadowed and obscured by the movement of furs in the same direction. Donald Gunn, writing in 1856, notes that "during the whole summer some of our people are on the road taking cattle from

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1860-1867, p. 127; Hargrave Correspondence, p. 207; Ross, Red River Settlement, p. 184.

[1]Giraud, Le Métis Canadien, p. 771.

[2]J. S. Galbraith, The Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor, 1821-1869 (Toronto, 1957), p. 62.

[3]The following sources contain evidence of this: Lettres de Monseigneur Joseph-Norbert Provencher, Premier Evêque de Saint-Boniface (St. Boniface, 1913), p. 185; Hargrave Correspondence, p. 348; E. A. Mitchell, "Clouston Goes to Pembina", Beaver, Autumn 1961, p. 52; Minnesota, Journal of the Senate, 1858, Appendix VIII, p. 92; C. C. Andrews, Minnesota and Dacotah (Washington, 1857), p. 108; United Kingdom, Select Committee on Hudson's Bay Company, 1857, p. 62; Evidence of George Simpson; United Kingdom, Journals, Detailed Reports, and Observations Relative to the Exploration by Captain Palliser (London, 1863), p. 56; H. Y. Hind, Narrative of the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition of 1857 (London, 1860), I, p. 230; J. L. Coulter, "Industrial History of the Red River Valley", Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, III, 1910, pp. 548, 557.

here and bringing goods in return." The same writer claims that the sale of cattle to Minnesotans paid for one ninth of the goods purchased by the colonists from St. Paul, the rest being paid for "in furs and bills of exchange".[1] The American settlers valued the Red River stock particularly for their hardiness and ability to endure long mid-continental winters.[2] The details of the organisation of this trade are not known. It is probable that the Scots and others in the Lower Settlement with substantial herds of animals, were the main participants in the trade. Since most farmers kept only a limited number of cattle and horses, it was not worth while to drive them individually to market. It seems likely that they sold off their surplus stock to dealers in the settlement,[3] who hired a few men to drive the herd down into Minnesota. However, on occasion, the American buyers travelled to the settlement itself to purchase a few animals.[4]

The writer has been unable to document the sale of other forms of agricultural produce in the United States at this time. M. Giraud, quoting a source of 1847, claims that it was the practice of the military garrisons on the

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[1]Donald Gunn, "Statistics of Red River," United Kingdom, Select Committee on Hudson's Bay Company, 1857, Appendix 7, p. 383.

[2]C. C. Andrews, Minnesota and Dacotah, p. 108.

[3]Alexander Ross describes Andrew McDermot, the leading free trader in the colony as being, among many other things, "a dealer in cattle": Ross, Red River Settlement, p. 399.

[4]See P.A.M., Rev. Alonzo Barnard, "Sketch of My First Trip to the Selkirk Settlement, 1843."

the Upper Mississippi to buy flour and meat from the Red River Colony and in 1851 J. W. Bond found the settlers shipping barley to Pembina, where the limited agriculture carried on there had been interrupted by flooding.[1] It may be significant that in 1859 a number of settlers petitioned the Council of Assiniboia protesting the 20 per cent duty that the newly created Minnesota Territory had imposed on imports of "flour and other articles."[2] This suggests that the colonists had either been selling or soon hoped to sell flour in the frontier settlements of Minnesota. However, apart from the sale of live animals, the writer has found nothing to suggest that over-the-border sales of farm products were anything but small in amount and irregular in occurrence, and indeed, as already noted, on one occasion the colony was compelled to purchase flour from the United States.

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[1] Giraud, Le Métis Canadien, p. 975; J. W. Bond, Minnesota and its Resources (New York, 1853), pp. 276-277.

[2] Oliver, Canadian North-West, I, pp. 436-437.

# CHAPTER X

## THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AREAS OF THE RED RIVER SETTLEMENT

To conclude the discussion of agriculture an attempt has been made to recognise and map some of the regional contrasts within the Red River Colony. Several criteria could have been used; differences of race, religion and language amongst the various settlers, the relative importance of the hunt in the parochial economies or the emphasis placed on crops and livestock in the different parts of the colony. In the division presented those parishes in which the position of agriculture in the economy was of a similar order of magnitude are grouped together. (Figure 13). This has been done on a qualitative, empirical basis but the divisions are supported by contemporary descriptions of the settlement and by the mass of information on agriculture and population found in the Red River censuses. Some of the data on agriculture has already been mapped with the intention of revealing some of the differences between the various sections of the settlement.

The parishes of St. John and St. Paul have been delimited as the agricultural core or heartland of the Red River Settlement. By any test -- amount of cultivated land, numbers of livestock and farm implements per capita -- this was the most advanced and best farmed section of the whole settlement, situated close to its centre. It corresponds fairly closely with the longest settled and most densely peopled part

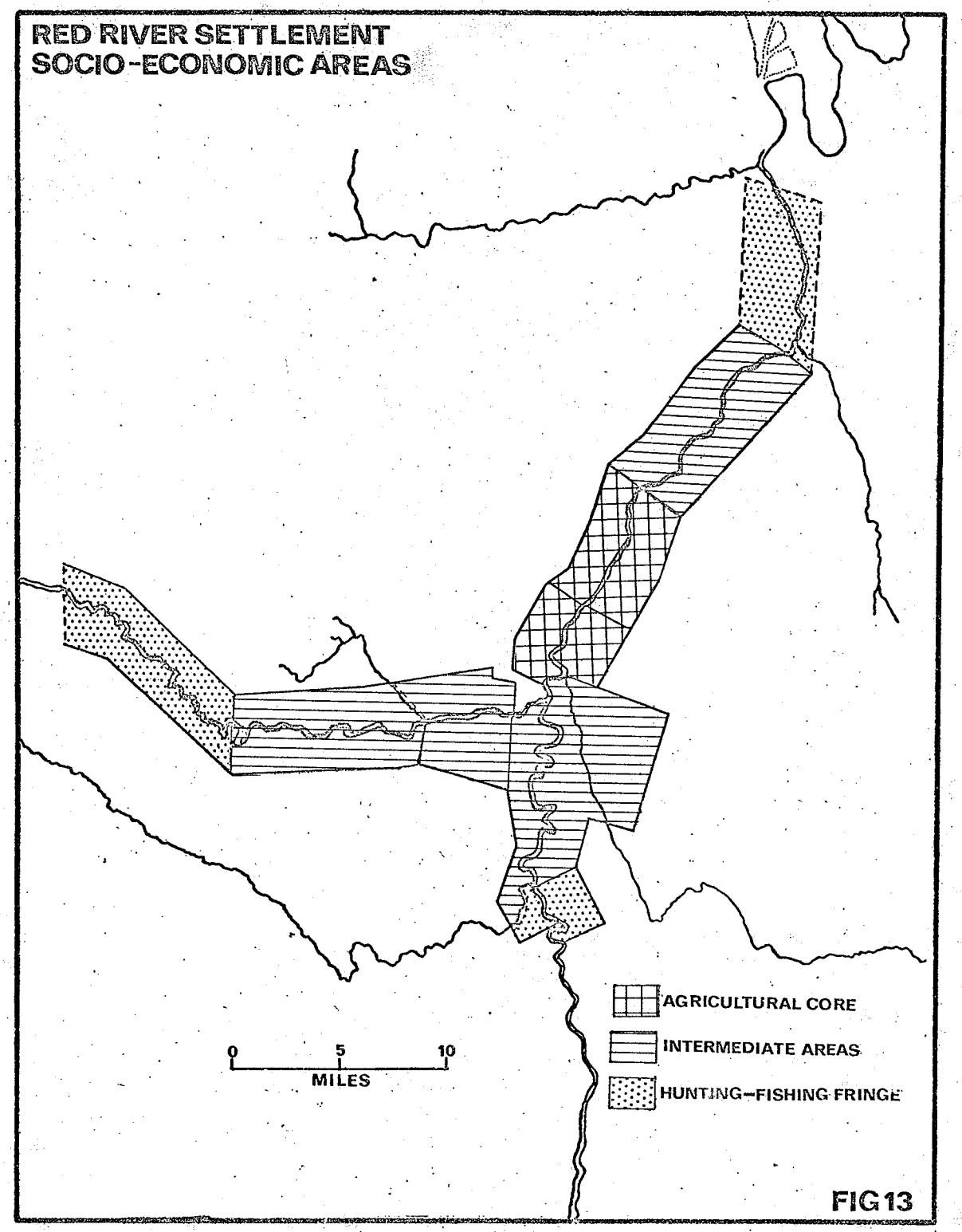
RED RIVER SETTLEMENT
SOCIO-ECONOMIC AREAS
AGRICULTURAL CORE
INTERMEDIATE AREAS
HUNTING-FISHING FRINGE
0
5
10
MILES

FIG 13

of the colony. It stands out as being the part of the settlement most fully committed to the agricultural way of life, for here farming was the major focus of interest amongst almost all the people. It was the marked emphasis on agriculture that differentiated the parishes of St. John and St. Paul from adjacent areas. The relative importance of agriculture was not based on any environmental advantages but rather on the cultural prejudice of the Scottish Highlanders who formed a significant portion of the total parochial population only in St. John and St. Paul, 48 per cent and 32 per cent respectively of the total number of families in 1856. It was the Scots, amongst all the population elements gathered at Red River, who were most completely committed, as a group, to the steady if unexciting toil of working the land.

At the other extreme, in the peripheral parishes of St. François-Xavier, St. Norbert and St. Peter, the committment to farming was partial and weak. These areas have been designated as the hunting-fishing fringe. Few settlers gained a living from their crops and animals alone and indeed there were many families that practised no agriculture at all in these parishes. Hunting and fishing were the major focii of interest and it was the emphasis on these two pursuits that accounts for the distinctiveness of the three parishes. The explanation for this must again be sought in the cultural differences among the Red River colonists. In St. François-Xavier and St. Norbert the population was composed of a mixture of French speaking half-breeds and Canadians,

and that of St. Peter's was wholly Indian. Almost all these colonists lacked an agricultural background, and though a few had adopted the life of the farmer with some enthusiasm and energy since their arrival at Red River, this was not general. The métis were linked to the semi-nomadic hunting life through their Indian mothers and they were joined in their traditional pursuits by some of the less numerous Canadians, who resembled them in religion and language. A majority of the residents of St. François-Xavier and St. Norbert were indifferent to agriculture and lived largely off the biannual buffalo hunts, with the fisheries as a supplementary source of food. The calendars of agriculture and the hunt so overlapped that the most a hunter could attempt was a garden patch and perhaps a cow and a few swine, along with a number of invaluable buffalo runners. The full blooded sedentary Indians of St. Peter's though not taking part in the organised hunting expeditions of the métis and Canadians, seem to have augmented their scanty agricultural production by fishing in the rivers and Lake Winnipeg and by hunting game in the marshy delta country of the Red.

The most striking internal regional contrasts were between those areas where agriculture was the basis of the economy and those in which hunting and fishing supplied the staples of life. More difficult to characterise are the intermediate areas between these two extremes. The parishes of St. Andrews, St. Boniface, St. James, and St. Charles have been

placed in this category. In these parishes the attention to farming was below the average of the agricultural core but well above the low level prevailing in the peripheral hunting areas. All parts of the intermediate areas had settlers who were as devoted to farming as the Kildonan Scots; some Canadians and a few metis in St. Boniface, Orkneymen and English speaking half-breeds in St. Andrew's and along the lower Assiniboine. However, their efforts are somewhat obscured in the Red River censuses by others whose prediliction for the agricultural way of life was much less. Each of the four parishes had either hunting elements in their population, for example the metis of St. Boniface and St. Charles, or farmers who had little land under cultivation and owned few animals, such as the Protestant half-breeds of St. Andrew's. The economies of St. Boniface and St. Charles were "mixed" in the sense that they included an agricultural as well as an hunting sector. In St. Andrew's and St. James agriculture was the prime economic activity.

