

WEAVING EDUCATION IN MANITOBA IN THE 1940'S

by

Janet A. Hoskins

A thesis  
presented to the University of Manitoba  
in partial fulfillment of the  
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in  
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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to discuss as fully as possible the handweaving education of Manitoba in the 1940's. Two relatively extensive projects in weaving education were begun and ended in the province during this decade. It was hypothesized that there were identifiable social causes for the increase in the local interest and activity in handweaving, as manifested primarily by these projects, and the decline of this interest. In examining this hypothesis, a wide variety of sources were investigated including numerous archives, contemporary publications, and the personal records of participants in the two projects. A number of these participants were also interviewed.

The first project was organized by a French language, Roman Catholic adult education association (La Société d'Enseignement Postsecondaire du Manitoba) and the second was sponsored by a prairie grain company (Searle Grain Company Ltd.). Both of these undertakings had strong ties with similar endeavours begun in Quebec in the 1930's. The origins, operation and demise of La Société's and Searle Grain's programs were recorded and analyzed with respect to the stated hypothesis. In order to provide the proper perspective for this analysis, the textile traditions in Manitoba (including

attempts at commercial textile production, such as the Buffalo Wool Company) were investigated and discussed, as was the Manitoba handweaving of the 1950's.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0.1 Objective

The purpose of this thesis is to discuss as fully as possible the handweaving education of Manitoba in the 1940's. The approach is primarily narrative, in its attempt to compile material from a variety of different sources into an organized documentation of the local handweaving of this particular time period. The relationship between the level of interest in handweaving and some of the economic and social aspects of the 1940's in Manitoba is considered, as well as the textile traditions present before this time, and the handweaving activity which followed.

#### 1.0.2 Rationale

Handweaving is currently enjoying a considerable renewal of activity, as exemplified by the recent introduction of several successful journals in the field,<sup>1</sup> the formation of specialist sub-groups such as the Complex Weavers' study group of North America, and the recognition accorded weavers

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<sup>1</sup> Interweave, (Colorado: Interweave Press, Inc.) and The Weaver's Journal, (Colorado: Colorado Fiber Centre, Inc.)

<sup>2</sup> Silve Tune Wilson, "SS&D Interview: Peter Collingwood",

such as Peter Collingwood<sup>2</sup> and Ted Hallman.<sup>3</sup> It is valuable for individual handweavers to have some basis for comparison in assessing their own efforts, but the work of contemporary weavers can only be partially evaluated in terms of current weaving. Additional perspective must be gained through the study of past weaving production, traditions and methods of instruction.

Two rather extensive projects in weaving education were carried out in Manitoba in the 1940's. The first project was initiated by la Société d'Enseignement Postsecondaire du Manitoba. This organization was a Manitoba branch of la Société d'Enseignement Postsecondaire in Quebec, and was headed by a St. Boniface priest, Father Antoine D'Eschambault. The teaching of weaving by this organization actually began in 1941 and the instructors were mainly drawn from the Order of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, a Roman Catholic teaching order. The sisters of this order taught weaving in rural communities, as well as in Winnipeg, and informed sources<sup>4</sup> say that in excess of 500 women were instructed in this program.

A number of sources of archival material from this project are still available. La Société published a bulletin which regularly reported on the progress of the weaving

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Shuttle, Spindle and Dye-pot, Vol. X, No. 4, 4, Fall, 1979.

<sup>2</sup> "Sunrise Titles and Twills", Interweave, Vol. VI, No. 1, 33, Winter 1980-81.

<sup>4</sup> SEP (Société d'Enseignement Postsecondaire), St. Boniface.

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courses, and brief descriptions of these courses also appeared in the records of some of the parishes where this instruction was given. Some of the women who were taught to weave by La Société's instructors have retained their sample books and these provide valuable insight into the nature of the instruction.

The second project was initiated by the Searle Grain Company in 1941. The company taught four instructors to spin and weave and then sent them to rural communities in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta to offer instruction in these activities. The Searle Grain Company sold looms, yarns and other weaving supplies from its Head Office in Winnipeg, and also published a regular newsletter. The purpose of this project appears to have been philanthropic in its attempt to assist the wives of the grain farmers, and was not primarily concerned with developing the art or craft of handweaving. This is in contrast to the Arts and Crafts Movement in Great Britain<sup>5</sup> and the "Craftsman Style" in the United States, where the major emphasis was on "sound workmanship, honest use of materials, and simple, forthright design".<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Gillian Naylor, The Arts and Crafts Movement: A Study of its Sources, Ideals and Influences on Design Theory, 2nd ed., (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1980), 7.

<sup>6</sup> Shirley E. Held, Weaving: A Handbook of the Fiber Arts, 2nd. ed., (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978), 70.

The interest in handweaving displayed in these two large projects was also present in a number of other areas such as the Crafts Guild of Manitoba and the local chapter of the Guild of Canadian Weavers. As such, this period in Manitoba history represents a time of significant contribution to the handweaving traditions of the province. There are still people living who were active weavers during the 1940's, but they are aging and consequently their notes and scrap books are being lost and broken up. Handweaving in Manitoba, being a day to day type of activity, has not been given a high priority in terms of archival collecting, with the result that records and documentation become harder to find as time passes. It was essential that this study be conducted now, while the contemporary resources were still available.

### 1.0.3 Hypothesis

The hypothesis that was formulated for this study was that there existed identifiable social causes for the increased interest and activity in handweaving in Manitoba in the 1940's and the decline of this interest in the 1950's.

### 1.0.4 Sources of Data

In the course of this study, a wide variety of sources were investigated. Considerable archival material was located in the holdings of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, the Public Archives

of Canada, the Department of Education for the Province of Manitoba, the St. Boniface Historical Society, the Grey Nuns, as well as St. Joseph's Academy and other convents of the order of The Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. The Winnipeg Free Press and Tribune from this time period provided additional material, as did the periodical "National Home Monthly". Brochures and bulletins published by both la Société d'Enseignement Postsecondaire and the Searle Grain Company also contained much pertinent information.

Many private individuals were contacted and interviewed, and they provided considerable information, as well as useful insights into some of the documentation. These people included Laura McHugh, a 1940's Manitoba weaver; Dorothy Rankine, the consultant to the Searle Grain project; Germaine Chaput, an instructor for Searle Grain; Sister Maximilla, an instructor for la Société d'Enseignement Postsecondaire; several other sisters who were associated with the French project; and Robert Leclerc, the president of the loom manufacturing company which supplied looms to both of these projects. These people most kindly donated their time to help document these unique movements in Manitoba history.

#### **1.0.5 Chapter Outline**

The significance of the amount of handweaving activity in Manitoba in the 1940's can only be clearly understood by examining and placing in context the preceding and following

Manitoba weaving traditions. The period before 1940 will be discussed in Chapter II, in three sections. The first will consist of a brief survey of the level of textile technology which had been developed by the time that the Manitoba area was settled. The second section will cover the fifty years from the first colonies in the area until its inception as a Canadian province in 1870, and the third section will discuss the period from 1870 to 1940. Chapter III will briefly consider the factors which influenced and affected the transition from the pre-1940 situation to that of the 1940's. The two weaving education projects will be discussed in detail: that initiated by la Société d'Enseignement Postsecondaire du Manitoba in Chapter IV and the Searle Grain project in Chapter V. A discussion of the contemporary 1940's weaving activity, as well as the trends that handweaving followed after this time, will be found in Chapter VI, and the final chapter, Chapter VII, will summarize the conclusions of this study.

## Chapter II

### EARLY TEXTILE PRODUCTION IN MANITOBA

#### 2.0.6 Introduction

In order to appreciate fully the degree of interest in handweaving, and the scope of weaving education in Manitoba in the 1940's, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the degree of importance accorded to weaving in Manitoba before this time.

#### 2.0.7 Prologue

The Manitoba area was settled by Europeans relatively recently<sup>7</sup> and, although a number of settlements in the Manitoba area, such as York Factory, Fort Prince of Wales and Norway House date back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the first permanent agricultural colony was not established until 1812, at Point Douglas. By this time textile manufacture was becoming industrialized in Europe. The fly shuttle had been invented by J. Kay in 1733 with the result that "the output of five or six spinsters was needed to

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<sup>7</sup> There was some native textile production in the area before this European immigration, (Andrew Hunter Whiteford, "Fabrics of the North American Indians: Techniques and Designs", Textile Collections of the World, Volume 1, United States and Canada, New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1976, 152.) but the textiles produced by this group will not form part of the current study.

keep one loom working".<sup>8</sup> As a direct consequence of this, development of more efficient spinning devices was encouraged [officially encouraged by "prizes" awarded by groups such as the Society for the Encouragement of Arts].<sup>9</sup> J. Hargreaves obtained a patent for his spinning jenny in 1770, some twenty years after this machine was first designed. S. Crompton developed the spinning mule in 1779 and W. Kelly added power to the mule by 1790.<sup>10</sup> Looms received further attention during this period and J. Watt's invention of the steam engine in 1785<sup>11</sup> made possible the introduction of power looms by W. Cartwright in 1787 and John Austin in 1796 - 1806.<sup>12</sup> The ability to weave very complex and highly patterned textiles was also mechanized by this time, as a result of Joseph Marie Jacquard's invention, in 1806,<sup>13</sup> of the device which bears his name.

In this early part of the nineteenth century, textile production was also well established in the United States. Initially "hand looms were an integral part of virtually

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<sup>8</sup> Harold Catling, The Spinning Mule, (Newton Abbot: David & Charles (Publishers) Limited, 1970), 25.

<sup>9</sup> Catling, op. cit., 25.

<sup>10</sup> Catling, op. cit., 42.