# RED RIVER SETTLEMENT

1857 - 1870

# CHAPTER XI

## THE RED RIVER SETTLEMENT, 1857 - 1870

### Introduction

On July 15, 1870 after a decade of political insecurity and unrest which had culminated in the Riel Rebellion, the Red River Settlement passed over to the Dominion of Canada, and was incorporated into the Province of Manitoba, the first of the Prairie Provinces. During the 1860's the settlement, for long isolated and virtually unknown to the world at large, came increasingly into "world" view. The failure of the colony's sources of food and the economic crisis of 1868, closely followed by the metis uprising of 1869-1870, had given the Red River Settlement a certain notoriety and much publicity. The Report of the Select Committee of 1857 into the Hudson's Bay Company, the evaluations of the potentialities of the Northwest for agriculture and colonisation contained within the writings of Henry Yule Hind and Captain John Palliser, and the commencement of the publication of the Nor'-Wester newspaper in 1859, had all worked towards the same end. There were many outward manifestations of the significant changes taking place, amongst which the beginnings of steamboat navigation on the Red in 1859 and the strengthened commercial relations with St. Paul, and through its merchants with industrial America, might be quoted as examples. The changing character of Red River in the sixties has been the subject of

intensive study by Chester Martin. A. S. Morton, W. L. Morton, G. F. G. Stanley and others. The discussion here will focus attention on the changes in population, settlement and agriculture.

Population

In 1870 the population of the new Province of Manitoba totalled 12,228.[1] Its distribution is shown in Figure 14. Settlement was still clearly concentrated along the main rivers around the Forks. Of the total population over 90 per cent (11,193) was crowded into the parishes stretched out along the lower valleys of the Red and the Assiniboine. This represented an approximate doubling of the population in those areas in a period of 14 years. Outside this main centre of population were small métis settlements, mostly connected with fishing and hunting, on the southern fringes of the Interlake area, at Oak Point and St. Laurent on the south eastern edge of Lake Manitoba[2] and also at Scanderbury in a similar location with respect to Lake Winnipeg. East of Red River another small half-breed settlement had existed since the late 1850's at Oak Point (Ste. Anne-des-Chênes) on the upper Seine. It was linked to St. Boniface by the last section of the newly

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[1]Censuses of Canada 1665 to 1871 (Ottawa, 1876), IV, pp. 380-387.

[2]Early settlement in the Interlake area is surveyed by J. M. Richtik, A Historical Geography of the Interlake Area of Manitoba From 1871 to 1921 (Unpublished thesis of the University of Manitoba, 1964), Chapter 2.

completed Dawson Road, a combination of track and river route connecting the Red River Valley with the head of Lake Superior. To the south of the main French métis settlements on the Red there was a tiny settlement on the lower reaches of the Scratching River where it was crossed by the trail to Pembina.[1] Beyond Scratching River over 140 persons scattered along the Red carried settlement down to the international frontier. In addition to the population enumerated by the census takers of 1870, it was estimated at about the same time by Bishop Taché of St. Boniface that some 13,000 Indians also lived within the boundaries of Manitoba. This would give it a total population of 25,228. Apart from these few isolated nuclei of riverside and lakeside population, Manitoba was an empty land, virtually devoid of people beyond the "settlement belt" of the Red River Colony, awaiting the arrival of pioneer farmers to claim and break its fertile acres.

The 1870 census of Manitoba includes data on the birth-place of the population. In that year, of the 12,228 counted, only 8 per cent had not been born within the province or other parts of the Northwest. Native-born settlers were in a majority, and in most cases an overwhelming one, in each of the censal units. This is certain evidence that immigration had been of slight importance to the colony since the early years of settlement. Clearly natural increase and internal

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[1] There had been a small métis settlement at Scratching River since at least 1864. See J. A. Gilfillan, "A Trip Through the Red River Valley in 1864", North Dakota Historical Quarterly, I (4), July 1927, pp. 37-40.

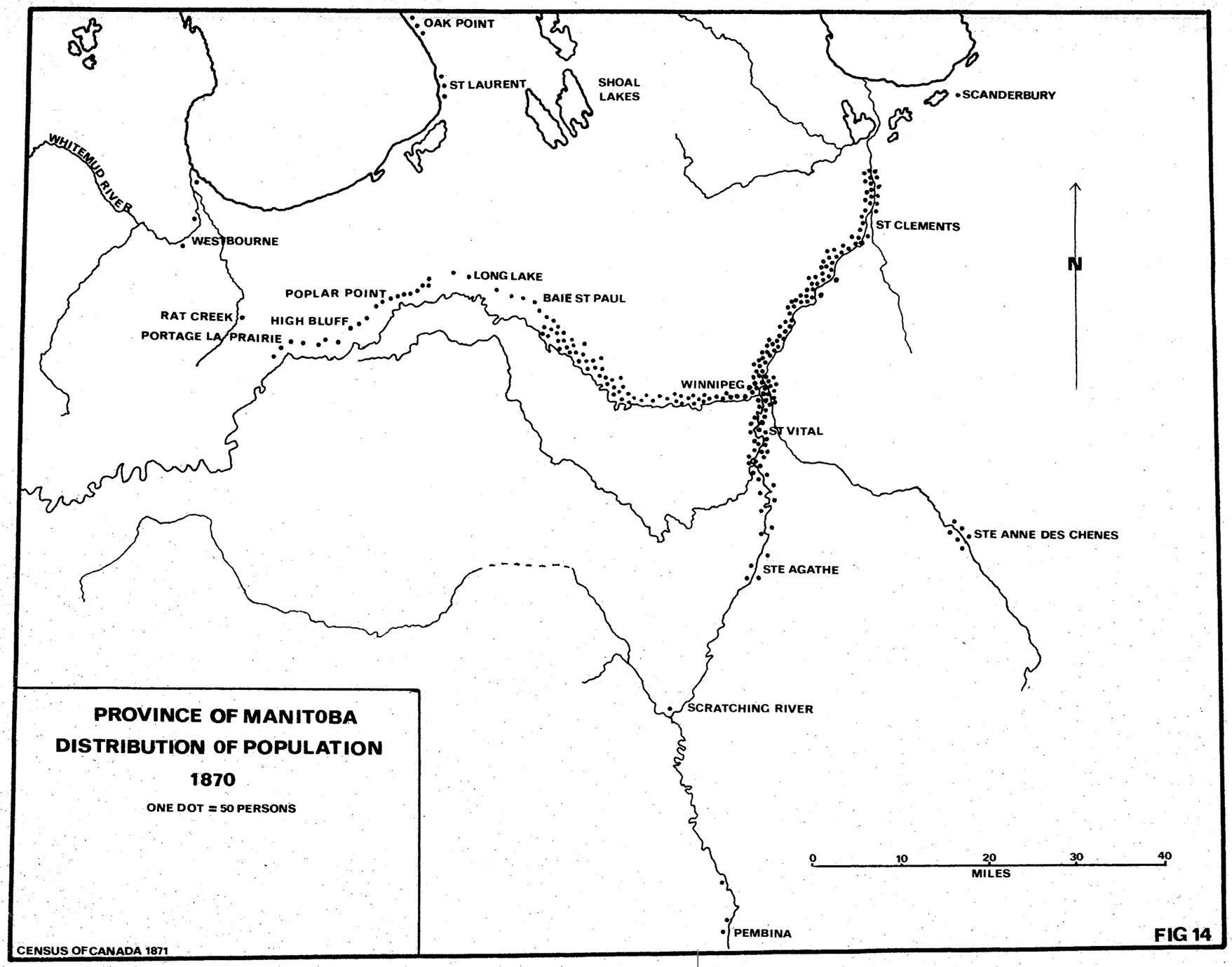
OAK POINT
ST LAURENT
SHOAL LAKES
SCANDERBURY
WHITEMUD RIVER
WESTBOURNE
ST CLEMENTS
N
LONG LAKE
POPLAR POINT
BAIE ST PAUL
RAT CREEK
HIGH BLUFF
PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE
WINNIPEG
ST VITAL
STE ANNE DES CHENES
STE AGATHE
SCRATCHING RIVER
PEMBINA
0 10 20 30 40
MILES
PROVINCE OF MANITOBA
DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION
1870
ONE DOT = 50 PERSONS
CENSUS OF CANADA 1871

FIG 14

migration from other parts of Rupert's Land had continued to account for most of the growth of population. Of the non-native population 422 had been born in Britain (248 Scots, 125 English and 49 Irish), 178 in Ontario, 166 in America, 111 in Quebec, 27 in "other countries", 10 in other British colonies, nine in France and seven did not give their place of birth. Each of these groups formed small minorities intermixed amongst the numerically preponderant French métis, English half-breed and Indian settlers. A local concentration of any of these minority groups gave a distinct character to that area, as for example, the Scots in Kildonan and the Canadians at the Portage.

Most of the Ontario-born and American-born people were relative newcomers in 1870. These two groups included the majority of recent immigrants into the Red River Valley. The Ontario-born of 1870 were widely scattered throughout the river parishes, but were most heavily concentrated at the newly colonised land of Portage la Prairie and in the Village of Winnipeg. The Canadian newspapermen and traders that came to Red River in 1859-1860 had been joined since 1862, but especially since 1867, by a few Ontario farmers.[1] As well, in 1861 some 20 men of the departing Canadian Rifles had been granted their release to allow them to take up permanent residence at Red River, their home since 1857.[2] Almost every

[1] Nor'-Wester, Aug. 30, 1862, Sept. 21, 1867, June 3, 1868, July 18, 1868, May 29, 1869. Mr. John McLean of Guelph seems to have been the first Ontario farmer to take up land at the settlement.

[2] Ibid., June 15, 1861, July 1, 1861.

year after 1862 saw a few Canadian individuals or families set out for the Red River Settlement, travelling by boat west from the head of Lake Superior or north by trail and river from St. Paul. The Ontarian movement into the colony should be seen as a small part of a much larger migration which was taking many Canadians in search of cheap, fertile, easily cleared land into the prairie country of the Upper Middle West of the United States.[1] Settlers were few until 1871, when the flow of Canadians into Manitoba began to quicken.[2] Until this migration the Canadian element at Red River had been almost wholly French and Catholic in character but during the 1860's the Ontario settlers added a new English-speaking, Protestant element to the colony's varied population. These newcomers were few in number but they were vociferous in political affairs, their opinions were echoed in the Nor'-Wester and they had an unsettling and disturbing effect on some of the older settlers, especially the métis of the Upper Settlement and St. François-Xavier, who correctly feared that they represented the beginnings of a land rush into their traditional hunting grounds and of a break up of the old established order at Red River.

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[1] W. L. Morton, Manitoba: A History (Toronto, 1957), p. 103.

[2] J. J. Talman, "Migration From Ontario to Manitoba in 1871", Papers and Records of the Ontario Historical Society, XLIII (1), 1951, pp. 35-42.

The American-born settlers were also widely scattered throughout the parishes of the colony, showing slight concentrations in St. François-Xavier, St. Charles and near the Forks in Winnipeg and St. John's. Many of them were retail traders out of Minnesota, who since the mid 1850's had been taking advantage of growing commerical links between St. Paul and Fort Garry.[1] The settlement also served as a refuge for deserting American soldiers escaping from the harsh military life of the frontier posts on the upper Missouri. In July 1868 the Nor'-Wester announced that

> "our population has been receiving considerable additions at the expences of Uncle Sam. From Fort Stevenson and Devils Lake [Fort Totten] we have had a continuous stream of 'boys in blue' some with mules and some on foot, while many more are expected. Bad treatment appears to be the cause of so many desertions."[2]

It is not known, however, if these men took up land or merely passed through Red River on their way elsewhere.

The population had continued to grow despite continuing emigration and a series of epidemics that raged in the settlement from 1864 to 1866. The earlier migration from Red River had consisted largely of dissatisfied and restless Scottish Presbyterians and English half-breeds heading for what they hoped would be a better way of life in the United States.

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[1]Nor'-Wester, April 2, 1862: "Of late years, not a few Americans have settled amongst us and are driving a paying business in our midst." Also Ibid., Aug. 30, 1862, Nov. 25, 1863.

[2]Ibid., July 18, 1868. See also L. M. Kane (ed.), Military Life in North Dakota. The Journal of Philippe Regis de Trobiand (St. Paul, 1951), p. 306.

However, by the 1850's there is evidence that the colony was beginning to lose considerable numbers of French métis and during the 1860's these people formed the main element amongst those leaving Red River. At first the Red River métis began to cross just over the international line heading for the small hunter settlements on the Pembina River. After leaving the Red River Colony in 1848, the Reverend G. A. Belcourt, the founder of Baie St. Paul, had begun another mission amongst the half-breeds collected at Pembina. Once established there, he attempted to persuade the Red River Settlement métis to join him at his new parish. Belcourt achieved some success, for in 1849 about 300 French métis abandoned their homes in St. François-Xavier and St. Boniface and moved to Pembina, the place which for some of them or their ancestors had been home until 1824.[1] Hind records that some 500 metis had departed the colony for the new settlement at St. Joseph, some 30 miles up the Pembina River[2], where Belcourt had established a new mission in 1850, after flooding had caused him to abandon the site near the mouth of that river.[3] The position of the St. Joseph settlement on the edge of the Pembina Mountains and close to the Dakota plains made it an admirable base

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[1] M. Giraud, Le Métis Canadien (Paris, 1945), pp. 840-841.

[2] H. Y. Hind, Narrative of the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition of 1857, and of the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition of 1858 (London, 1860), I, p. 176.

[3] J. M. Reardon, George Anthony Belcourt, Pioneer Catholic Missionary of the Northwest (St. Paul, 1955), p. 121; Giraud, Le Metis Canadien, p. 842.

and point of departure for the buffalo hunters. This new metis colony grew quickly and by 1856-1857 it had from eighty to one hundred buildings and a population of from 1,000 to 1,500.[1]

More significant were the beginnings of a migration of the Red River métis back into the western plains, from whence many of them had originally come to join the colony.[2] This movement first became evident during the 1860's but quickened after 1870 with the break up of the old order and the incorporation of the Red River Settlement into the new Province of Manitoba. The droughts and grasshopper plagues of the years 1863 to 1866 and the resulting poor harvests seem to have triggered off the first important exodus of the métis away from the Red River Valley. According to M. Giraud two groups of migrants left the Red River Colony for the Far West. The first group moved to the small métis settlements which had grown up around the Roman Catholic missions founded at several points on Western prairie rivers and lakes. The most populous of these were the settlements at St. Albert, Lake St. Anne and Lac la Biche, all in the Fort Edmonton area, and their populations were swollen by the arrival of numbers of Red River metis during the 1860's.[3] A second, larger group

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[1] A. C. Gluek, Minnesota and the Manifest Destiny of the Canadian Northwest (Toronto, 1965), p. 112. This would make it, along with St. François-Xavier, the most populous of the métis settlements.

[2] For a detailed discussion of this westward migration see, Giraud, Le Métis Canadien, Part 6, Chapter 3. There is an English translation of this chapter, entitled "Métis Settlement in the North-West Territories", in Saskatchewan History, VII (1), Winter 1954, pp. 1-16.

[3] Nor'-Wester, June 21, 1864, 25 métis families leaving the

of métis joined the winter-rovers (hivernants), those who lacked a permanent home but wandered over the plains, living as best they could, and almost completely dependent on hunting and fishing for subsistence.

The Red River Settlement also contributed some of its people to other small nuclei of settlement that were emerging west of the colony during the sixties. After the discoveries in 1861, the alluvial gold workings on the North Saskatchewan above Fort Edmonton acted as a magnet for a few Red River settlers.[1] Some left with the 200 or so Overlanders who passed through the settlement in 1862 and others left in 1863 and later years.[2] A number of Kildonan settlers formed the early nucleus of population which collected around the Presbyterian mission founded by the Reverend James Nisbet in 1866 on the North Saskatchewan.[3] This was the beginning of the Prince Albert Settlement, which was soon to be one of the most populous and thriving in the whole of the Northwest.

In the years 1864-1866 the settlement was struck by the most devastating epidemic since the plague year of 1846.

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colony for Lac la Biche. For an excellent study of one of these métis settlements see, D. Wayne Moodie, "The St. Albert Settlement: A Study in Historical Geography" (Unpublished Thesis of the University of Alberta, 1965).

[1] Nor'-Wester, July 1, 1861, July 15, 1861.

[2] M. S. Wade, The Overlanders of '62 (Victoria, 1931), pp. 31, 51, 53; Nor'-Wester, April 2, 1862, June 11, 1862, Aug. 19, 1863, Feb. 23, 1865, May 13, 1865, Oct. 2, 1865.

[3] Commercial, 16, 1898 (Winnipeg), p. 561; E. H. Oliver, "The Beginnings of White Settlement in North Saskatchewan", Trans-Actions of the Royal Society of Canada, XIX, 1925, p. 87.

all over this Settlement".[1] The epidemic continued into 1866 for in April an outbreak of whooping cough hit the colony,[2] but by the end of the year most of the sickness was over. Reasons for the epidemic were not hard to find; the consumption of bad river water and the poor diets of many colonists, the unhealthy atmosphere of dirty, ill-ventilated homes and the lack of proper care for the sick -- each played its part.[3] The shortage of food during the three bad crop years 1863-1865 and the resulting undernourishment no doubt weakened the resistance of the settlement to the attacks of various diseases.

Expansion of the Settled Area

The most extensive new settlement during the 1860's was taking place in the Portage district. The 1861 flood, which left much of the parishes of St. John and St. Paul under water, like the one in 1852, acted as a spur to a further outflow of people from the Lower Settlement to the empty lands at the Portage, looking for better and easier areas to farm.[4] By the spring of 1862 there were perhaps 200 persons settled in that area.[5] The spread of settlement was both east

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[1] Ibid., Dec. 1865.

[2] Ibid., April 1866.

[3] Nor'-Wester, Feb. 6, 1865, Feb. 23, 1865, Oct. 23, 1865.

[4] Ibid., Aug. 1, 1861; also Ibid., April 28, 1860.

[5] Ibid., May 28, 1862.

and west from the original node of population collected around St. Mary's Church. But the most spectacular developments were east of the Portage and by about 1860 the population was grouped in three nuclei: the first was at the Portage proper and to the east were the new settlements at High Bluff and Poplar Point. St. Margaret's Church was opened at High Bluff in the autumn of 1861[1] and in the following year St. Anne's at Poplar Point was completed to serve the growing population of that area.[2] These three small communities were known collectively as the Assiniboine Settlements and by 1863 they stretched for a distance of some 18 miles along the north side of the river.[3] In 1870 they had a combined total population of 995.

To the north west of the Portage was a tiny, isolated settlement of English half-breeds at the Westbourne Mission, but it did not see any significant growth until the 1870's. Only nine persons are recorded under Westbourne in the 1870 census[4] and in the following year the Manitoban reported that

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[1] Ibid., Oct. 15, 1861.

[2] Ibid., June 25, 1862, Oct. 22, 1862.

[3] Ibid., Feb. 9, 1862, "Local Sketches. Settlements in the West". This is the best contemporary description of the Portage settlements during their early development. The Canadian Charles Mair provides a useful account of these settlements as they were in 1869: W. L. Morton (ed.), Alexander Begg's Red River Journal and other Papers Relative to the Red River Resistance of 1869-1870 (Toronto, 1956), pp. 405-408.

[4] There were another 127 people scattered along the Whitemud River, but their exact location is not known. These were likely French métis, who like their kind at St. Laurent and Oak Point probably lived off the hunt and by fishing in Lake

"till last summer the settlement at this place [Westbourne] consisted of a few English half-breeds, some half dozen in number."[1] This community dated back to 1860 when the Reverend Henry George, son-in-law of Archdeacon Cockrane of the Portage, completed the construction of an Anglican mission at the first of the three crossings of the Whitemud River by the North Branch of the Saskatchewan Trail.[2] Because of this situation it was commonly known as the First Crossing[3] but its official name was meant to perpetuate the memory of John West, the first Protestant missionary in the Red River Colony.

The new settlements along the Assiniboine attracted a large proportion of the immigrants arriving at Red River during the 1860's, most of whom bypassed the crowded parishes on the Red and the lower Assiniboine that were finding it increasingly difficult to absorb their own natural increase of population, let alone newcomers. The Nor'-Wester in 1862, after commenting on "the almost universal tendency" for people to move from the old Red River settlements to the Portage, continued that "strangers that come to settle, always prefer that district to this."[4] With their populations of predominantly

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Manitoba. M. Giraud, Le Métis Canadien, p. 1135, notes that some 15 métis families had moved to the Whitemud River from the older settlements during the dry, grasshopper years of the 1860's.

[1] Manitoban, Sept. 30, 1871.

[2] Nor'-Wester, April 14, 1860, Dec. 17, 1860, Aug. 15, 1861.

[3] M. M. Fahrni and W. L. Morton, Third Crossing (Winnipeg, 1946), p. 5.

[4] Nor'-Wester, Oct. 22, 1862.

English half-breeds and their emphasis on farming as a means of livelihood the Portage settlements in many ways resembled the long established communities on the lower Red. However, their isolation from the main colony, their experiments in local self-government, and the significant proportion of Canadians from Ontario within their population, helped to make them distinctive and highly self conscious little communities. The Portage had received its first Canadian settlers in 1862 and most of the Ontario people coming to Red River in the sixties that were farmers, as distinct from traders, moved up to that area. The settlements filled up rapidly in the late 1860's, especially after 1867. In June 1869 the Nor'-Wester reported that "up to the Portage proper, nearly all the land on the banks of the river has been taken up",[1] and in the following October that "nearly all the fine country between the Portage and Rat Creek is already taken up".[2] Settlement had commenced at Rat Creek, sometimes called Muskrat Creek, a small northward flowing tributary of the Whitemud, in 1868, where the South Branch of the Saskatchewan Trail crossed it (later Burnside), seven miles north west of the Portage.[3] Despite the protests and threats of violence by the local Indians, four Canadian heads of families had laid claim to large blocks of rich prairie land fronting on the

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[1] Ibid., June 19, 1869.

[2] Ibid., Oct. 26, 1869.

[3] Canada, Sessional Papers, 1873, VI, No. 45; Morton, Begg's Red River Journal, p. 431.

tree-lined creek. By 1870 there were 39 persons living at the Rat Creek settlement. At this time there were few gaps in the line of settlement between Portage and Poplar Point, although below Poplar Point settlement was less contiguous. Over 400 persons, probably largely métis and Indians, scattered around the north bend of the Assiniboine in the poorly drained Long Lake-Baie St. Paul area, breached the gap between the new farming settlements at the Portage and the long established hunter settlements of the White Horse Plain.

The Portage settlements acquired a few commercial establishments to serve their expanding populations, although there was as yet nothing that could be called a village. An Hudson's Bay store, known as Sinclair's Post or the Portage Fort, was opened in 1860[1] but despite the considerable amounts of grain that must have been cultivated at the Portage, the first mill was not built until 1868.[2]

In the long established settlements on the Red and the lower Assiniboine, although there were small local gains, there was no marked advance of the settled area during these years. Most of the river front space was occupied and desirable lots with good hay and timber on them were by this time

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[1] Nor'-Wester, Feb. 9, 1863.

[2] Ibid., July 31, 1868. By 1869 there was a steam engine at High Bluff which worked "a saw mill and a grist mill alternately, but not as yet regularly". It is impossible to determine with any accuracy the scale of agricultural production at the Portage. A report in the Nor'-Wester for August 24, 1867 predicted that over 30,000 bushels of wheat would be produced there that season.

scarce. In 1863 when the Hudson's Bay Company decided to sell off some of its reserve land at Lower Fort, a veritable "land mania" seized the inhabitants of that neighbourhood, so anxious were they to acquire part of it. The rapid parish "making" activity of the 1850's was not repeated in the next decade. Apart from the two new parishes formed east of the Portage, the only other new church was that in the Mapleton district, opened in December 1861 and named St. Clement's.[2] This new parish was carved out of the lower part of St. Andrew's and represented a second church for that populous area rather than a further advance of the northern limits of close settlement on the Red. Everywhere in the areas of older settlement the progress of colonisation was less than what might be expected from the considerable increases of population. Migration to the Portage or other areas certainly siphoned off some of the increase but much of the growing population continued to be absorbed by further subdivision of the family lots amongst children. By 1870 repeated subdivision of land among coin-heritors had reduced many lots to comic proportions. It is known that in one part of St. Andrew's there were three families living on one piece of river frontage only three chains in width.[3] The problems involved in farming such uneconomic units of land can well be imagined.

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[1] Ibid., Nov. 25, 1863.

[2] Ibid., Dec. 14, 1861; Taylor, Journal, Dec. 1861.