<sup>11</sup> Encyclopedia of Textiles, ed. by the editors of American Fabrics Magazine, 1972, II, 285.

<sup>12</sup> Marceline Szpakowski, "Loom Mounted Devices and their Application", (Toronto: Canada Council report, 1979), 5.

<sup>13</sup> Encyclopedia of Textiles, page 326.

every colonial household"<sup>14</sup> "and colonial women took great pride in their ability to produce practical and decorative fabrics for personal and household use".<sup>15</sup> Cotton spinning factories were established in the late eighteenth century and this, in combination with the invention of Eli Whitney's cotton gin in 1792<sup>16</sup> and the availability of slave labour for picking cotton, made cotton yarn more accessible. It was possible to buy "cotton cloth for shirting".<sup>17</sup> Itinerant weavers appeared as a group at this time who would weave "plain goods for those who could afford to hire this done"<sup>18</sup> and were also "capable of producing intricate fabrics well beyond the skill of the farm wife on her simple four-harness loom".<sup>19</sup> After 1823, when William Horstmann introduced the Jacquard loom into the United States,<sup>20</sup> the skill of the professional weaver extended to the intricately patterned coverlets and carpets which could be produced using this de-

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<sup>14</sup> Milfred Davison, "Hand-woven Coverlets in the Art Institute of Chicago", The Art of the Weaver, (New York: Universe Books, 1978), 236.

<sup>15</sup> Davison, op. cit., 236.

<sup>16</sup> Encyclopedia of Textiles, op. cit., 75.

<sup>17</sup> Abbott Lowell Cummings, "Connecticut Homespun", The Art of the Weaver, (New York: Universe Books, 1978), 82.

<sup>18</sup> Virginia D. Parslow, "James Alexander, Weaver", The Art of the Weaver, (New York: Universe Books, 1978), 18.

<sup>19</sup> Parslow, op. cit., 18.

<sup>20</sup> Harold B. Burnham and Dorothy K. Burnham, Keep Me Warm One Night: Early Handweaving in Eastern Canada, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 317.

vice.

By contrast, weaving in the area which later came to form the nucleus of Canada, was not initially well developed.

In the early days of Canada it was very difficult to develop home weaving and mistakes were made at the very start. "If the Directors of the Company of the Hundred Associates had not been so eager to increase their personal wealth in the trading of furs" writes Mr. Noel Fautoux (*L'industrie au Canada sous le Pédime Français*) "they could have established in Canada, small factories who gradually would have supplied the needs of the inhabitants, as well as those of the other French colonies of America, and especially of Acadia." The charter granted the Company in April 1627 gave them that right.

The settlers easily accommodated themselves to imported goods, and the efforts of the administrators to encourage the making of homespun were practically in vain.<sup>21</sup>

The British did not promote weaving in Canada either, for similar reasons. "[D]omestic manufacture of any kind in all the British colonies was always discouraged in the interests of maintaining a market for English products."<sup>22</sup> However, weaving traditions did become established in the colonies which later became the United States, and those traditions were carried to Canada with the United Empire Loyalists who emigrated during and after the American Revolution.<sup>23</sup> Thus, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, Canada also numbered among its population a substantial number of weavers

<sup>21</sup> Oscar A. Beriault, *Home Weaving*, (Quebec: Department of Agriculture, 1939), 9.

<sup>22</sup> Burnham and Burnham, op. cit., 10.

<sup>23</sup> Burnham and Burnham, op. cit., 10.

who were capable of producing fine fabrics in complex patterns.<sup>24</sup>

### 2.0.3 Red River and St. Boniface Textile Production 1812 - 1870

The Red River settlement consisting of about one hundred Scottish immigrants was founded by Thomas Douglas, Earl of Selkirk on a tract of land comprised within the charter of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1812.<sup>25</sup> Initially, the prime consideration of the settlers was the planting of crops and the raising of livestock in this harsh new environment. Wolves were "sufficiently numerous to be very annoying and destructive to cattle, particularly to hogs, calves and sheep".<sup>26</sup> In addition, the settlement was "constantly exposed, on the north and west, to black and stormy winds, which during the winter of seven months' duration, [were] accompanied with deep snows and intense cold".<sup>27</sup> To further complicate the settlers' lives, early in 1814, Miles McDonnell, the Governor of the District of Assiniboia "issued a proclamation, in which he forbade the appropriation of any provisions, whether of flesh, fish, grain, or vegetables to

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<sup>24</sup> Burnham and Burnham, op. cit., 288, 301, 306.

<sup>25</sup> Alexander Ross, The Red River Settlement: Its Rise, Progress and Present State, (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1972), 8.

<sup>26</sup> Ross, op. cit., 15.

<sup>27</sup> Ross, op. cit., 15.

any use but that of the colonists".<sup>28</sup> This proclamation aroused bitter feelings in the North-West Company fur traders towards the settlers and indirectly resulted in the colony being burned and a number of the colonists killed or wounded. Yet another disastrous hardship occurred one July afternoon in 1818 when a plague of grasshoppers destroyed an entire crop. With all of these immediate concerns, it is not surprising that textile manufacture was more or less put aside during the first years of the colony.

Despite all the efforts for the colony to become self-sufficient, some goods had to be purchased, either from the Hudson's Bay Company or from the settlements to the south. For example, due to the grasshopper plague of 1818, Red River had no supplies of seed-wheat and were required to purchase this grain from "Prairie du Chien", a town on the Mississippi River, several hundred miles distant from the colony".<sup>29</sup> Purchases of this kind required foreign exchange, which obliged the community, either to grow or to manufacture some commodity for trade.

One such attempt at acquisition of foreign exchange through manufacture was the Buffalo Wool Company. Andrew Colville, who was then the Executor for the late Earl of Selkirk, wrote to Alexander Macdonell requesting that he "measure off & deliver to John Pritchard Esq. for the use

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<sup>28</sup> Ross, op. cit., 24.

<sup>29</sup> Ross, op. cit., 50.

of the Buffalo Wool Company a lot of one hundred acres of land in a convenient situation for the erection of their Manufactory".<sup>30</sup>

This saw the beginnings of the textile concern known as the Buffalo Wool Company, which, according to Alexander Ross had three express objects:

1. To provide a substitute for wool; as it was supposed, from the numbers and destructive habits of the wolves that sheep could neither be raised nor preserved in Red River, at least to any extent.
2. The substitute contemplated was the wool of the wild buffalo, which was to be collected in the plains, and manufactured both for the use of the colonists and for export.
3. To establish a tannery for manufacturing the buffalo hides for domestic purposes.<sup>31</sup>

Unfortunately, the wool and hides were not as readily available as had been supposed,<sup>32</sup> and the wool did not find a promising export market in London, as had been hoped. Andrew Colville summarized the success with which the Buffalo Wool products were met in London:

I have received your letter of the 5 August respecting the Buffalo Wool Coy's affairs and I am sorry to say the result of the sale of this last year's importation of wool is not at all encouraging as you will learn by Mr. Smith's letter. I

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<sup>30</sup> A. Colville to A. Macdonell, London, May 25, 1820, Selkirk Thomas Douglas (5th Earl of) Papers (Selkirk Papers), MG2 A1, Provincial Archives of Manitoba (P.A.M.)

<sup>31</sup> Ross, op. cit., 70.

<sup>32</sup> Ross, op. cit., 70.

fear the wool hear [here] will not answer your expectations & that the success of that branch of your business will depend on what you can make of it by converting it into cloth, which you can sell to Settlers or the Company. I expected that we should have been able to advance you as to its value for making cloth here but we have not yet got an answer, however I am not sanguine upon the subject; and for this next Season provided you can make a saving price for your wool on the shape of Cloth I would advise you to send home only a small quantity of the quality that sold best at the late sales & that only if that price net to your concern is more than you make of it in the shape of cloth. If you can shew to the Satisfaction of Governor Simpson & the Council that you can make a profitable concern of the leather & cloth business out of which you might extinguish your present debt I have no doubt that they will be disposed to assist you by purchasing such articles as they may require of your manufacture & supply you with skins at a reasonable rate, but you cannot expect them to continue to make you advances without a prospect of your being able to repay them.<sup>33</sup>

The lack of success that these products encountered in London was certainly not through lack of promotion. Adam Maitland, working for the Countess of Selkirk herself, went to Edinburgh with a bag of "Buffaloe Wool" which Lady Selkirk had sent him and took it to Wellstood & Ogilvie, shawl manufacturers. In his report to Lady Selkirk, Adam Maitland indicated that this "Buffaloe Wool" was not lightly dismissed but was to be given serious consideration.

They explained to me, that altho' by far the finest British shawls are made here, all the yarn for them is spin [spun] in England. On this account they were cautious in giving any decided opinion as to the quality of the Wool, but they offered to send it to one of their English correspondents who they considered eminently qualified

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<sup>33</sup> A. Colville to J. Pritchard, London, March 11, 1824, Selkirk Papers, MG2 A1, D.A.\*.

for deciding how far it is practicable to clean & spin it so as to render it fit for manufacturing into shawl fabrics. Having mentioned that the agent of the house to which they wished to send it was at present in Edin., I authorised them to show it to him, & to endeavour to get him to take charge of it to England.

they seemed to take the matter up as an object of interesting curiosity, & one which might possibly lead to beneficial consequences.<sup>34</sup>

By the 29th of April, the wool had been sent to William Thomson & Co. of Lancaster, who were reputed by Wellstood & Ogilvy to be "eminent Silk & Wool Spinners".<sup>35</sup> Their immediate impressions of the fibre were favourable but they felt that the quantity is [was] too small to admit of its being properly cleaned & spun by their machinery,<sup>36</sup> and requested a larger sample. They were able however to isolate the following limitations of the fibre:

the staple of the wool seems rather short.....