[3] New Nation, Feb. 11, 1870, "Convention at Fort Garry"; Evidence of Mr. Donald Gunn.

Settlement during the 1860's remained almost wholly dispersed and tied closely to the rivers. Several factors were for a long time operative to prevent the emergence of a town or even a village. Firstly, the long lot system inevitably had considerable effect on community development. The open, linear pattern of this method of land division made functional nucleation difficult if not impossible. Beyond the parochial focus on the church as a general meeting place and centre of social and educational activity, nodal concentrations (i.e. craft or commercial activity) failed to develope within the elongated ribbons of river front settlement. Such craft trades as smithing, woodworking, building and grain milling were carried on by skilled individuals at their own dwellings and the income from such work seems to have been largely supplemental to that derived from agriculture. Secondly, the growth of a town is usually dependent on the development of trade. The economy of the Red River Colony was dominated by trading in furs, which until the Sayer Trial of 1849 at least, was a virtual monopoly of the Hudson's Bay Company, whose commercial activities were organised at and through Upper and Lower Fort Garry. It was to these two posts on the Red that the farmers of the colony carted their agricultural commodities and the hunters their "plains-provisions", which they traded in return for goods brought into Rupert's Land through York Factory or, after 1858, via St. Paul. All administrative and judicial functions within the settlement were

also concentrated at these same forts. The Council of Assiniboia usually met at the Upper Fort which also had the court house nearby and the Governor of Rupert's Land stayed at the Lower Fort when he was resident at Red River.

In 1870 the village of Winnipeg was the only truly nucleated settlement in the colony.[1] The beginnings of this nucleus of town settlement went back to the 1850's and perhaps earlier but not until 1862-1863 was it recognized as a village clustering. In April 1863 the Nor'-Wester had posed the problem of the possible future location of a town at the Red River Settlement and suggested the area about Upper Fort Garry, "because there is already the nucleus of a town there."[2] The village was known at first as McDermatown, after the Irish trader Andrew McDermot,[3] later as the town of Winnipeg, though the number of buildings hardly warranted that title. Most urban centres are dependent on the growth of trade for their development and Winnipeg was no exception. So long as the Hudson's Bay Company held a monopoly of trading activities in the Northwest, all commerce could be conducted through

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[1]For the origins and early growth of Winnipeg see H. A. Hossé, The Areal Growth and Functional Development of Winnipeg from 1870 to 1913 (Unpublished Thesis of the University of Manitoba, 1956).

[2]Nor'-Wester, April 13, 1863, "Our Future Capital".

[3]P.A.M., Ross Papers, James Ross to His Wife, June 5, 1865: "There have been six new houses erected in McDermotown since we left. This now quite a city." The stores of the Red River Settlement were largely, though not wholly collected near the Forks. The Nov. 9, 1864 issue of the Nor'-Wester, for example, refers to stores at Sturgeon Creek, White Horse Plain and at the Portage.

trading posts placed at various strategic sites. Urban development could only begin after this monopoly had been challenged and broken and commerce liberated so that independent traders could also take advantage of market possibilities. Winnipeg was a result of the free trade movement in Rupert's Land, which since about 1850 had led to a proliferation of merchants in the Red River country. It was also a product of the increasing volume and variety of international trade conducted between the Red River Colony and the expanding towns of Minnesota. The recent commercial outlets of Canadian and American merchants had been added to those of the older Red River free traders to form a small trading centre. Almost all these merchants chose to erect their stores and other commercial facilities close by the Forks in the open, poorly-drained area between the reserve land at the Upper Fort and the Point Douglas Common. It was a location advantageous for trade and commerce, which had seen a succession of trading centres since the eighteenth century; Forts Rouge, Gibraltar and Garry and lastly the town of Winnipeg. The Forks was at the centre of the most populous part of the settlement and at the meeting place of both trails and waterways, so that the merchants could use both land and water routes to move the goods involved in their trading activities. J. J. Hargrave, who arrived at Red River in 1861, refers to "its [Winnipeg's] central situation at the intersection of the great highway of the grain country on the Red River and that of the Fur

regions to the west, leading along the Assiniboine."[1]

Houses were as yet few and its dominant function was trade. The village was both a collecting centre for furs, buffalo robes and other items out of the Northwest and a distributing centre for an increasing variety of trade goods carted or boated up from St. Paul, Minnesota. Since the decline of the hazardous Nelson River route to York Factory in the late 1850's, the ties of most of the Winnipeg merchants had been to the south, to St. Paul and other smaller urban centres in Minnesota.[2] By 1870 the village had over 200 inhabitants and contained perhaps 30 buildings, scattered about on either side of the track leading north from the Forks, near its intersection with the Saskatchewan Trail from the west.[3] There were even signs that the reserve and common land around the Forks was beginning to be encroached upon by the expansion of this embryonic urban centre. As early as 1864 the Company were contemplating selling off some of their

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[1] J. J. Hargrave, Red River (Montreal, 1871), p. 307.

[2] For the organisation of the Red River trade see A. C. Gluek, "The Minnesota Route", Beaver, Spring 1956, pp. 44-50 and "The Fading Glory", Ibid., Winter 1957, pp. 50-55. The St. Paul route is described by H. C. Klassen, The Red River Settlement and the St. Paul Route 1859-70 (Unpublished Thesis of the University of Manitoba, 1963).

[3] Even at this time Winnipeg was distinguished by its cosmopolitan character. Besides those born in the colony, its population included persons born in Ontario, Scotland, England, Quebec, Ireland, America and France.

reserve land as town lots[1] and by about 1870 a number of building lots were being taken up on the Point Douglas Common.[2]

Throughout the 1860's the river bank continued to be almost the only acceptable site for settlement for all colonists, be they métis, Scots, English speaking half-breeds, Canadians or Americans. The Red River Colony remained a riverine settlement strung out along the main rivers and on the lower parts of some of their tributaries. Only at the Portage were there any signs that settlement was beginning to break away from the strong pull of the river's edge. A correspondent of the Nor'-Wester in 1863 recognised this when he wrote with something like astonishment that "a noticeable peculiarity in that whole district is that the people's houses are at a considerable distance from the river -- from half a mile to two or three miles. They use wells and care not a fig for that river to which we are here so fond of clinging."[3] This is the first reference to the use of ground water as distinct from surface water and these are likely the first wells dug on the Canadian prairies. Many of the farmsteads in the Portage settlements were sited alongside the Saskatchewan Trail, which in this section ran at some distance from the

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[1] Nor'-Wester, Feb. 5, 1864.

[2] Canada, Sessional Papers, 1873, Vol. 6, No. 45; Canada, Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Causes of the Difficulties in the North-West Territories in 1869-1870 (Ottawa, 1874), Evidence of J. S. Dennis, pp. 186-187.

[3] Nor'-Wester, Feb. 9, 1863; also Ibid., July 22, 1863.

river, avoiding the deep, thickly wooded points of the middle Assiniboine.[1] This did not constitute the beginnings of the colonisation of the open prairies but with its dependence on well-water and its alignment along a line of transportation other than the rivers it was the nearest approach to it at the Red River Colony.

Agriculture

Data concerning Red River farming from 1857 to 1870 are available but not in sufficient quantity to enable one to see clearly and in detail the significant lines of development. There is unfortunately a complete lack of quantitative information relating to agricultural affairs after 1856. The census of 1870-1871 was a population census only and did not include data on agriculture. The following account of agriculture relies heavily on two sources; the columns of the colony's first newspaper, the Nor'-Wester and the Samuel Taylor Journal. The Nor'-Wester began publication on December 28, 1859, and as befits a newspaper that was serving a partly agricultural community and which hoped to proclaim to the rest of the world the agricultural potential of the Red River Valley, it included, especially during its early years, information on all aspects of farming. It is particularly valuable as a record of the weather and crop conditions at the Red River Colony

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[1] Manitoban, Sept. 30, 1871: "...Poplar Point, High Bluff and the Portage where the houses are built on the road-side, and not as is usual, in other parts of the province, on the river bank", and New Nation, May 6, 1870: "In some places [at Poplar Point] they are settled 2 and 3 miles from the river, owing to the depth of the points."

during the sixties. Samuel Taylor's Journal runs from 1849 to May 1867. Until 1858 the journal's information is slight and there are many gaps in the record but after that year it is a careful and detailed day to day account of a farmer residing in the lower part of St. Andrew's parish. As such it provides many valuable insights into the way of life in one part of the settlement.

Agricultural Conditions During the Sixties

There are no valid statistics of the output of agriculture and this has had to be inferred largely from the columns of the Nor'-Wester and until 1867 from the comments on agricultural conditions in the Samuel Taylor Journal. The late 1850's were wet years and in general the crops were above average, though delay in ripening sometimes resulted in frost damage, as in 1859.[1] It was during the mid and late 1860's that the Red River cultivators experienced the greatest difficulties, the worst since the grasshopper years 1818-1821, and the dry years of the 1840's. The decade began well, for although there was much rain again in 1860, the crops were bountiful. "It is been a extra good crop through the whole Settlement", wrote Samuel Taylor, "perhaps the best that ever was in it."[2] In the wet spring of 1861 the colony was again

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[1] Nor'-Wester, Dec. 28, 1859.

[2] Taylor, Journal, Sept. 1860; also Nor'-Wester, Sept. 14, 1860.

subjected to partial flooding, the low-lying parishes around the Forks being most seriously affected, and the crops there were thin in the following autumn.[1] Even in those areas not directly damaged by flooding, the spring rains, which delayed the sowing of wheat in some places until the last week of May, reduced crop yields.[2] In the spring of 1862, a time of hunger, the Hudson's Bay Company had to advance amounts of seed grain from the stores maintained for such emergencies, to enable the flood victims to plant a full crop.[3]

From 1857 to 1861 the settlement had suffered from a surfeit of water, but in 1862 there began one of those cycles of dry years which have been so influential in determining the rate of progress of settlement and agriculture on the North American Great Plains. The lateness and dryness of the spring of 1862 prevented some of the maturing crops from coming to maturity but on the whole returns were satisfactory.[4] The drought of 1863 was more severe and prolonged; "the dryest Summer that any one can remember", was the opinion of Taylor.[5]

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[1] Nor'-Wester, June 1, 1861, Sept. 14, 1861.

[2] Taylor, Journal, Sept. 1861: "we built our wheat on the 21st I had only four hundred and eighty sheaves, owing to the rainy spring".

[3] Ibid., May 3, 1862: "many people there [Lower Fort] getting the loan of wheat & barley for seed"; also Nor'-Wester, April 16, 1862, Sept. 11, 1862 and J. J. Hargrave, Red River, p. 219.

[4] Nor'-Wester, April 30, 1862, July 9, 1862, Sept. 11, 1862.

[5] Taylor, Journal, July 1863; also Sept 1863: "we took up our potatoes the 24th & 25th only 9 bushels from 9 bushels of cut seed, owing to dry weather all Summer".

But the drought of 1863 was as nothing compared with the heat and drought that came in the summer of 1864. The Nor'-Wester described it as the "Heated Term" and explained that

> "the oldest inhabitant does not remember a summer of such extraordinary, long-continued heat as we have experienced this year in Assiniboia. One day of sultry, scorching, hot weather follows another...That this is the case will readily be believed when we say that the thermometers have indicated 87 to 90, 97, and even 100 degrees in the shade!"[1]

Grasshoppers also bedeviled the farmer, adding to the serious devastation of the drought. These insects had preyed upon the crops of the Assiniboine settlements in 1857 and 1858[2] and in June 1864 they reappeared in the Red River parishes for the first time since 1821.[3] They appeared annually for the rest of the decade. The combined effects of drought and grasshoppers drastically reduced crop yields in 1864 and to a lesser degree in 1865. Taylor writes in September 1864 that "there are some people that really have not one sheaf of wheat," but adds that "some never had a better crop". In the spring of 1864 the price of seed wheat had already reached 10 shillings per bushel and by the following spring had risen to 12 shillings. In 1865 the Company had to come to the rescue of needy again by loaning them some 800 bushels of seed.[4] The

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[1] Nor'-Wester, Aug. 18, 1864.

[2] Ibid., Dec. 28, 1859.

[3] Ibid., June 21, 1864, July 12, 1864.

[4] E. H. Oliver, The Canadian North-West: Its Early Development and Legislative Records (Ottawa, 1914), I, p. 552.

succession of dry years reduced the tempo of life at Red River. The back-country swamps and many of the prairie creeks dried out completely. As a result, the water mills were stilled and the millers could not grind much of the farmers' corn thus further intensifying the scarcity of flour.[1] The prairie fires ran far and often, hay was in very short supply, and the colony's livestock were even leaner and weaker than usual at spring time. Navigation on the Red, much reduced in volume, was interrupted for a while in 1864.[2] Weather conditions were somewhat better in the three summers that followed though 1865 was another dry season and each year the grasshoppers injured the settlers' crops.[3] However, in 1868 the combined effects of drought and grasshoppers prevented the maturing and harvesting of the spring seedings. It was a year of general and acute dearth.[4] The grain crops were a flat failure and some 6-7,000 bushels of potatoes and a number of squashes cultivated in the Assiniboine parishes were reported as the total returns on the year's plantings.[5] This critical situation was made much worse by the failure of the colony's other

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[1] Taylor, Journal, Sept. 1863: "the watermills are all dry and will not be able to grind this fall" and Ibid., May 1864: "this spring the watermills cannot grind for want of water".

[2] J. J. Hargrave, Red River, p. 337.

[3] Taylor, Journal, Oct. 1866: "there was a General thanksgiving all over the Settlement on the 3rd on account of the good crop." For further comments on the crops of 1866 and 1867 see J. J. Hargrave, Red River, pp. 399, 418-419.

[4] Nor'-Wester, Aug. 7, 1868, "Our Great Calamity".

[5] Ibid., Sept. 15, 1868.

sources of food, the buffalo hunts and the fall fisheries.[1] Even the rabbits disappeared, marking the most complete breakdown of the settlement's food supply since the hot, dry seasons of 1846 and 1847. The crops during the rest of the decade were an improvement but the grasshoppers were still a problem. It is against this background of depression in the agricultural sector of the Red River economy, with its resulting poverty, starvation, distress and occasional social discord, that the changes in farming must be seen.

Changes of the Late Fifties and Sixties

The further discussion of agriculture will put forward the evidence for change and improvement within the farming sector of the Red River economy. However, the reader should be cautioned that although signs of change can be presented in the absence of quantitative data it is impossible to determine how far the new methods had affected Red River agriculture by 1870.

Most of the changes taking place in the settlement's agriculture can be traced to the efforts of a few progressive and enterprising individuals amongst the Scottish and English half-breeds of the Lower Settlement. There had no doubt always been individual colonists who had practised superior methods and been willing to experiment but evidence of

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[1] Ibid., Nov. 14, 1868; J. J. Hargrave, Red River, p. 447; Oliver, Canadian North-West, I, p. 588. This was the first occasion during the decade that a crop failure had coincided with a disastrous hunt. At the time of earlier crop failures in the 1860's the resulting distress had been somewhat reduced

agricultural change can only be documented for the years after 1856. In 1850 "a number of intelligent individuals" had founded the Red River Agricultural Association aided by a small cash grant from the Assiniboia Council.[1] One of its avowed aims was to encourage the stall feeding of cattle but any achievements that might be attributed to this organisation have not been recorded. Some of the Canadian farmers entering the area in the 1860's brought new seed and livestock with them and would seem to have introduced a better style of farming into the Portage settlements. But the farmers of Red River were a conservative body as a whole and many of them kept obstinately to their traditional forms of husbandry, completely indifferent to but sometimes scornful of the signs of change around them. A majority of the settlers simply did not have a keen and consistent interest in agricultural affairs while the conscientious farmers amongst the colonists lacked a substantial commercial outlet that would have forced them to raise both the quantity and quality of their products.

If it is impossible to determine the extent of change at Red River, it is equally difficult to evaluate the influence of the literary material relating to agriculture available to the farmers at this time, in bringing about that

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by the completion of successful hunts by the French half-breeds. See the comments of the Nor'-Wester, Nov. 1, 1861, "Buffalo Hunt" and Nov. 9, 1864, "The Dry-Meat Hunt".

[1]Alexander Ross, The Red River Settlement (London, 1856), p. 389; Oliver, Canadian North-West, I, pp. 358-359.

change. The Nor'-Wester saw itself as the voice of innovation and improvement. By exposing the generally careless and unprogressive farming methods employed at Red River to the outside world, on several occasions it tried to shame the colonists into improving their ways. The Red River churchmen even got into the act, castigating their parishioners for their idleness and failure to reform.[1] The Nor'-Wester also opened its columns to local farmers who had ideas for improvements and innovations. Notable amongst these were Oliver Gowler of Headingley, Donald Gunn of St. Andrew's, and the newspaper's correspondent "Agricola". In several issues these men passed on information about crops and tillage. Sheep farming, summer fallowing, agricultural machinery, drainage of the prairies, the hay laws, winter fodder, prairie fires, subsoiling -- all merited discussion in either letters or editorial comment. This newspaper also reprinted articles on agricultural affairs cut from newspapers and farm journals printed elsewhere in North America or in Britain but most of the information they contained was inappropriate to the situation at Red River and the type of farming practised there.

The several aspects of agricultural change -- the changing distribution of cultivated land, the introduction of new varieties of cultivated plants, the innovations in farming methods and techniques, the introduction of new

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[1]See Nor'-Wester, Jan. 28, 1860. Report of a speech by Archdeacon Cockran to parishioners of St. John.

agricultural machinery, changing livestock farming, and the commercial aspects of agriculture -- each will be discussed in turn.

Arable:- The parish survey maps of the 1870's show that most of the settlement's arable land was still concentrated on the areas adjoining the main rivers. At the same time surveys were made of the outer two miles or "hay-privilege" beyond the rear boundaries of parishes. These latter surveys reveal that there had been a shift in land use and a spread of the arable beyond its original boundaries,[1] for there were in parts of the "hay-privilege" what were called "park lots" or "park claims", irregularly shaped islands of ground that varied from small plots of one or two acres up to blocks of 80 acres, though most of them were between two and eight acres.[2] These "park claims" were especially concentrated in the "hay-privileges" of St. Andrew's and St. Clement's, to the west of the lower Red. Some of these claims may have been merely fenced in hay areas used for the summer pasturing of livestock but there seems no doubt that most of them were patches of cultivated ground scattered throughout the "hay-privilege", an area that had previously served for pasture, wild hay and open range for grazing. The problem these "park lots" present is

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[1] These surveys are housed in the Lands Branch Department, Norquay Building, Winnipeg.

[2] H. E. Beresford, "Early Surveys in Manitoba", Papers Read Before the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba, Series III, No. 9, 1954, p. 13.

to determine when and why they were formed.

At the Select Committee of 1857, Governor Simpson had stated emphatically that "there has never been any cultivation [more than] a mile from the river."[1] When pressed about his reasons for believing that it was virtually impossible to cultivate the open prairie back from the streams, Simpson replied that it was based "upon experiment; trial. It has been tried and found not good, and discontinued".[2] Two main points emerge from Simpson's testimony on this matter. Firstly, it was his belief in 1857 that cultivation at the Red River Settlement was confined to a narrow mile-wide strip bordering the main streams. Secondly, sometime before 1857 there had been an attempt to cultivate the open prairie beyond the one mile limit, but for reasons not given, this experiment had proved a failure and had been discontinued. Simpson's evidence on agricultural matters is not always reliable but his statements here receive some support from other sources. The reports of the Hind and Palliser Expeditions, which include the most complete descriptions of the Red River Colony at this time, provide no hint of any cultivation beyond the immediate environs of the rivers. Indeed Hind puts even narrower limits to cultivation than Simpson -- up to one third of a mile. It would appear from the evidence at hand that it was some time

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[1]United Kingdom, Report From the Select Committee on the Hudson's Bay Company (London, 1857), p. 51.

[2]Ibid., p. 93.

later that the settlers began to plough in the "hay-privilege." The first reference to cultivation being undertaken at any distance from the rivers comes from 1860. Then in a description of the Lower Settlement, where it was pointed out the land "is cultivated to a much greater distance back from the west branch of the river....than elsewhere", "farms" are mentioned at a distance of four miles from the Red.[1] This would place them at the farther edge of the "hay-privilege". Although the evidence is scanty, it would suggest that the oldest "park lots" dated back to the years 1857-1860 and that they first appeared somewhere in the Lower Settlement.

The first tentative advance onto the prairie was a selective one, with the better drained lands the objects of first choice for cultivation. Both W. L. Morton and J. Warkentin have said that it was an expansion of the arable onto the slightly higher-lying, well drained prairie lying to the westward of the Lower Settlement, for the colonists had neither the will nor the knowledge to occupy the wet prairie and swamp which made up so much of the back-country of the Red River Valley.[2] The "hay-privilege" included areas of good drainage as well as those of poorer drainage, the proportion of each varying from one part of the colony to another, so that small and irregular fields usually resulted from the first attempts

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[1] Nor'-Wester, Sept. 14, 1860.

[2] W. L. Morton, "Agriculture in the Red River Colony", Canadian Historical Review, XXX, Dec. 1949. p. 318; J. Warkentin, "Manitoba Settlement Patterns", Papers Read Before the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba, Series III, No. 16, 1961, p. 65.

to farm the patches of better-drained prairie soil. They were fields without habitations. New families and incoming immigrants continued to erect their homes within the stream-side belts of timber and as close as possible to the river-side. The first expansion of arable farming into the "hay-privilege" was undertaken by the established river-front settlers and not by farmers squatting down behind the colonists in the Red River parishes.[1] This development had created a certain amount of friction amongst some neighbours for many farmers did not restrict their ploughing to the hay right directly behind their own lot but encroached at random into that of others, ignoring property boundaries.

The appearance of the "park-lots" in the "hay-privilege" would appear to have been a consequence of the continuing increase of population in the longer settled sections of the colony, especially in the thickly inhabited areas of the Lower Settlement. The recurrent subdivision of river lots had led to an extreme fragmentation of land holdings and greatly increased the pressure of population on water-front land. This process had also reduced the amount of superior-drained levee soil within the lots of individual families. Although there are no data on cultivated acreages at Red River at this time

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[1] New Nation, Feb. 11, 1870, Statement of Mr. D. Gunn: "I have had some considerable experience in the working of the narrow lots down our way [St. Andrew's] and have known cases where three families were settled on a three chain lot, all fronting on the river, but I have not known a case where a son settled behind a father".

it can be safely assumed that the rise in population had brought about a corresponding increase in the amount of tilled land. Part of the increase in the arable acreage can be accounted for by the further pushing back of the edge of the cultivated strip paralleling the rivers.[1] But at some point the plough was taken out beyond the long lots and used to break up some of the better drained areas in the "hay-privilege". It has already been demonstrated that even a very slight increase in population could upset the delicate balance between the production and consumption of foodstuffs at Red River. The arrival of the 100 men of the Royal Canadian Rifles in 1857 may have been sufficient to upset this equilibrium, for they added a non-agrarian element to the population that had to be fed from the fields of the local farmers.[2] For four years they provided an outlet for agricultural products that may have been enough to cause an extension of cultivation out into the "hay-privilege".[3] In this way the balance between the production and consumption of foodstuffs was restored. As far as can be discerned, the first occurrence of cultivation

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[1] Nor'-Wester, May 28, 1860: "We are happy to see fields widening and new substantial fence arising all over", and Ibid., April 28, 1865: "We believe a much larger breadth of land than is customary will be put under cultivation this year." If the 1.8 acres of arable per capita in 1856 had been maintained there should have been over 14,500 acres of cultivated land in Manitoba in 1870.

[2] The garrison of 1846-1848 had also upset this balance, though the drought of those years was a contributing factor. Then the balance was righted by imports of foodstuffs.

[3] The Nor'-Wester, Sept. 14, 1861, specifically mentions the farmers of St. Andrew's as being the main losers by the departure of the Royal Canadian Rifles in 1861.

outside the river lots coincided in time with the presence of the soldiers stationed at Lower Fort Garry. This is given added significance by the interesting concentration of the "park-lots" in the "hay-privilege" to the north and south of the Lower Fort, the commercial focus for the farmers of that area. It should also be added that this was also the period of the first investment of the Red River farmers in the more complicated agricultural implements, which reduced the effects of the scarcity of farm labour at the settlement and may have provided the means by which the colonists could expand their farming operations beyond the river-front strip.