He says that there is a great deal of grease in the wool, by the abstraction of which the weight is much diminished. He adds also that when cleaned the wool will retain its natural colour, only a little lighter - that it may be dyed Scarlet: dark-brown, black or any colour darker than [than] the natural one, but that it will be impossible to spin it green, yellow, or any light colour.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> A. Maitland to Lady Selkirk, Edinburgh, April 22, 1824, Selkirk Papers, MG2 A1, P.A.M.

<sup>35</sup> A. Maitland to Lady Selkirk, Edinburgh, April 29, 1824, Selkirk Papers, MG2 A1, P.A.M.

<sup>36</sup> A. Maitland to Lady Selkirk, Edinburgh, April 29, 1824, Selkirk Papers, MG2 A1, P.A.M.

<sup>37</sup> A. Maitland to Lady Selkirk, Edinburgh, April 29, 1824, Selkirk Papers, MG2 A1, P.A.M.

By June of 1824, William Thomson & Company were able to send a sample of yarn to Lady Selkirk. In order to produce this yarn however, they had been required to add silk, but were prepared to persevere with their experiments, with a view to eliminating this need for silk in the yarn.<sup>38</sup>

After considerably more correspondence between Lady Selkirk and Wellstood & Ogilvy, as well as the production of two cravats,<sup>39</sup> shawls and stockings, the disappointing result of all the experiments was finally conveyed to Lady Selkirk, thus:

have had a good deal of correspondence with the Spinners in Lancashire on the subject of the Wool sent them, & we fear from a letter received this morning that the success of the experiment on a large scale, will be checked, if not defeated, by their inability to whiten the Yarn. They mention having used many methods to effect this & took the aid of an experienced Chemist in the course of their trials, but after many attempts, in which they reduced the substance to pulp, they were satisfied of the impracticability of the attempt.--The Colour which nature has imported, it is impossible to bring to a white, though it may be dyed as we have already seen. We confess this gives us much concern, for our expectations of success had gained strength from the preceding correspondence; but the character of the House entrusted with the Wool leaves us no room to doubt their zeal in the matter & ability to carry it through. In this state of things we feel it our duty to pause, & communicate these facts to Your Ladyship &, while we would not hesitate a moment on our own risk, going forward, with the spinning if the material would whiten, we feel it would be very hazardous to proceed under this drawback. The Colour which the yarn has taken best is

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<sup>38</sup> W. Thomson & Co. to Lady Selkirk, Lancaster, June 23, 1824, Selkirk Papers, MG2 A1, P.A.M.

<sup>39</sup> Wellstood & Ogilvie to Lady Selkirk, Edinburgh, December 10, 1824, Selkirk Papers, MG2 A1, P.A.M.

certainly Black, as your Ladyship will have observed, but for this, the demand is too limited to warrant throwing the produce of a Bale into it though we would not fear a small scale for private consumption, or if The Hudson's Bay Coy would on public Grounds wish to do so, we will be most happy to furnish any information in our power.<sup>40</sup>

One must also remember that the Paisley shawl industry, which had been operating in Scotland since the early nineteenth century and was well established by this time, had as its aim to "cater to a mass market. They did this through cheap labor, careful organization, and ruthless competition....Pricing was the key to Paisley's success in the market. From about 1820 to 1850 the average price of a fairly simple shawl in England was between [7 and 10 pounds]; a more complicated design sold for [20 to 30 pounds]."<sup>41</sup> Although woven shawls were popular at this time then, competition was also keen. The Edinburgh mills were gradually being eased out of the market themselves and by "the 1840's Edinburgh mills had abandoned the field".<sup>42</sup> It is not surprising that the "buffaloe wool", with its associated limitations, was not able to compete in this area.

Thus, despite almost an entire year of personal attention by the Countess of Selkirk to this venture, as well as the work invested by a number of leading British textile firms,

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<sup>40</sup> Wellstood & Ogilvie to Lady Selkirk, Edinburgh, March 21, 1825, Selkirk Papers, MG2 A1, P.A.M.

<sup>41</sup> Cecil Lubell (editor), Textile Collections of the World, II, United Kingdom - Ireland, (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1976), 51.

<sup>42</sup> Lubell, op. cit., 51.

it was clear that the truth of Andrew Colville's letter of March, 1824 was confirmed. The products of the Buffalo Wool Company were not suitable for large scale use and should be considered primarily for domestic consumption.

The project had other problems as well. Having optimistically sent to England for "machinery, implements, ives and skilled workmen",<sup>43</sup> in addition to paying increasing amounts for hides, wool and wages, the Buffalo Wool Company became indebted to the Hudson's Bay Company for an amount in excess of 4000 pounds.<sup>44</sup> As we have already seen, the products of this industry were, in no way, able to justify this type of expenditure.

It was Governor George Simpson's opinion that John Pritchard himself was instrumental in the failure of the Buffalo Wool Company, as stated in the following section of a letter which he sent to Andrew Colville:

Pritchard's Buffalo Wool concern I fear is not likely to turn out well, the Creature is too sanguine and speculative, never Sober when he can get Liquor and altho' he is extremely attentive and industrious, yet has no idea of Economy, gives a higher price for labour provisions &c. than any other person and instead of confining himself to Tanning Leather and picking Wool wishes to become Genl. Merchant.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ross, op. cit., 71.

<sup>44</sup> G. Simpson to A. Colville, Red River Settlement, May 31, 1824, Selkirk Papers, MG2 A1, P.A.M.

<sup>45</sup> G. Simpson to A. Colville, Red River Settlement, May 31, 1824, Selkirk Papers, MG2 A1, P.A.M.

Later attempts at the commercial production of flax and hemp were also doomed to failure. In order to encourage production of these fibres for export, premiums were awarded by Governor Simpson for their cultivation but, as rather cynically observed by Alexander Ross, "the moment the premiums expired, the hemp, like the flax, expired also"<sup>46</sup> and the crops were left to rot in the fields.

Governor Simpson was still determined to make yarn manufacture a commercial enterprise in Red River as evidenced by the following section from his July 13, 1831 report to the Hudson's Bay Company:

Wool, however, I think would yield a profit and furthermore the saving it would produce by enabling the Settlers to substitute their own manufactures for imported Supplies would be the utmost Consequence to them. Hitherto they have not had an opportunity of turning their labour to advantage in that way, as notwithstanding the requested attempts which have been made to get a Stock of sheep into the Country, we have only as yet the few brought up from Fort William last summer. They thrive uncommonly well, and have more than double their numbers within the year.<sup>47</sup>

An expedition subsequently left to purchase sheep in St. Louis, Missouri. These sheep were actually procured in Kentucky but, through a good deal of mismanagement and misfortune, of the 1375 sheep which began the trip, only 251 of the flock survived. Even some of these surviving sheep ac-

<sup>46</sup> Ross, op. cit., 139.

<sup>47</sup> Hudson's Bay Company Archives (H.B.C.A.), D 4/98, fo. 7, P.A.M.

<sup>48</sup> Ross, op. cit., 146-150.

tually died after their arrival.<sup>48</sup>

These accounts deal principally with attempts at spinning yarn, but it is known that at least one weaver emigrated from Scotland in 1830 to Red River. This weaver, George Munro, sailed to York Factory with his wife and three children around June of 1830,<sup>49</sup> with the clear intention of settling in Red River.<sup>50</sup> His name appears in the Red River census of 1831 and it is the firmly held opinion of a number of his descendants that he actually did practise his occupation in Red River as well as, perhaps, offering weaving instruction.<sup>51</sup>

Early Manitoba textile production had an additional component for, in addition to the Scottish settlers, Red River also had a substantial French-speaking population. In 1817, in a petition addressed to Bishop Plassis of Quebec, and signed by twenty-four settlers, of which twenty [were] Scottish, Lord Selkirk requested missionaries to be sent to Red River".<sup>52</sup> Two missionaries, Father Provencher, later Bishop Provencher, and Father Dumoulin, arrived at the colo-

<sup>48</sup> W. Smith to G. Munro, London, February 17, 1830, H.B.C.A., A 5.9, fo. 79, P.A.M. [See Appendix A]

<sup>50</sup> W. Smith to D. Sutherland, London, January 27, 1830, H.B.C.A., A 5.9, fo. 74, P.A.M. [See Appendix B]

<sup>51</sup> B. Gillespie, historian, Parks Canada, private interview, March, 1981.

<sup>52</sup> Histoire de la Nation Métisse Par l'Ouest Canadien, August-Henri de Trémaudan, 113-114, cited by Sister Hedwidge Newmann, "Les Soeurs Grises a la Rivière Rouge", Vol. I, English version, (unpublished), 1.

ny on July 16, 1818 and approximately one year later wrote to Quebec expressing a desire to have a group of nuns in the settlement to help with the education of the children.<sup>53</sup> Bishop Provencher himself arranged for the Canadian wife of a farmer to show the girls of the school how to process linen and wool. The girls were reasonably successful at this task, and Bishop Provencher stated in a letter to Monseigneur Plessis in February, 1826, that he had plans for sowing flax. At that time, he also stated that sheep's wool was not available and it was necessary to use ox (presumed to be buffalo) wool to make fabric.<sup>54</sup> This of course was some six years after the formation of the ill-fated Buffalo Wool Company.

It should be noted that among the varied stock of the Hudson's Bay Company store, a reasonable selection of textiles and clothing were to be found, right from the very early days of the colony.<sup>55</sup> The necessity that individuals become self-sufficient with a regard to these items became then, primarily one of economics rather than availability. Some other form of production or service would be required of the individual in order that he have the currency to pay

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<sup>53</sup> Sister Hedwidge Newmann, "Les Soeurs Grises a la Riviere Rouge", Vol. I, English Version, (unpublished), 2.