Thus, from the slight documentation relating to this problem, it seems possible that the market for farm products represented by the military garrison at Lower Fort Garry provided the initial stimulus which resulted in the creation of the earliest "park-lots", sometime during the years 1857-1861. Once the feasibility of cultivation of the open prairies had been demonstrated most of these lots were maintained and new ones doubtless appeared even after the departure of the soldiers, for they were the means of feeding the growing population crowded into the river-side parishes. The "park-lots" were probably formed as part of the process of land clearance during the 1880's, brought about by the growth of population. In the long settled and densely populated areas of the colony the pressure of population had resulted in intensive subdivision of the arable lands. As population increased, cultivation

was extended to the more distant areas of well-drained soils in the "outer-two miles".

To summarise, there were three ways in which the rising population at Red River during the 1860's was incorporated into the established pattern of riverine settlement; subdivision of the older arable land; additional widening of the arable strip alongside the rivers; extension of cultivation out into the "hay-privilege."

Crops:- Experiments with new crops or with new varieties of old crops was another aspect of agricultural change. The possibility of introducing sugar beets into the colony, and of building a sugar factory was discussed in 1856[1] but there is no evidence of this crop ever being planted during the Red River period. The cultivation of 1½ bushels of rye by a settler in 1865 was welcomed as an interesting innovation.[2] Individual farmers were also experimenting with types of Indian corn seven to ten feet tall, which was much higher than the traditional type cultivated at Red River.[3] Yet these were very minor changes, interesting curiosities rather than important innovations, that did nothing to alter the basic pattern of cropping.

More significant was the introduction of improved, quicker maturing strains of wheat. By 1860 the Red River

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[1]P.A.M., Ross Papers, 166, William Ross to James Ross, Mar. 10, 1856.

[2]Nor'-Wester, Sept. 21, 1865.

[3]Ibid., Aug. 14, 1860, Aug. 28, 1860.

husbandmen were sowing a wide variety of spring wheats. The Nor'-Wester reported the cultivation of seven strains in the Lower Settlement and listed the most important of them as "Black Sea Wheat, English, Irish and Scotch, and a quality brought from Prairie du Chien."[1] The Prairie du Chien was the traditional strain and as already described the Black Sea variety first entered the colony during the dry years of the 1840's. In 1857 the Rev. Abraham Cowley of St. Peter's was experimenting with a variety of "Scotch wheat" which matured in 97 days.[2] Beyond this it is impossible to say just when and by whom these various varieties of seeds were first introduced into the community. No doubt some of the more enterprising settlers had packets of seed sent out from Britain or perhaps brought in from Minnesota and it seems likely that the Canadian farmers entering the colony during the 1860's brought supplies of seed grain with them from their home areas. Those seeds that proved successful were passed on to neighbours and friends and in this way the new strains were disseminated throughout the settlement. The new wheat types were said to mature in about ten days less than the Prairie du Chien and it seems certain that by at least the 1860's the Red River farmers were cultivating "wheats that would mature in about 100 days".[3] The cultivation of these various strains

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[1] Ibid., Sept. 14, 1860.

[2] Hind, Exploring Expedition, I, p. 203.

[3] W. L. Morton, "Agriculture in the Red River Colony", p. 314.

in the same ground complicated the harvest work, for when some wheat was ripe and ready for reaping, the slower maturing types were still green, though some farmers had learnt to keep different types separate.[1] Some of the early Canadian settlers at the Portage were also testing varieties of winter wheat, including the "Gennessee white wheat", but they presumably met with as little success as had the original Selkirk colonists over 40 years earlier.

Farming Methods:- The application of improved and more rational farming methods was another aspect of agricultural change at Red River. In a report to the Select Committee of 1857 Donald Gunn of St. Andrew's confessed that "some patches [of land] have been known to produce 20 successive crops of wheat and that without fallow or manure", but added that "in general" the farmers of Red River were practising a simple six or seven course rotation in which four or five years of wheat were followed by one year of barley and one year of fallow.[3] Hind explained the extraordinary success of the English farmer, Oliver Gowler of Headingley, one of the immigrants of 1837, as being due to the fact that he did not simply "grow wheat after wheat"[4] In its first number, the Nor'-Wester in a discussion of agricultural matters,

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[1] Nor'-Wester, April 14, 1860.

[2] Ibid., Aug. 30, 1862, Aug. 19, 1863.

[3] Donald Gunn, "Statistics of Red River", United Kingdom, Select Committee on Hudson's Bay Company, Appendix 7, p. 381.

[4] Hind, Exploring Expedition, I, p. 150.

explained that "sometimes, indeed, the ground was allowed to lie under fallow for a year; and at other seasons a rotation of crops was ventured on", but concluded that "these departures from the ordinary routine were rare".[1] Critics of Red River agriculture during the 1860's continued to reprimand the settlers for failing to utilise the refuse of their stables and barnyards. Yet there is some scattered evidence after 1856 that some farmers were manuring their land. The earliest references are to the manuring of garden crops. In June 1856 Samuel Taylor records, "I had 2½ loads of fine dung for our garden",[2] and Hind, again with reference to the master farmer Gowler, states that "whatever manure his yard and stables supplied he gave to green crops and the garden."[3] However, during July 1859 Samuel Taylor helped one of his neighbours for more than two days "to spread dung on his land", which suggests from the time spent on this work, that manure was being applied to the parks of at least one farmer.[4] Commenting in the following year on the successful farming operations at Lower Fort Garry under the able direction of a Mr. Lilly, the Nor'-Wester wrote that "he causes his land to be well manured in which respect he is at issue with the oldest inhabitants. They

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[1] Nor'-Wester, Dec. 28, 1859.

[2] Taylor, Journal, June 1856.

[3] Hind, Exploring Expedition, I, p. 150.

[4] Taylor, Journal, July 1859.

never seek to strengthen the soil in this fashion".[1] There were a number of lime burning establishments in St. Andrew's where limestone outcropped at the Rapids but their output was used as whitewash for the settlers' homes and for making plaster rather than for putting on the land. Only one reference to lime being applied to the land has been found. In May 1862 Taylor limed his wheat.[2]

There is, therefore, some evidence that by the late 1850's and early 1860's individual farmers were practising summer fallow, using simple crop rotations, and applying manure and perhaps lime to the land. But from the information available it is impossible to calculate just how far these improved methods had penetrated the colony's agriculture. The weight of evidence is certainly not enough to suggest that these first scattered improvements had caused any basic transformation of the general character of Red River farming or had significantly raised crop yields in the old arable areas. Indeed there is reason to believe that monocultural practices had resulted in a considerable deterioration of even the very fertile Red River Valley soils. It is said that "a vicious system of over-cropping" had reduced yields (crop not specified but probably wheat) from 35 or 40 bushels per acre to 18 or 20 bushels.[3] Weed infestation was another consequence of the prevalent unprogressive farming methods and

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[1] Nor'-Wester, Sept. 14, 1860.

[2] Taylor, Journal, May 12, 1862.

[3] Nor'-Wester, Dec. 28, 1859.

the deteriorated state of the arable land. Weeds had been a problem since the early years of settlement but by the 1860's the Canada thistle (cirsium arvense) and wild oats (avena fatua) had become especially troublesome.[1] Most lots were infested by these weeds and parks were being abandoned as they became choked by these two plants. There was even talk that the weed problem might lead to the abandonment of the whole settlement.[2] These weeds, harvested along with the grain, were giving Red River flour an unpleasant flavour.[3]

Agricultural Implements:- Until the mid 1850's Red River farming generally failed to reflect the changes and advancements being made in the nature and design of the tools and machinery of agriculture in other parts of North America. In the late 1850's and the 1860's some farmers were gradually changing their methods from those traditionally practised and adopting in their place those made available by the American industrial revolution and Yankee ingenuity. This was especially noticeable in the increased use of farm machinery at Red River. In terms of farm implements Red River farming in the 1860's was a mixture of the old and the new. By 1870 a number of settlers possessed reaping, threshing and winnowing machines as well as improved ploughs, though a still common method of

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[1] Ibid., Jan. 28, 1860: "we see whole fields with nothing in them but wild oats, whilst other fields are wholly overgrown with thistles."

[2] Ibid., Sept. 30, 1863, Mar. 31, 1864.

[3] Ibid., April 14, 1860.

reaping grain remained hand labour with scythe, sickle and cradle, the flail was still in use, and all the grain was still hand sown.

The first of these improved farm machines would appear to have been carted to the settlement from St. Paul in 1855. John Gunn wrote to James Ross, the son of Alexander Ross, in February 1855 that, "I think a great many will go from here to the States next spring for goods especially for threshing mills".[1] The Red River census of 1856 records a total of eight threshing machines, as well as two reapers and six winnowing mills. In that year a number of Scots made the trip to St. Paul, "principally for reapers", where nine were purchased at a cost of £35 each. Alexander Ross' verdict on their utility was that "in standing grain they do well, but not so in lying."[2] It is not known the amount of farm machinery the agricultural implement men at St. Paul sold to the farmers of Red River. One Minnesotan remembered that "there were about as many of them [Manny reapers] sold to Winnipeg people as we used in our state....settlers came down and they particularly wanted a machine that would cut hay, and used to buy Manny harvesters or reapers."[3] In 1860 the firm of J. C. Burbank of St. Paul was reported to have forwarded nearly

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[1]P.A.M., Ross Papers, John Gunn to James Ross, Feb. 7, 1855.

[2]P.A.M., Ross Papers, Alexander Ross to James Ross, Sept. 8, 1856.

[3]J. J. Hill, "History of Agriculture in Minnesota", Minn. Historical Collections, VIII, 1898, p. 278.

$5,000 worth of farm implements to Fort Garry, including 30 Manny reapers, 13 fanning mills and a number of ploughs and harrows.[1] In the same the Red River steamboat alone carried 12 threshing machines, 12 reapers, 14 fanning mills and 61 ploughs as well as unknown numbers of horse rakes, harrows, spades, forks, scythes, snaiths and hand rakes, north to the Red River Settlement.[2] The improved transportation that the steamboat had provided since 1859 undoubtedly stimulated the trade in agricultural implements. The editors of the Nor'-Wester constantly brought to the attention of their readers the benefits that would ensue from purchasing the new machinery and prominently displayed in their paper the advertisements of the warehouse of D. C. Jones at St. Paul, agents for the Albany Agricultural Works.[3] Most of the purchases of the implements were made by the Scottish, Orkneymen and English half-breed farmers of the Lower Settlement. The more conscientious and substantial farmers among these groups had long been frustrated by the scarcity and cost of farm labour, especially at haying and harvest time, and welcomed the opportunity to replace the scythe, sickle and flail with the new reapers and threshing machines. Ross, for one, had long been appalled by the shortage of farm labour. "Between the Co. and the

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[1] Nor'-Wester, July 28, 1860, quoting from St. Paul Pioneer and Democrat.

[2] Ibid., Oct. 15, 1860.

[3] Ibid., June 14, 1860, Sept. 14, 1861.

free traders, the tripping to the states, the boats for York, the wintering out, and the call for hands, that not a man or boy is to be got for love or money", he wrote in September 1856.[1] In the same letter, however, he noted that "the introducing of reaping and mowing machines from the states, in the scarcity of hands, may be looked upon as a blessing". Ross' sentiments here were probably representative of the feelings of the whole farming community. There were two important implications of the increasing mechanization of farming. Firstly, as implied by Ross, the new machines saved human labour and thus lessened the worry of obtaining enough hired help when the grain in the parks or the prairies grasses, were ready for cutting. Secondly, they speeded up the work of harvesting and thus reduced the danger of damage to the crops from early frosts, autumn rains, wind or migrating birds.[2]

Livestock:- The absence of any quantitative material relating to agriculture after 1856 makes it impossible to trace with any certainty the trends in the numbers of the different livestock. It is fairly safe to assume a continued increase in all types of livestock except sheep. The fall in sheep numbers was continuous and rapid. "Agricola", writing in the Nor'-Wester in 1860 asserted that "in our own day it [sheep rearing] has nearly gone out of fashion altogether."[3] Following the

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[1] P.A.M., Ross Papers, Alexander Ross to James Ross, Sept. 8, 1856. Also Alexander Ross, Red River Settlement (London, 1856), p. 394.