<sup>54</sup> Soeur Elisabeth de Moissac, S.G.M., "Les Femmes de l'Ouest, Leur Rôle Dans l'Histoire", (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Ottawa, 1946), 169.

<sup>55</sup> Lower Red River District Accounts 1821 & 22, H.B.C.A. B235 d 3, P.A.M. [See Appendix C]

for purchases at the Company store. The colony therefore had to be relatively self-sustaining, or develop some type of export trade, even to be able to make purchases from the Hudson's Bay Company. As such, while endeavouring to maintain the market for its goods in Red River, the Company still had a vested interest in encouraging individual self-sufficiency in some areas.

Bishop Provencher was very interested in the self-sufficiency of the colony and, in this fashion, was very instrumental along with Governor Simpson, in introducing a school of industrial arts into the settlement.<sup>56</sup> Instruction was given at this school in weaving (among other occupations) and an account of this school, particularly of its origins and fate has been documented by the Gray Nuns as follows:

Very few families made woollen handspun for their own use. Bishop Provencher, in his incomparable solicitude for his people, had seriously considered the possibility of getting some weavers for Red River.....But that would require travelling by the Hudson's Bay Company canoes, and he did not have the money to defray the costs. Then Providence came to his aid. In 1837 as he was going up river with Sir George Simpson, this gentleman drew the bishop's attention to the fine cloth with which the Canadian crewmen were clothed. The prelate said: "This industry is missing in our colony; it should be introduced here."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> The Hudson's Bay Company had recommended in 1822 that a school of industry be established but in Governor Simpson's May 31, 1824 letter to Andrew Colville, he expressed the belief that this recommendation could not be carried out. He gave as his reason that motivation was lacking, in some members of the colony, to provide an education for their children. - G. Simpson to A. Colville, Red River Settlement, May 31, 1824, Selkirk Papers, MG2 A1, P.A.M.

Governor Simpson, as previously noted, had already expressed an interest in introducing textile production to the colony, and agreed to bring up two Canadian weavers for three years, provided that the bishop be responsible for their lodging and board. It was under these circumstances that Mme Lapalaice and Ursule Grenier arrived in 1838. Their school was established at the site of the French mission, in the area called St. Boniface which was across the Red River from the earlier settlement. The school only lasted one year, as the building and equipment were destroyed by a fire<sup>58</sup> on March 27, 1839.<sup>59</sup>

The Congregation of the Grey Nuns in Montreal later agreed to send a group of sisters to St. Boniface to found a school and Bishop Provencher's expectations for that school were stated as follows:

Since a number of years, I have sought for sisters to assure the girls and women of Red River a sound education in religion as well as in household arts, such as weaving of homespun and linen, etc., so as to fashion good housewives and mothers for the future. Moreover to encourage skills and industries that would make for better homes, and would further the prosperity of the colony.<sup>60</sup>

Clearly, both Governor Simpson and Bishop Provencher felt that the development of weaving and other textile related occupations, either on an individual or a commercial level,

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<sup>57</sup> Newmann, op. cit., 18.

<sup>58</sup> de Moissac, op. cit., 171.

<sup>59</sup> H.B.C.M. B 235/a/14, P.A.M.

<sup>60</sup> Newmann, op. cit., 9.

was critical to the development and well-being of this new colony. Governor Simpson was sufficiently motivated in this endeavour that in 1847 he even organized an industry contest where rewards were given to those who produced the greatest quantity and best quality of cloth and spinning.<sup>61</sup>

The Grey Nuns took part in these competitions, spinning and weaving and hoping to capture first prize.<sup>62</sup> They had been introduced to spinning in 1844, during their first winter at St. Boniface, and in 1845 acquired the services of a skilful weaver in the person of Sister Cusson. Sister Gosselin, who arrived a year later, was able to card wool and fortuitously, a pair of cards was found in the company store. A loom arrived for the sisters and they produced the first piece of camelot<sup>63</sup> in Red River. They spun and wove for their own needs as well as a source of income for their aid to the poor.<sup>64</sup>

At about the same time as the Grey Nuns were meeting with their modest success in producing textiles on a small scale, another commercial textile venture was attempted across the river. Alexander Boss provides a colourful description of

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<sup>61</sup> de Moissac, op. cit., 175.

<sup>62</sup> Newmann, op. cit., 58.

<sup>63</sup> A type of Fustian fabric, a "very strong, hardwearing pile cloth usually made of cotton but originally constructed with linen warps and cotton wefts". - Martin Hardingham,, The Fabric Catalog, (New York: Pocket Books, 1978), 59.

<sup>64</sup> de Moissac, op. cit., 173-174.

this example of another mis-begotten enterprise:

Notwithstanding the limited number of sheep in the colony, and consequently the scarcity of wool, nothing would do but we must have a fulling-mill. So the project of a fulling-mill was set on foot--and a very useful article it is in a place where it is wanted, or where wool and cloth, to any extent, occupy the attention of the people; but for a community like ours, with never as much wool as would keep us in mittens and socks, a more foolish and useless speculation could scarcely be imagined.....

Our mill being erected, we waited three months or more for a bit of cloth, and then discovered that it would not go. It was altered in some respect, and now we hoped all was right, but after waiting a month or two longer, a farmer brought 25 yards of cloth to be fullled, which proved too small a quantity: the mill required 100 yards to give her a fair trial....and from [a time one month later] till this--a period of five years--the fulling-mill has been silent and motionless.<sup>65</sup>

In 1858, the Grey Nuns undertook an improvement to their textile industry which was much less ambitious than that of the Red River colonists and consequently much more successful. They received a carding machine from Montreal which greatly speeded up the task of carding wool. The machine being tiresome to operate and requiring the services of two men, however, they made arrangements with the miller, Jean-Louis Piel, to connect their carding machine to his water system thereby reducing the time required for the carding of all of their wool to two or three weeks.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Ross, op. cit., 337-338.

<sup>66</sup> Newmann, op. cit., 59.

Thus, many attempts were made during the early days of the Red River colony and St. Boniface to introduce various forms of textile production into the area. These projects ran the gamut from sheep rearing and flax production, through carding, spinning, weaving and even fulling, but the only projects that met with any degree of success were the ones carried out on a relatively small scale, primarily for domestic use. In view of the extent to which textile technology was developing in the outside world by this time, as well as the amount of protection given some of the textile industries by their home governments, it is hardly surprising that the Red River colonists were unable to develop a commercial textile industry or export markets for these textiles. Strong competition in textiles had developed between the more industrialized nations by now and, while England practised free trade in textiles, France adopted protectionism of its textile industry, which led to the ruin of even the Swiss textile industry.<sup>67</sup>

#### 2.0.9 Manitoba Textile Production 1870-1940

On December 1, 1869, the Hudson's Bay Company transferred control of a portion of its holdings, including the area of the settlement at Red River, to the Canadian Government<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Francois Boucher, 20,000 Years of Fashion: The History of Costume and Personal Adornment, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.), 357.

<sup>68</sup> Ruben Bellan, Winnipeg First Century, (Winnipeg: Queenston House Publishing Co. Ltd., 1978), 6.

and in 1870 this area became Canada's fifth province, given the name Manitoba. All did not go smoothly with this transfer of control as the manner in which it was handled produced discontent amongst many of the inhabitants of the colony, particularly the Metis,<sup>69</sup> and precipitated the Riel rebellion. One result of this was that by 1870 large numbers of troops had arrived from Ontario and many of them decided to settle in the area.<sup>70</sup> "The arrival of the troops infused confidence amongst the people; trade which was almost dead suddenly revived, and money became very plentiful.... Winnipeg, [which is what the colony on the west of the Red River came to be called] from being almost a deserted spot, suddenly found itself full of excitement, business and general activity."<sup>71</sup>

As the economy of this area expanded, textile production also became more commercially viable. "Mr. Alex. Murray, during 1871, imported several lots of sheep from the States, one of his flocks amounting to 180 head. It was estimated that there were, at that time, between 5,000 and 6,000 sheep in the settlement, and the erection of a woollen mill was spoken of."<sup>72</sup> In fact, "George MacVicar started the St. Ro-

<sup>69</sup> William Morton, Manitoba, a History, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 119.

<sup>70</sup> Rollan, op. cit., 7.

<sup>71</sup> Alexander Beqq and Walter R. Nursev, Ten Years in Winnipeg, (Winnipeg: Times Printing and Publishing House, 1879), 3.

<sup>72</sup> Beqq and Nursev, op. cit., 41.

niface woolen mills in 1873"<sup>73</sup> and an advertisement for this mill appeared in the July 10, 1874 Winnipeg Free Press. The advertisement made the claim that the St. Boniface Woolen Mills were "Complete and in Full Working Order....[and] prepared to manufacture Woods, Flannels, Blankets, &c."<sup>74</sup> These particular mills were however burnt out in October, 1877, this occurrence being described by Beag and Nursey as "a great loss to the country".<sup>75</sup> An 1880 photograph showing a "Bird's Eye View" of St. Boniface lists the George Reid Woolen Mill as one of the buildings depicted. Since George MacVicar's St. Boniface Woolen Mill had also been located on the east side of the Red River, this mill may very well have been a reconstruction of the earlier one. It is unlikely that two woolen mills would have existed in such close proximity at the same time.

Oscar Beriau in his 1939 "Home Weaving" book stated that "between 1890 and 1926 home weaving in Canada was almost at a standstill",<sup>76</sup> and this he attributed to the machine age. As noted in the prologue to this chapter, the machine age as applied to spinning and weaving had actually begun over one hundred years earlier, so that increasing technology alone cannot be blamed for this fallow period for home weaving.