[2] Nor'-Wester, Sept. 14, 1861.

[3] Nor'-Wester, May 14, 1860; also Ibid., June 30, 1863.

the introduction of improved ploughs and other forms of agricultural machinery into the colony during the late 1850's and 1860's the faster moving and more mobile horse may have begun to replace the slower oxen in some of the farm work. The widespread introduction of farm machinery throughout much of North America had generally resulted in an increase in the numbers of horses at the expense of oxen. But the writer has found no direct evidence of such a replacement of the ox by the horse at Red River. Neither is there any evidence of any attempt to improve the quality of the settlement's animals. The poor hay crops of the drought years of the 1860's, as well as the continuing lack of care in breeding, inevitably resulted in a further deterioration in the quality and condition of the Red River stock. It has already been explained that the settlement's graziers were especially vulnerable to the effects of drought. The low rainfall of the years 1863, 1864 and 1865 caused an extreme shortage of fodder, resulting in an acute scarcity of hay at spring time and with the usual effect of reducing the weight and condition of the stock. In spring 1864 Samuel Taylor recorded in his journal that "a great many cattle dying for want of something to eat," and later added that "hay is scarce all over this year some had not one straw long ago."[1] The following March the same writer noted that "there is people down from up amongst the French and Scotch, in great need of hay; the price of hay is just now

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[1] Taylor, Journal, March and April, 1864.

6 shillings".[1] Things were just as bad in 1866; "there is a general complaint all over for hay, and none to get to buy anywhere," writes Taylor.[2] These conditions of scarcity inevitably raised mortality rates amongst all kinds of livestock during the mid 1860's. To add to the farmers' woes a cattle disease was reported in 1868 to be reducing the herds out along the Assiniboine.[3] The farm animals at Red River were hardy but little else can be said in their favour. The Nor'-Wester informed its readers in 1869 that "thorough breds in horses, cattle, sheep and pigs are much needed in the Settlement."[4] In the late 1860's some of the new settlers from Ontario were bringing a few purebred cattle with them into the Red River Colony.[5]

Commercial Aspects of Red River Farming

Agricultural change at Red River was limited by a number of factors, not least by the restricted market it was able to serve. The bulk of Red River farm produce continued to be consumed locally. Farming was unspecialised and uncommercial in character with each settler trying to produce most of his own needs and selling little.[6] Neighbours often exchanged

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[1] Ibid., March 1865.

[2] Ibid., March 1866; also March and April 1867: "bad times beginning for hay...no warm weather yet and hay little little... a great many people out of hay."

[3] Nor'-Wester, Sept. 15, 1868.

[4] Ibid., April 17, 1869.

[5] The Manitoban, Sept. 30, 1871.

[6] Nor'-Wester, Mar. 5, 1862: "Almost everybody is a producer,

a few commodities but Red River farmers did not normally cultivate things for other farmers. The majority grew little more than was necessary to supply the wants of their own households.

During the years 1857-1861 the presence of a detachment of the Royal Canadian Rifles at Fort Garry represented, for Red River, a significant body of non-producing consumers that swelled the local outlet for agricultural produce. The fur trade continued to provide the most regular market for farm products. The writer has no statistics for the volume of the purchases made by the Northern Department after 1845 but there are reasons to believe that sales to the Company fell away during the 1860's and possibly earlier. The Nor'-Wester commented in 1861 that

> "until recently, they purchased their supplies from the settlers, thus giving market for much of their produce. And although they still purchase a considerable quantity yearly, their own immense farm at Lower Fort Garry renders them in a great measure independent - so far independent, at least, as to dictate their own terms in purchasing."[1]

By the sixties the Company had what was almost certainly the largest and probably the most efficiently run farm in the whole settlement attached to the Lower Fort. They had 150 acres under wheat there in 1860 which was expected to yield 4,000 bushels[2] and five years later in 1865 the Company harvested 1,300 bushels of potatoes.[3] In addition, they had a large

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and, consequently, the number of non-producing consumers is very limited."

[1] Ibid., July 1, 1861.

[2] Ibid., Sept. 14, 1860.

[3] Taylor, Journal, Oct. 1865.

farm at Lane's Post on the Assiniboine. It is not known how significant these two farms were in supplying the fur trade but it seems likely that their produce provided an increasing proportion of the total annual shipments of foodstuffs from the Red River Settlement.

The role which the colony began to play as a supply base and point of departure for travellers taking the overland trail to the west may have perhaps partly made up for any loss of sales to the Company. The farmers at Red River discovered buyers among the members of the Palliser and Hind exploring expeditions of 1857-1858[1], the gold seekers of 1859 and 1862 on their way to the Fraser Valley[2] and parties of hunters and sight-seers bound for the Far West during the 1860's. Farmers also found a market in some years in supplying newcomers who proposed to settle at Red River. The departure of the Royal Canadian Rifles in 1861 depressed the local market, but in 1863 the farmers found an unexpected outlet for their products in the battalion of American troops stationed at Pembina following the Sioux uprising of 1862. The men of Hatch's Battalion were reported to be buying up the colony's surplus wheat, barley, oats, beef and pork and "paying excellent prices for it."[3] Small amounts of seed grain were exported

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[1] Nor'-Wester, Dec. 28, 1859.

[2] Ibid; Ibid; June 11, 1862; M. S. Wade, The Overlanders of '62, pp. 37-38.

[3] Nor'Wester, Aug. 19, 1863, Nov. 25, 1863, April 28, 1864.

from the settlement. In 1860 four sacks of seed wheat were shipped to a farmer at Monticello in Jones County, Iowa[1] and a bale spring wheat from Red River was listed as one of the many spring wheats being cultivated in Ohio.[2] This was the period of the great change over from winter wheat to spring wheat growing throughout much of the Middle West and American prairie farmers were testing many varieties of spring wheat, including the northern seed from Red River.[3] But these small shipments did not represent an export staple and not until 1876 did the farmers of the Red River Valley begin to export grain on a regular commercial basis.[4]

The sales of live animals to American frontier settlements continued, though interrupted for several years after the Sioux massacres of 1862. It did not resume again until 1865 when "for the first time in some years, cattle were sent down [to St. Paul] , and sold to great advantage, and...hardy Indian ponies found many purchasers at good prices."[5] Thereafter, as the frontier of settlement on the northern plains pushed forward again Red River livestock were driven down the trails to Sauk Center, Fort Abercrombie and other centres in

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[1] Ibid., Sept. 28, 1860.

[2] J. H. Klippart, The Wheat Plant: Its Origin, Culture, Growth, Development, Composition, Varieties, Diseases, Etc. Etc. (Cincinnati, 1860), p. 553.

[3] A. G. Bogue, From Prairie to Corn Belt (Chicago, 1963), p. 127.

[4] W. L. Morton, Manitoba: A History (Toronto, 1957), p. 182.

[5] Nor'-Wester, Sept. 21, 1865.

Minnesota.[1]

Local market, northern fur posts, American frontier settlements, scientific exploration parties, overlanders on their way to pan gold in the Fraser or the North Saskatchewan, and prairie farmers testing types of spring wheat -- the Red River farmers supplied them all in varying degrees. Yet none of these outlets was large enough or regular enough to effect a transformation in the character of the Red River agriculture. Fundamental changes in the settlement's farming would only come about after 1870 when new markets had been discovered and transportation links constructed to join Red River to a wider world. Indeed so small was the margin for sale produced by Red River farmers, that any rise in the local demand for foodstuffs, however small, was likely to create conditions of scarcity and high prices and when the crops were below average or worse, failed, shortages had to be relieved and famine avoided by bringing in supplies from Minnesota. In 1864, for the first time since 1847, grain was imported from the United States as a result of the lean harvest of that hot, dry, grasshopper-plagued year.[2] With no surplus grain in 1864 and with fears of another harvest failure in 1865, imports of flour and grain were again required in 1865 to alleviate any possible deficiency. Samuel Taylor noted early in July that "all the carts

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[1] P.A.M. Barber Papers, J. R. Harris to E. L. Barber, Fort Abercrombie, Mar. 19, 1866, L. E. Tubbs to E. L. Barber, Sauk Center, Mar. 15, 1868, C. Gayer to E. L. Barber, Sauk Center, Jan. 8, 1869.

[2] Nor'-Wester, June 21, 1864; Oliver, Canadian North-West, I, pp. 547, 550; J. J. Hargrave, Red River, p. 343.

came in from Georgetown this week with flour".[1] The crisis of 1868, when the colony was on the verge of starvation, required more urgent and drastic measures. Public subscriptions were opened in St. Paul, Ontario, and Britain and a Central Committee, with sub-committees in each of the settlement's parishes, was set up to organise the distribution of relief. At least 435 bushels of wheat and 385 barrels of flour were imported from Minnesota to see the settlers through the winter.[2]

Conclusions

This was the Red River Settlement during the 1860's. In some ways the changes already described had made it a different place in 1870 from what it had been ten years earlier. However, apart from the changing numbers and distribution of people, in the absence of quantitative data relating to agriculture, it has not been possible to determine the pattern of these changes with any precision. Some of the changes that had taken place must have been obvious to even a casual observer looking at the colony in 1870. The new reaping and threshing machines brought in from the United States now worked on the river lot farms and had speeded up the operations there. The appearance of newly ploughed blocks of land in parts of

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[1] Taylor, Journal, July 1865; also Nor'-Wester, May 13, 1865.

[2] Oliver, Canadian North-West, I, p. 590; Morton, Begg's Red River Journal, p. 480.

the "hay-priviledge" was a clear sign that at last cultivation was beginning to pull away from the immediate edge of the main rivers. The multiplication of farms and the breaking of new land at the Portage and adjoining areas was evidence of the expansion of the settled area and the increase in the tilled acreage. The most important single factor causing these changes had been the continued growth of the colony's population and the beginning of an influx of migrants from other parts of North America. Many of the more wealthy residents by 1870 lived in quite substantial, ornate stone houses and after repeated attempts to produce a good brick from the local clay, in 1868 the first brick building had been erected. New names had appeared on the map. High Bluff and Poplar Point were recent communities on the Assiniboine and along with the older centre at Portage la Prairie formed a new and significant growth point that all commentators agreed would soon be a large and prosperous settlement. The most important of the new names was that of Winnipeg, the small urban centre at the Forks that had grown up largely in response to the ever increasing volume of trade carried on between the colony and St. Paul, the commercial metropolis of the Upper Middle West to which Red River was increasingly bound during the sixties. This trade had given the residents of the colony many more of the comforts of living and done much to temper the harshness of life way beyond the frontier of close settlement and in a continental climate. All these changes had come about despite the grasshoppers, the

droughts, the flooding, the crop failures and the political turmoil connected with the Riel Rebellion.

Yet these changes were rather slight modifications or embellishments of the long established and the traditional than profound changes representing the beginnings of a new order. A majority of the people were still refugees of the fur trade and their children, English or French-speaking persons of mixed blood, many of whom were non-agricultural colonists committed to the semi-nomadic life of the hunt, and farming absorbed the total energies of only about one third of the total population. Much of the old way of life at Red River continued unchanged. It was still a riparian settlement; there was almost no settlement away from the waterways and most of the cultivated land ran in narrow if widening strips along the banks of the main rivers, still the major transportation arteries that linked the settlements together and the colony with the outside world. In 1870 furs were still by far the most important commercial item shipped from the area, carried every year down to St. Paul by the lengthening cart brigades, and the fur trade continued to draw into its ranks many of the most enterprising settlers. And each summer and fall the half-breed hunters left their settlements along the Red and the Assiniboine for the Missouri plains and the thrill of the buffalo hunt, just as they had done for almost half a century. There had been changes but much of the old pattern and rhythm of life at the Red River Settlement passed over into the newly created Province of Manitoba.

## CHAPTER XII

## SOME CONCLUSIONS

The Red River Colony provides an interesting example of an isolated agricultural settlement founded in the heart of a fur trading wilderness well beyond the agrarian frontier. It was an idealistic conception of Lord Selkirk who hoped to settle dispossedsed Scottish and Irish peasants on the North American plains. The Hudson's Bay Company supported Selkirk's plan, hoping that the colony would become a source of agricultural produce for their rapidly multiplying fur posts in theNorthwest.