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<sup>73</sup> Morton, op. cit., 169.

<sup>74</sup> Advertisement, Winnipeg Free Press, July 10, 1874.

<sup>75</sup> Beag and Nursey, op. cit., 168.

<sup>76</sup> Beriau, op. cit., page 10.

In Manitoba, the declining interest in handweaving must surely have been associated primarily with two factors: population and transportation. By the year 1879, when Manitoba was less than ten years old, Winnipeg's population rose to 10,000, having been only about 100 in 1870.<sup>71</sup> The population had become sufficient to support a good assortment of services and retail outlets and "numerous representatives of all branches of industry located in our [Winnipeg's] midst, attracted by the increasing popularity of the city, its field for honest speculation, and driven, perhaps, by the hardness of the times, and the depression that was fastening with such grim pertinacity, upon the older and wealthier centres of commerce in the eastern provinces".<sup>72</sup>

In June, 1881, the Canadian Pacific Railway Company formally offered to locate its workshops in Winnipeg<sup>73</sup> and a real estate boom began.

Below the froth of the speculative boom in real estate, however, major economic expansion was taking place... The insatiable demands for supplies of railway contractors, the growing agricultural population, and the exhilarating prospects supported a tremendous expansion of the local economy in the space of a year. Where in 1881 there had been twenty-six wholesalers in the city, there were fifty in 1882, and the volume of their trade doubled as well. By the latter year a complete range of merchandise could be obtained from local wholesalers.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Beag and Nursey, op. cit., 225.

<sup>72</sup> Beag and Nursey, op. cit., 224.

<sup>73</sup> Bellan, op. cit., 20.

Beqq and Nursey closed their book Ten Years in Winnipeg in 1879 with the optimistic proclamation:

That Winnipeg is destined to be the great distributing and railway centre of the vast North-West is now no empty figure of speech, for it admits of no denial, it being all but an accomplished fact.<sup>75</sup>

Transportation to Winnipeg underwent as radical a change in the time after Manitoba's becoming a province as did the population of the area. Before annexation,

The Steamer International, then owned by the Hudson's Bay Co., used to make two or three trips in the summer, between Fort Garry and Georgetown, but would never consent to carry any other than Hudson's Bay Co. freight. The free traders were therefore obliged to carry their own goods over the prairie in ox-carts from St. Cloud, Minnesota, to Winnipeg, a distance of several hundred miles, and as this was really a serious undertaking, it was customary for these trains of carts to leave twice a year only, (spring and fall), for their journey to the States, consequently stocks of goods were liable to run short at times, with no means of replenishing them.<sup>76</sup>

On November 7, 1885 the last spike of the Canadian Pacific Railway was hammered in<sup>77</sup> and Winnipeg became linked by a trans-continental railroad to the Pacific coast as well as to eastern Canada.

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<sup>74</sup> Bellan, op. cit., 28.

<sup>75</sup> Beqq and Nursey, op. cit., 226.

<sup>76</sup> Beqq and Nursey, op. cit., 5.

<sup>77</sup> Donald Creighton, Dominion of the North: a History of Canada, revised edition, (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1957), 351.

Thus, it is clear that the settlement at Red River changed dramatically in the first decade and a half after the area became a part of the Dominion of Canada. The Red River colony under the Hudson's Bay Company was a small isolated village with an economy based primarily on agriculture and fur trading. Imported retail goods required some type of foreign exchange and doubtless, the elaborate arrangements necessary for the importation of any goods from outside the colony would cause them to be expensive. Conditions such as these would have to impose a need for, or at least strongly encourage, some degree of self-sufficiency and a fostering of home industries such as spinning and weaving, even though there is little evidence of successful commercial ventures into these industries.

With the greatly increased population that the colony enjoyed very soon after becoming a part of Canada, and with the improved transportation, goods became more readily available and the economy gradually expanded. The number of wholesalers and retailers increased, thereby introducing competition. Also, now that the area was a city,<sup>84</sup> the degree of specialization among individuals increased and services, as well as goods, were purchased.<sup>85</sup> Spinning and weaving as home industries were no longer critical and textile production, even on a community basis, was not an es-

<sup>84</sup> The City of Winnipeg was incorporated in November of 1873. - Beag and Nursey, op. cit., 91.

<sup>85</sup> Bellan, op. cit., 10.

essential industry with the availability of manufactured yardage from more industrially developed outside centres. People living in the isolated farm villages retained the need for self-sufficiency longer, but gradually the goods and services of Winnipeg became increasingly accessible to them as well.

The pattern was set. Home weaving, after 1870, was not an essential requirement for most families and it certainly was not considered a recreational activity. This accounted for the "standstill" that Beriau described. He cited 1929 as the year of the revival in handweaving, but this date was associated with events which took place in Quebec at that time. However, as will be shown in subsequent chapters, it took almost another decade for the effects of the changes in the Quebec scene to diffuse as far as Manitoba.

It should be noted at this point, that the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw large numbers of central and eastern Europeans migrate to Manitoba under the Sifton immigration policies.<sup>86</sup> Many of these people came from areas which had long standing textile traditions,<sup>87</sup> and some handweaving was practised in isolated areas throughout

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<sup>86</sup> Bellan, op. cit., 63.

<sup>87</sup> For example, the Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada (Manitoba Branch) museum contains a number of pieces of clothing made from intricately woven fabric, said to be hand woven.

<sup>88</sup> For example, a Swedish loom located in the Eriksdale museum bears the following description:

the province.<sup>88</sup> This weaving however, could form the basis for a study in its own right and will not be included in this thesis.

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c. 1910 hand made by one of the Goranson brothers of the Nord district. Donated by the Tegelbergs. It had served in the area during the early days. They made floor mats on it.

## Chapter III

### HANDWEAVING IN MANITOBA IN THE 1940'S

#### 3.0.10 Introduction

To properly place handweaving in Manitoba in the 1940's in perspective, it is necessary to first examine a series of events which took place in Quebec in the late 1920's and early 1930's. The Quebec situation had a profound effect on subsequent developments in Manitoba.

#### 3.0.11 Origins in Quebec

By the end of the nineteenth century, Quebec had developed a distinctive culture which was "agrarian, religious, [and] traditional [and] was in conflict with the trend of modernization that surrounded and penetrated it".<sup>89</sup> Significant changes were taking place in the economy of Canada as a whole but "for most French Canadians "farming maintained its dominant place".<sup>90</sup> As the amount of good farmland diminished however, thousands of people from Quebec were drawn to the factories of Montreal<sup>91</sup> (which were largely controlled

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<sup>89</sup> Kenneth McRoberts and Dale Posgate, Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1976), 20.

<sup>90</sup> McRoberts and Posgate, op. cit., 20.

<sup>91</sup> McRoberts and Posgate, op. cit., 21.

by English speaking businessmen) and of Massachusetts.<sup>92</sup>

The 1920's in Quebec saw growth in finance and industry, both of which were "tightly organized and controlled by an English-speaking minority of Britons and Canadians",<sup>93</sup> but with the depression at the end of the decade came widespread unemployment. This resulted in "French-Canadian resentment and anger against "foreign" employers"<sup>94</sup> as well as a reasonably successful "back-to-the-land movement".<sup>95</sup>

In 1929 there was a revival [in home weaving]. In connection with the back to the land movement, the Government of the Province of Quebec, created a school of Handicrafts in the Department of Agriculture.

This school is for the training of leaders who in turn work in the field, teaching the members of the Women's Clubs and the "Cercles des Fermières" the arts of spinning, weaving, dyeing of the various textile fibres, especially those produced on the farm--wool and flax.<sup>96</sup>

As in other parts of the country, the importance of home weaving had been declining in Quebec. The traditional "barn" looms were huge devices which required large amounts

<sup>92</sup> W.L. Morton, Manitoba: A History, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 160.

<sup>93</sup> J.A. Lower, Canada: An Outline History, rev. ed, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1973), 179.

<sup>94</sup> Lower, op. cit., 179.

<sup>95</sup> McRoberts and Posgate, op. cit., 32.

<sup>96</sup> Oscar A. Beriau, Home Weaving, (Quebec: Department of Agriculture, 1939), 10.

<sup>97</sup> Harold B. Burnham and Dorothy K. Burnham, Keep Me Warm One Night: Early Handweaving in Eastern Canada, (Toronto:

of floor space.<sup>97</sup> They were therefore stored and used in barns or sheds and, since these sheds would have had little if any heat in the winter, weaving tended to become a summer occupation. Having taken note of this situation, the Quebec Department of Agriculture, in 1924, ran a competition for a new type of loom to replace the cumbersome old-fashioned models. The winning design was to receive the endorsement of the Department of Agriculture. Nilus Leclerc, of L'Islet designed a four harness counter-balanced loom which won this competition and his company began production of this model which was subsequently demonstrated at the Quebec exposition in 1926.<sup>98</sup> This was the loom then, which was used in the Quebec Department of Agriculture teaching programs and supported, perhaps even by cash subsidies for purchase, by the "Cercles des Fermières". During this period, all of these looms were sold strictly through mail order catalogues as the Leclerc company engaged no dealers.<sup>99</sup>

Hand or home weaving in Quebec was deemed by the government to be very important because of its close connection with farming, the French Canadian economy in Quebec being

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University of Toronto Press, 1975), 44.

<sup>98</sup> It should be noted here that, from this beginning, the Leclerc loom company went on to become the largest loom manufacturer in Canada, and possibly even in the world. It should also be noted that the prize winning loom of 1924 has stood the test of time and, apart from minor modifications, remains unchanged and is still marketed, as the present "Mira" model.

<sup>99</sup> Robert Leclerc, private interview, June, 1981.

primarily an agricultural one. After 1760, when the French lost this area of the continent to the British, large numbers of the wealthy French businessmen returned to France, leaving behind the farmers, the poor and the clergy. Farms were small and relatively self-sustaining, therefore there was little money for the purchase of consumer goods and services. Handweaving was one of the activities which was practised as a home industry, so that attempts to improve farm conditions in Quebec naturally led to advances in home weaving education and technology.<sup>100</sup> As a continuation of the project, Oscar Beriau who was at that time, the Quebec Minister of Agriculture, wrote a comprehensive book dealing with fibres, yarns and looms, and the designing and drafting of woven structures. This book was published in French as "Le Tissage Domestique" and in English under the name "Home Weaving". The latter version was published in 1939.

### **3.0.12 Manitoba Projects**

Manitoba has always had a substantial French population, located primarily in the city of St. Boniface, but also spread out in a number of outlying smaller rural centres. Because these French communities are essentially embedded in the larger English speaking population of the West, they tend to look to Quebec for advice and leadership. Thus, la

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<sup>100</sup> Donald Creighton, Dominion of the North: a History of Canada, revised edition, (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1957), 152, and Robert Leclerc, private interview, June 1981.

société d'Enseignement Postsecondaire du Manitoba, under the directorship of Father D'Eschambault included a program of weaving instruction among its activities. The initial instructors came from Quebec and offered instruction in St. Boniface, as well as a number of other French communities.

In 1941, which is the year that la Société actually began its weaving classes in Manitoba, another program of weaving instruction was initiated. This program, which was sponsored by the Searle Grain Company, was not intended to be in competition with the French project but rather to be complementary. The aim of this endeavour was similar to the objectives of the Quebec plan, in that the Searle Grain Company wished to "brighten the lives of the [prairie] farm wife [wives]".<sup>101</sup> In the 1940's, these women were relatively isolated and it was hoped that this organized activity would provide some contact with other women as well as teaching a skill which could be practised to the betterment of the family situation. Spinning and weaving were considered particularly appropriate skills because of their long association with agriculture.

Both of these projects were ambitious, each offering instruction to hundreds of women, and because of this, they form an interesting part of Manitoba's cultural and social history. For this reason, each of these programs will be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters.

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<sup>101</sup> Dorothy Fankine, letter dated November, 1978.

## Chapter IV

### LA SOCIÉTÉ D'ENSEIGNEMENT POSTSCOLAIRE DU MANITOBA AND WEAVING

#### 4.0.13 Early Beginnings

La Société d'Enseignement Postscolaire du Manitoba was founded in 1934,<sup>102</sup> under the direction of Father Antoine D'Eschambault, with its headquarters in St. Boniface, as a Manitoba branch of the Quebec based Société d'Enseignement Postscolaire. This organization, which was affiliated with the Roman Catholic church, was involved with adult education and undertook a program of instruction to Manitobans, particularly in the French communities, in a number of different subjects.

As previously noted, the Quebec Department of Agriculture had been operating a program of home weaving instruction since the late 1920's. La Société d'Enseignement Postscolaire and the associated Association d'Education (which was interested in programs for school children) had also by this time established les Ecoles ménagères (Schools of Home Economics). Representatives of la Société encouraged the Manitoba group to offer this type of instruction as well, as is illustrated by the following July 7, 1941 excerpt from the

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<sup>102</sup> La Liberté, Saint Boniface, September 24, 1981, 2.

chronicles of the Institut et College St. Joseph, St. Boniface, in which a speech to their cours de Pedagogie is described:

Le Congrès a été rendu encore plus intéressant par la présence de M. l'abbé Tessier, visiteur des Ecoles Menagères de la province de Quebec. M. l'abbé Tessier était l'hôte de l'Association d'Education et de la Société d'Enseignement Postsecondaire. M. Tessier est connu dans l'Est comme un animateur émérité et un éducateur. La substance de son enseignement est le retour aux choses simples, aux réalités de la vie ordinaire. Dans ses Ecoles ménagères, il veut former les jeunes filles qui lui sont confiées, surtout en vue de leurs devoirs futurs comme épouse et mère. Ses conseils peuvent se résumer ainsi: Eduquons nos enfants par rapport à la vie et en tenant compte de leur milieu, de leur passé, de leurs cadres personnels, et en vue de leurs devoirs futurs.<sup>103</sup>

At another Pedagogical Conference several months later, Oscar Beriau also came from Quebec to support and encourage the efforts of the people who were offering instruction in Domestic Arts (weaving being included in this category). He, himself felt it to be critical to preserve the Canadian,

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<sup>103</sup> [Translation] The Congress was made yet more interesting by the presence of Abbot Tessier, a visitor from the Home Economics schools in Quebec. Abbot Tessier was the host of the Association for Education and of the Adult Education Society. Mr. Tessier is known in the East as a meritorious moving force and an educator. The substance of his teaching is the return to simple things, to the realities of ordinary life. In his Home Economics schools, he wishes to mold the young girls who are entrusted to him, especially in view of their future duties as wife and mother. His recommendations can be summarized thus: Educate our children in reference to life and in taking count of their surroundings, of their past, of their personal limits, and in view of their future duties.

or perhaps more importantly for him, French Canadian, traditions and that this cause could be helped enormously by fostering home industry, increasing the standards and degree of participation in this industry, through programs of education.<sup>104</sup>

The Franco-Manitobans were obviously very sympathetic to this viewpoint since they had fought conscientiously to retain their distinctive culture and separate identity from the very beginning, sometimes against great opposition.

The Manitoba Act of 1870 had taken into account the duality of language and religion which was present in the societal structure of the population prior to 1870 and it, in conjunction with early legislative enactments pertaining to education, provided for publically funded Catholic and Protestant schools.<sup>105</sup> These provisions however, were met with a great deal of opposition since "[a]nything which made for division, such as the dual system in language and schools seemed to invite a perpetuation of differences, and was condemned in the general opinion of the British and Protestant majority".<sup>106</sup> Thus with the passing of The Public School Act of 1890 "[t]he denominational system of schools established

<sup>104</sup> Institut et Collège St. Joseph, Chronicles IV, (St. Boniface: October 17, 1941), 69 [See Appendix D].

<sup>105</sup> D.S. Woods, Education in Manitoba, Part I, Preliminary Report, (Winnipeg: Economic Survey Board, Province of Manitoba, 1938), 15.

<sup>106</sup> W.L. Morton, Manitoba: A History, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 245.

in 1871 was abolished".<sup>107</sup> This situation continued for seven years, until 1897, when "the Schools Act was amended in accord with the Laurier-Greenway compromise. By the amendment Catholic teachers were to be employed when there were forty Catholic children in an urban school or ten in a country school....When ten pupils in any school spoke French or any language other than English, the teaching of these was to be "in French, or such other language, and English upon the bi-lingual system".<sup>108</sup> Because this legislation applied to any of the minorities within Manitoba's population, it ultimately proved unwieldy and was amended in 1916, to abolish all bi-lingual teaching.<sup>109</sup> This was the situation in Manitoba, with no French instruction permitted in the schools, at the time of the Pedagogical Conferences at St. Joseph's College in 1941.

Added to the problem of education for the French in Manitoba was the decreasing ratio of their population to the population of Manitoba as a whole. In the late nineteenth century,

Repeated calls for Quebec support were made, but clerical and political leaders in Quebec were concerned with the wholesale abandonment of entire parishes for the industrial centers of New England, and were not impressed with suggestions that yet more emigration from Quebec was desirable. They argued, in turn, that French-Canadians should remain in their province lest they lose their

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<sup>107</sup> Woods, op. cit., 21.

<sup>108</sup> Morton, op. cit., 353.

<sup>109</sup> Morton, op. cit., 353.

majority there and their influence in Confederation.<sup>110</sup>

The massive influx of Eastern Europeans into the province at the turn of the century "put pressure on the francophone population"<sup>111</sup> by greatly increasing the numbers of non-French-speaking Manitobans. This was accompanied, in the early twentieth century by the migration of "Franco-Manitoba farming elements"<sup>112</sup> to Saskatchewan and Alberta. By 1911, the number of French Canadians in Manitoba had risen to 30,952, from 9,949 since 1881, but this was accompanied by a rise in the number of Western Europeans from 9,168 to 48,586 and Eastern Europeans from 24 to 51,735 during the same interval. Similarly, the population of Manitobans of British descent increased from 38,285 in 1881 to 266,562 in 1911.<sup>113</sup> Thus, where Franco-Manitobans had accounted for seventeen percent of the total Manitoba population in 1881, by 1911 they only represented seven percent of the total.

During the thirty years between 1911 and 1941 nothing happened to change the composition of Manitoba's population in favour of the French. The Canadian Conscription crisis of the First World War reinforced the fears of French-Can-

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<sup>110</sup> Robert Painchaud, French-speaking Settlers on the Prairies, 1870-1920, Canada's Visual History, Series 1, Volume 10, National Museum of Man and National Film Board of Canada, 1974, 2.

<sup>111</sup> Painchaud, op. cit., 5.

<sup>112</sup> Painchaud, op. cit., 5.