From its tiny beginnings on Point Douglas in 1812, settlement at Assiniboia expanded upstream and downstream along the Red River and upstream along the Assiniboine River away from the centrally located Forks. The process of colonisation at Red River was a competition for sites with river frontage that ensured quick and easy access to the main rivers and the associated streamside belts of timber. Both settlement agriculture clung closely to the edges of the rivers within the distinctive long lot survey, a system of land division copied from that long employed in Quebec. Limitations of technology and the force of traditon, as well as the distribution of woodland and light, well drained levee soils within the RedRiver lowland limited settlement to a narrow band along the main rivers. The long, thin, strip farms of of the settlers, all fronting

on the rivers, cut across two vegetation associations, the narrow belt of hardwood timber along the river and a wider segment of the prairie grassland behind. Settlement spread out along the line of contact between the forest and the prairie, for each of these plant associations was essential to the existence of the colony, the former supplying building materials and fuel, the latter wild hay and grazing for livestock.

By 1870, when the population of the colony had risen to over 12,000, the settlement straggled for about 60 miles along the Red and for a similar distance along the north bank of the Assiniboine as far as Portage la Prairie and Rat Creek. Since about 1860 overcrowding in the older areas of settlement resulting largely from the repeated subdivision of river lots amongst offspring had brought about the spread of cultivation away from the immediate vicinity of the waterways into the open prairie beyond. But nowhere had there been sufficient pressure on river front space to modify the riparian nature of the colony or even to bring about a second range of settlement. The growth of the Portage settlements and the migration to them of people from other parts of the colony, helped to relieve the high population densities along the lower Red after 1850.

Much of the distinctive character of the riparian Red River Settlement resulted from the existence within it of disparate peoples and cultures; whites, half- breeds and Indians, farmers and hunter- fishermen, occupied different

sections of the riverfront. Two very different ways of life, one based on sedentary agriculture, the other on the semi-nomadic buffalo hunt, made up the total economic life of the small community. The crop failures of the early years had forced the colony to turn to the buffalo hunt of the plains and the fisheries of lake and river for a large part of its food, linking itself by necessity to the nomadic economy of the fur trade and the prairie, from which in later years it was never able to withdraw. It was the uncertainty of both agriculture and the hunt that created and maintained the basic dichotomy of the Red River economy and made the settlement dependent on the produce of both river lot farms and prairie hunting lands for its sustenance. Agriculture and the hunt existed in close interdependence. When the crops of the farmer of the Lower Settlement and St. Boniface failed, the spoils of the hunt, provided largely by the métis people of the Upper Settlement and St. François- Xavier, had to suffice for colonial needs. On the other hand following an unsuccessful trip to the plains, the farmers had to help out the needy hunters, for most of whom farming had little attraction.

Farming was commonly productive if slovenly. The market for farm produce was small and internal, largely centred on the regular and uncritical demands of the fur trade. Of the Red River censuses only that of 1856 lent itself to the study of the distributional aspects of agriculture. The absence

of such data on a parish basis for other years prevented a detailed examination of the distributional change of such phenomena. Although there is no information relating to the acreage or production of crops, wheat, barley and potatoes almost certainly dominated Red River crop farming. The distribution of crop land, expressed as the amount of arable per capita, was a good indicator of the levels of farming activity within the settlement. The concentration of arable land was greatest at the centre of the colony in St. John's and St. Paul's and lowest at its extremities in St. François-Xavier, St. Norbert and St. Peter. The settlement was also home to a large livestock population, supported almost wholly by a carefully organised haying economy, based on the gathering of wild prairie grasses. The per capita concentration of cattle and sheep was greatest in the Lower Settlement and further emphasised the greater attention to agriculture in that sector of the colony. Amongst the maps showing the pattern of livestock distribution, that of the ratio of horses to oxen was especially revealing of the essential regional contrasts within the colony. The high number of horses in the métis settlements of the White Horse Plain and the Upper Settlement was a good indicator of the very low level of agricultural activity in those areas. The numbers of oxen, the basic animal for farm work, were greatest in the areas where the level of farming was highest, that is in the Lower Settlement. The patterns of land use and of animal distribution pointed up the internal contrasts existing within the small Red River Colony, and were used in the drawing of a map show-

ing the socio- economic areas of the settlement. St. John's and St. Paul's stand out as the agricultural heartland. The parishes at the extremities of the colony, St. François-Xavier St. Norbert and St. Peter, are marked by the emphasis on hunting in their economies, and were termed the hunting- fishing fringe. The parishes that fell between these extremes were called the intermediate areas.

The reasons for these sharp internal contrasts, in the absence of any marked environmental variations from one part of the settlement to another, are to be found in the varying cultural origins and attitudes of the different groups of colonists. Of all the major groups collected at Red River, it was the Highland Scots who were most fully committed to farming as a way of life. Most of the needs of the French métis and full blooded Indians were provided by the hunt and the fisheries.

Much of what was the heart of the Red River Colony lies submerged beneath the brick and concrete of Greater Winnipeg, but certain of its distinctive aspects are still preserved in the present landscape of Manitoba. In particular the long, narrow fields of the river fronting lots stand out with great clarity, enveloped as they are by the square patterns of later township and sectional surveys. The river lot areas of Manitoba are a constant reminder of an earlier way of life and define with some accuracy the riverine, farmer- hunter settlements of the early residents of the Red River Valley.

## APPENDIX A

### Sources For Table 1

1. G. L. Nute (ed.), Documents Relating to Northwest Missions, 1815 - 1827 (St. Paul, 1942), pp. 430-431, 434; M. Giraud, Le Métis Canadien (Paris, 1945), pp. 638-639.

2. A. Ross, Red River Settlement (London, 1856), Chapter IX; S.P., 27, p. 8451, D. McKenzie to Colvile, August 1826; G. L. Nute (ed.), Northwest Missions, p. 443.

3. S.P., 16, p. 5291, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, Aug. 15, 1818; Ibid., 16, p. 5336, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, Aug. 30, 1818; Ibid., 16, p. 5328 Capt. Matthey to Selkirk, Aug. 30, 1818; Ibid., 16, p. 5368, Capt. Matthey to Selkirk, Sept. 12, 1818; Ibid., 16, p. 5385, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, Sept. 13, 1818.

4. Ibid., 19, p. 6389, W. Laidlaw to Selkirk, July 1819; Ibid., 19, p. 6414, Capt. Matthey to Selkirk, Aug. 2, 1819; Ibid., 19, p. 6541, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, Nov. 8, 1819.

5. Ibid., 21, p. 6949, Alex. Macdonell to Colvile, Aug. 8, 1820; Ibid., 21, p. 6968, J. Pritchard to Colvile, Aug. 29, 1820.

6. Ibid., 23, p. 7302, Alex. Macdonell to Colvile, June 10, 1821; Ibid., 23, p. 7400, Alex Macdonell to Simpson, June 12, 1821; Ibid., 23, p. 7360, J. Pritchard to Colvile, Aug. 31, 1821; Ibid., 23, p. 7422, Alex. Macdonell to Colvile, Sept. 13, 1821.

7. Ibid., 3, p. 787, Miles Macdonell to Selkirk, July 17, 1813; Ibid., 4, p. 1183, Miles Macdonell to Selkirk, July 25, 1814.

8. Ibid., 69, pp. 18,435 - 18,448, Peter Fidler's Journal at the Red River Settlement, July 22, 1814 - July 25, 1815.

9. Ibid., 12, p. 4195, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, Nov. 10, 1817; Ibid., 12, p. 4290, W. Laidlaw to Selkirk, Dec. 28, 1817; Ibid., 12, p. 4306, F. de Graffenried to Selkirk, Jan. 1, 1818; Ibid., 15, p. 5189, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, July 20, 1818; Ibid., 15, p. 5209, W. Laidlaw to Selkirk, July 22, 1818.

10. Ibid., 19, p. 6414, Capt. Matthey to Selkirk, Aug. 2, 1819.

11. Ibid., 26, p. 8353, R. P. Pelly to Colvile, Oct. 23, 1824.

12. M. Giraud, Le Métis Canadien, p. 640, Note 6.

13. S.P., 63, p. 16,824, Miles Macdonell's Journal, May 5, 1813; Ibid., 3, p. 853, W. Auld to A. Wedderburn, Sept. 16, 1813.

14. As for Number 7.

15. As for Number 9.

16. S.P., 24, p. 7740, A. Bulger to Colvile, Aug. 11, 1822; Ibid., 24, p. 7743, A. Bulger to Colvile, Sept. 1, 1822.

17. Ibid., 26, p. 8282, R. P. Pelly to Colvile, June 7, 1824; G. L. Nute (ed.), Northwest Missions, pp. 407, 419.

18. Ibid., pp. 430-431, 434; M. Giraud, Le Métis Canadien, pp. 638-639; Ross, Red River Settlement, p. 97.

19. As for Number 2.

## APPENDIX B

### Sources For Table 2

| | |
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| 1813 | Ibid., 63, pp. 16,824-16,838, Miles Macdonell's Journal, May 8 - June 22, 1813;<br>Ibid., 4, p. 1183, Miles Macdonell to Selkirk, July 25, 1814. |
| 1814 | Ibid., 4, p. 1198, Miles Macdonell to Selkirk, July 25, 1814;<br>Ibid., 63, pp. 16,897 - 16,900, Miles Macdonell's Journal, May 10 - May 21, 1814;<br>Ibid., 69, pp. 18,435 - 18,448, Peter Fidler's Journal, Aug. 20 - Sept. 29, 1814;<br>Ibid., 63, p. 17,108, Miles Macdonell to Selkirk, June 20, 1815. |
| 1815 | Ibid., 69, pp. 18,459 - 18,466, Peter Fidler's Journal, May 19 - June 1, 1815;<br>Ibid., 6, p. 1813, Colvile to Hudson's Bay Company, Dec. 5, 1815;<br>Ibid., 78, p. 20,264, List of Alex. McLean's Crops (1815). |
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| 1817 | Ibid., 64, pp. 17,261 - 17,292, Miles Macdonell's Journal, May 10 - June 20, 1817. |
| 1818 | Ibid., 15, p. 5189, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, July 20, 1818;<br>Ibid., 15, p. 5219, W. Laidlaw to Selkirk, July 22, 1818;<br>Ibid., 16, p. 5368, Capt. Matthey to Selkirk, Sept. 12, 1818. |
| 1819 | Ibid., 19, p. 6558, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, Nov. 8, 1819. |
| 1820 | Ibid., 21, p. 6948, Alex. Macdonell to Colvile, Aug. 8, 1820. |
| 1821 | Ibid., 23, p. 7302, Alex. Macdonell to Colvile, June 10, 1821;<br>Ibid., 23, p. 7422, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, Sept. 13, 1821. |

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|---|---|
| 1822 | Ibid., 24, p. 7673, Abstract of Settlers, Cattle and Seed, Red River Settlement, Spring 1822. |
| 1823 )<br>1824 )<br>1825 )<br>1826 ) | Planting of Major Crops Assumed. |

## APPENDIX C

### Sources For Table 3

| | |
|---|---|
| 1814 | S.P., 63, p. 17,108, Miles Macdonell to Selkirk June 20, 1815. |
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| 1817 | Ibid., 12, p. 4195, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, Nov. 10, 1817. |
| | Ibid., 15, Alex. Macdonell to Selkirk, July 20 1818. |
| 1820 | Ibid., 21, Alex. Macdonell to Colvile, Aug. 8, 1820. |
| 1822 | Ibid., 24, p. 7743, A. Bulger to Colvile, Sept. 1, 1822. |

## ABBREVIATIONS

In the sources cited in the thesis and in the bibliography the following abbreviations have been used.

A. A. A. G. - Annals of the Association of American Geographers.

C. G. J. - Canadian Geographical Journal.

C. H. R. - Canadian Historical Review.

Col. St. Hist. Soc. N. Dak. - Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota.

G. R. - Geographical Review.

Minn. Hist. Col. - Minnesota Historical Collections

Miss. Valley Hist. Assoc. Proc. - Proceedings of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association.

M. V. H. R. - Mississippi Valley Historical Review.

N. D. H. Q. - North Dakota Historical Quarterly.

P. A. M. - Public Archives of Manitoba.

S. P. - Selkirk Papers.

T. R. S. C. - Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada.

Trans. of the Hist. and Scientific Soc. of Manitoba - Transactions of the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba.

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