<sup>113</sup> Woods, op. cit., Table II, 10.

dians "about the unsympathetic nature of the population outside of Quebec [and] [f]urthermore the rapid urbanization and industrialization of Quebec provided more opportunity at home".<sup>114</sup>

These factors, namely the provincial education policy and the minority status of the French, had a great effect on the definition of the Franco-Manitoban cultural problem of the 1940's. These people were denied the right to French education and were not allowed public funding for their Catholic schools. As a group, their size was also decreasing relative to the rest of the Manitoba population. Active measures were necessary, under these conditions, to keep the Franco-Manitoba community from being assimilated into the larger, predominantly English-speaking, population in which it was embedded. The establishment of a church affiliated, French-language adult education program would serve these needs admirably well. It would also have the distinct advantage of being intimately connected with similar programs already in place in Quebec, and thereby providing a link with this older and better established French community, as well as teaching a practical and creative skill based on long-standing traditions.

Thus the province of Quebec was able to exert considerable influence on the promotion of home weaving and other crafts in Manitoba, both through the government, in the per-

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<sup>114</sup> Painchaud, op. cit., 5.

son of Oscar Beriau, and through the established educational associations and Roman Catholic organizations. The influence came in the form of advice and encouragement, and that of example. It also came more directly in the form of Quebec weaving instructors.

#### **4.0.14 First Weaving Course Given by La Société d'Enseignement Postsecondaire du Manitoba**

On July 27, 1941 Sister Agnès de Rome and Sister M. Donald, two sisters from the order of The Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, in the province of Quebec began a course in weaving at St. Joseph's Institute and College (also affiliated with this order) in St. Boniface.<sup>115</sup> This course was apparently "sponsored jointly by the Department [of Education] and the Adult Education Association [La Société d'Enseignement Postsecondaire]".<sup>116</sup>

Mrs. Néomie Ricard who was, at that time eighteen years old and resident in La Broquerie, was one of the students who participated in that first course. The parish priest had been advised of the course and asked if he knew of suitable candidates. As Mrs. Ricard (unmarried at that time) had always had an inclination toward and ability with crafts, she was chosen to go to St. Boniface for the weaving

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<sup>115</sup> Institut et Collège St. Joseph, Chronicles, IV, (St. Boniface: July 27, 1941), 65 [See Appendix E].

<sup>116</sup> C.K. Rogers and Hugh Saunderson, "Manitoba Summer School", Report of the Department of Education for the year ending June 30th, 1941 (Winnipeg: King's Printer, 1941), 138.

course. She was not required to pay tuition and was given room and board at St. Joseph's College. The request made of Mrs. Picard, and of her fellow students, was only that they pass this instruction on to other interested people in their communities.

Mrs. Picard remembers this as being a very large class, perhaps as many as 150 students, and that there were very many nuns present.<sup>117</sup> This is consistent with the St. Joseph's chronicles which indicated that nuns from eight different convents were present as well as twenty-one women and young girls.<sup>118</sup>

The course, which lasted for most of the summer, used floor looms set up in St. Joseph's College, and yarns which Sister Agnes and Sister Donaldia had brought with them from Quebec. A number of different weave structures were covered and sample books were made up. Several of the sisters from St. Joseph's College who participated in this instruction retained their sample books over the years and have placed them in the College archives.

As these sample books are similar to each other and to ones produced in subsequent courses which Sister Donaldia taught, they obviously give a reasonably accurate insight into the nature of this course. As such, a brief discussion of the general characteristics of the samples and approaches

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<sup>117</sup> Néonie Picard, private interview, September, 1981.

<sup>118</sup> Institut et Collège St. Joseph, Chronicles, IV, (St. Roniface: July 27, 1941), 65 [See Appendix F].

will be included at this point.

The scrap books were produced according to a standard format, with small samples attached to the right hand page and labelled. A very complete description usually appeared on the facing page. This description included the draft, the slewing, the tie-up and all of the various treadlings used. The samples themselves, were primarily woven in cotton, with some wool and occasionally some linen used. By today's handweaving standards, the actual yarns used would be considered fairly fine, and the sett of the fabric quite dense. Robert Leclerc has in fact, indicated that the most common reed size used at that time was 15 dents per inch and that size was supplied with his company's looms, whereas the reed which comes with a new Leclerc loom today has 12 dents per inch (5 dents per centimetre).<sup>119</sup>

The first exercise in the books involved the class of "Tissus Simples", which was variations on a straight twill threading. At least one of the students had mounted eighteen different samples for this exercise, representing eighteen different weaving variations. Another group of samples was woven using a "Chevrefeuilles" or Overshot draft, and there were as many as twenty-eight samples woven on this single draft included in the group. The warp was almost exclusively white cotton, with a cotton tabby weft, but the pattern weft was sometimes cotton and sometimes wool. Other

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<sup>119</sup> Robert Leclerc, letter to the author dated April 7, 1981.

weave structures studied and recorded were "Nids Dabeilles" (a type of Bird's Eye), "Allées de Roses" (Rosepath), "Ete et Hiver" (Summer and Winter), and "Incrustation" (a point twill threading, woven as a tabby background with a pick up inlay). In addition to these structural experiments, various colour samples were woven, with several types of plaid fabric appearing in some of the books. Without exception, the work that was presented was capable of being produced on four harnesses and was almost certainly woven on a floor loom.

The general level of craftsmanship and documentation in the work included in the sample books was high and the range and length of topics covered was substantial. These books give every indication that the course that was taught at St. Joseph's College involved a comprehensive study of four harness woven structures and weaving techniques.

#### **4.0.15 Continuation of Weaving Education Program**

The minister of Education in Manitoba at the time, M. Schultz, was so impressed by the results of this initial course, both in terms of the articles produced and the spirit which was instilled in the students, that he offered la Société d'Enseignement Postsecondaire a grant if they would extend their instruction to the rural communities. Father

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120 During the 1941-42 fiscal year, the Province of Manitoba paid \$700.00 to the "Manitoba Association for Adult Education, St. Boniface". - Public Accounts of the Province

D'Eschambault agreed to this proposal<sup>120</sup> and was given permission by Sister Donaldda's convent in Montreal, to keep her in Manitoba for another year. The teaching of weaving in the outlying villages then began in the fall of 1941.<sup>121</sup>

According to an entry in the St. Joseph's chronicles of July 28, 1942, Sister Donaldda managed to teach her weaving course in five different communities between the fall of 1941 and the summer of 1942.

Sous les auspices de la Société Canadienne d'Enseignement Postsecondaire, section française, Soeur M. Donaldda inaugura durant l'année les cours de tissage dans les paroisses suivantes: Notre Dame de Lourdes, Sainte-Anne des Chênes, Winnipeg, Saint-Joseph, Haywood et La Broquerie. Notre chère soeur consacrait en moyenne cinq semaines dans chacun de ces endroits pensionnant chez les religieuses où partout elle fut reçue le plus cordialement possible.<sup>122</sup>

When Sister Donaldda taught her weaving courses that year, she asked Mrs. Ricard to accompany her and to act as an assistant, for which she was paid a wage of about one dollar per student, which apparently she saved to buy her

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of Manitoba for the fiscal year ended April 30, 1942.

<sup>121</sup> Antoine D'Eschambault, "L'artisanat au Manitoba français", Paysana, January, 1947, 6.

<sup>122</sup> [Translation] Under the auspices of the French section of the Society for Adult Education, Sister M. Donaldda instituted during the year weaving courses in the following parishes: Notre Dame de Lourdes, Sainte-Anne des Chênes, Winnipeg, Saint-Joseph, Haywood and La Broquerie. Our dear sister devoted at least five weeks to each of these places boarding with the nuns. She was most cordially received wherever she went.

Institut et Collège St. Joseph, Chronicles, IV, (St. Boniface: July 28, 1942),

own loom. She recalls that classes were held in the parish hall and that all ages of people attended them. Cooking and sewing instruction was also offered and exhibitions of the students' work were held, with small prizes awarded for the best examples of work in the various courses.<sup>123</sup>

Sister Madeleine Parent of St. Joseph's College remembered a course that was organized across the river in Winnipeg which was given to a group of English women. This course was conducted in the evenings and as Sister Donalds required a companion, since it involved being out after dark, Sister Madeline accompanied her.<sup>124</sup>

During the school summer vacation of 1942, another weaving program was organized and held at St. Joseph's College, with school teachers being invited to attend. This course continued with beginning weaving under the direction of Sister Donalds, but at the same time, a second group of instruction was established. Sister M. Alphonse d'Avila from the regional Home Economics school at Sainte Martine, Quebec was the instructor for this group, which dealt with more advanced topics. The students in this section were assumed to have knowledge of weaving, perhaps from one of Sister Donalds's earlier courses, and so covered additional weaving material as well as straw braiding and vegetable dyeing.

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<sup>123</sup> Néonie Ricard, private interview, September, 1981.

<sup>124</sup> Sister Madeleine Parent, private interview, September, 1981.

There were thirty-three participants in the two programs, twenty-three of whom were nuns and ten of whom were laymen. Each of the students had the use of a loom, there being about thirty-seven looms available.

Spinning was also assumed to be taught, either at the elementary or the advanced level, or both, since the St. Joseph's classrooms were said to have contained six spinning wheels.<sup>125</sup>

According to a Winnipeg Tribune article Sister Donalda went to St. Agathe to teach, in November of 1942. Classes there "were held from 9 to 12 in the morning and 2:30 to 5 in the afternoon [for six weeks] and [t]here were 15 looms busy all the time".<sup>126</sup> As in all her previous courses, this one was well received, not only by the women and girls who participated, but also by the village residents who attended an exhibition of the weaving produced. Father Clovis Paille, the parish priest, was delighted with the success of the course and felt that there were other potential and realized benefits arising from this instruction, in addition to the instruction itself.

"We hope it will lead to sheep raising and the growing of flax." Then he added: "It's not just the fact that they have learned to make pretty and useful things for their homes that made the course so successful. It has taught them thrift,

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<sup>125</sup> Institut et Collège St. Joseph, Chronicles, IV, (St. Boniface: July 28, 1942), 88.

<sup>126</sup> Verena Garrioch, "Villagers of St. Agathe Present Display of Weaving", Winnipeg Tribune, November 17, 1942, 8.

patience and perseverance. It has taught us older people that not all the young ones want to spend their time in idle pleasures."<sup>127</sup>

Clearly, this education was not merely skill oriented but embraced the broader purpose as expressed by Abbot Tessier of getting back to the simple things and becoming more in tune with the environment.<sup>128</sup> It also proved a successful vehicle for the church to promote moral virtues and helped to foster a greater understanding between the generations.

During the remainder of 1942, Sister Donalda went on to St. Pierre and then on January 15, 1943, she began a course at Holy Rosary School in Winnipeg. This course had twenty-six women and girls as students, each with her own loom. A newspaper article in March gave glowing accounts of the quality of the work produced by these weavers (and others taught previously by Sister Donalda) which was displayed in an exhibition at the school.

The woven articles described at this exhibition alone are numerous,<sup>129</sup> ranging from altar mats, ties, scarves and baby shawls to bedspreads, curtains, steamer rugs and tweed wardrobe for men's and ladies' suits.

On March 31, 1943, Sister Marie Maximilla, also of the order of The Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, left St. Boniface for Ste. Martine, Quebec where she received training as a

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<sup>127</sup> Garrioch, op. cit., 8.

<sup>128</sup> Institut et Collège St. Joseph, Chronicles, IV, (St. Boniface: July 7, 1941), 62.

<sup>129</sup> Winnipeg Free Press, March 9, 1943, 8.

weaving instructor<sup>130</sup> and, later that year, she replaced Sister Donald as a teacher of weaving. Sister Max, as she is now fondly referred to, is thought to be in her nineties but still has many fine memories of her weaving classes.

Over many years, Sister Maximilla taught weaving to hundreds of people, primarily in rural communities. She went to some English, as well as the French, communities and taught weaving to all kinds of people -- small children, women and men, even to some of the priests. Father J.A. Laurin, the parish priest at Letellier, was so taken with weaving after participating in one of Sister Maximilla's courses that weaving became his hobby.<sup>131</sup> Sister Maximilla mentioned the names of a few of the communities in which she gave her course and these were: St. Malo, St. Pierre, Otterburn, St. Jean Baptiste, St. Agathe and St. Adolphe, all in the Red River Valley area. Apparently this was the area which she primarily toured, although she did recall going to Spokane, Washington for two summers to give weaving courses.<sup>132</sup>

Sister Maximilla usually gave her classes in church basements using looms which she had transported with her from place to place. To St. Claude for example, fifteen 45 inch

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<sup>130</sup> L'école Sacré-Coeur, Chronicles, 1918-1945, (Winnipeg: March 9, 1943), 171.

<sup>131</sup> Sister Helene Chaput, archivist, St. Joseph's Academy, private interview, October, 1981.

<sup>132</sup> Sister Marie Maximilla, private interview, September, 1981.

looms and one larger loom were sent.<sup>133</sup> The larger loom was apparently a double loom, requiring two weavers to operate, and had a weaving width of 90 inches. Because of the width, this loom was suitable for weaving blankets and things of that type.<sup>134</sup>

It was no small job transporting these looms, as they were large and bulky objects. The Nilus Leclerc Inc. catalogue published in 1944 records the dimensions and weight of a forty-five inch loom as four feet seven inches long by three feet wide by four feet three inches high, and the weight as 125 pounds. The ninety inch loom was the same width as the forty-five inch one but its height and width were three and forty-seven inches greater, respectively and it weighed an additional 110 pounds.

Sister Cecile Turenne was a teacher at Sacred Heart School during the time that Sister Maximilla was giving her courses and, since she too enjoyed weaving, she went out with sister Maximilla on weekends to help her set up her looms. At the end of one session, this meant taking the looms to pieces so that they could be transported to the next community and then reassembled for the new class.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> SEP, November, 1943, 10.

<sup>134</sup> Sister Marie Maximilla, private interview, September, 1981.

<sup>135</sup> Sister Cecile Turenne, private interview, September, 1981.

November, 1943 saw the first volume of SEP published. This was a small booklet which was the official organ of la Société Postscolaire and provided brief descriptions of the group's ongoing activities. The first issue described the weaving course which Sister Maximilla gave in St. Claude, with the assistance of Abbot Padaz. She had twelve students take this instruction and according to SEP, it was very well received.<sup>136</sup>

By the time that SEP began its publication, the weaving program was reasonably well established. Four hundred Manitobans had been taught to weave and la Société had about thirty looms on hand. The organization also kept stocks of materials which they were able to send out to courses, along with the looms. At that time, increasing prices of materials were not the major problem for the group, but the scarcity of supplies<sup>137</sup> was a serious concern. It must be remembered that this was during the second world war, with its attendant shortages and rationing. The Nilus Leclerc company was classed as a farm machinery producer by the government because of the long association of handweaving with agriculture, and was therefore deemed a high priority industry. In this way the company was able to purchase raw materials such as lumber and metal, to hire workers and

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<sup>136</sup> SEP, November, 1943, 10.

<sup>137</sup> SEP, November, 1943, 10.

<sup>138</sup> Robert Leclerc, private interview, June, 1981.

therefore to keep up the production of its looms.<sup>138</sup>

The range of articles produced in Manitoba weaving classes during this program was obviously considerable, as was the quantity. Sister Maximilla recalled a similar inventory of items being produced as those in Sister Donald's Holy Rosary exhibition. She also mentioned towels and blankets, in addition to catalogues, the characteristically French Canadian carpeting, woven in a very simple weave structure using rags as weft.<sup>139</sup>

Only a small fee of ten dollars was charged to the students to defray the costs and provide an honorarium for the instructor.<sup>140</sup> The students were required to pay for materials which they used in their projects and were able to obtain them from la Société stores. The cone of yarn that they used was weighed before the student started winding a warp on bobbins from it and was weighed again, after the project was woven. The weight of yarn used was thus determined and charged.<sup>141</sup>

According to SEP, during the year 1944 alone, la Société d'Enseignement Postscolaire gave fourteen courses to 182 students and sold 47 looms.<sup>142</sup> In excess of 80 women and

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<sup>139</sup> Harold B. Burnham and Dorothy K. Burnham, Keep Me Warm One Night: Early Handweaving in Eastern Canada, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 10.

<sup>140</sup> SEP, February, 1945, 8.

<sup>141</sup> Sister Cecile Turenne, private interview, September, 1981.

<sup>142</sup> SEP, February, 1945, 8.

girls took the course in 1945 and about 50 looms were sold by la Societe that year.<sup>143</sup>

#### 4.0.16 Related Weaving Courses

A great many of the people who took these weaving courses, particularly those given during the summer at St. Joseph's College, were teachers. Indeed, that was probably the occupation of most of the nuns who learned to weave in these programs. Some teachers took this instruction and learned to weave purely for their own use and enjoyment but there were others who went back to their schools and passed on their knowledge to their students. Sister Cecile for example, taught at Sacred Heart School where weaving was a part of the Home Economics program. The girls wove fabric which they then made up into skirts or dresses.<sup>144</sup>

Sister Agnes Demoissec, also of St. Joseph's College, took the weaving course in St. Boniface one summer and then went back to teach her elementary school children in Kenora. Kenora was very isolated from the heavily populated Ontario centres so that the sisters who taught in the schools there had much more contact with and were more influenced by Winnipeg and St. Boniface. They did in fact, feel themselves to be a part of the "religious province of Manitoba". Sister Agnes taught weaving to her grades four, five and six

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<sup>143</sup> SEP, December, 1945, 2.

<sup>144</sup> Sister Cecile Turenne, private interview, September, 1981.

students and was very gratified with their progress in this subject. By grade five, the students were making scarves and weaving their initials in at the ends. This type of education was apparently very well viewed by the parents, who were pleased to see their children completing projects which required perseverance and self-disciplined attention to detail. The parents were also gratified to see the pride of workmanship displayed by the students as well as the interest shown in the traditional weave structures and patterns. The school inspector was also exceedingly pleased to see this type of skill being taught in the school,<sup>145</sup> and these impressions had a positive effect on the size of the grants which it received.

#### 4.0.17 End of La Société d'Enseignement Postsecondaire Weaving

Sister Maximilla is not thought to have taught formal weaving courses past the 1940's, although she did continue to instruct on a limited individual basis.<sup>146</sup> There is no record of another instructor having taken over the teaching of classes in weaving. Also, the bulletin of La Société ceased to be published soon after 1945. The December 1945 issue stated that financial assistance from the University

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<sup>145</sup> Sister Agnes Demoissac, private interview, September, 1981.

<sup>146</sup> Sister Helene Chaput, private interview, November 1981.

<sup>147</sup> SEP December 1945.

of Manitoba would allow publication of a few more issues,<sup>147</sup> but these issues, if they were published, are not contained in the holdings of the Saint Boniface Historical Society, although the Historical Society's archives do contain all of the SEP bulletins up to that point.

The Manitoba government awarded grants to the "Manitoba Association for Adult Education", which was the English translation of the name - "La Société d'Enseignement Post-scolaire", beginning with the \$700.00 grant received in the 1941-42 fiscal year, and each year after that an additional payment was made, ending with the fiscal year 1947-48. There was no money paid to this organization in 1948-49.<sup>148</sup> Informed sources<sup>149</sup> say that the last grant mentioned was roughly coincident with the end of its formal weaving program.

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<sup>148</sup> Grants paid to the Manitoba Association for Adult Education by the Province of Manitoba were as follows:

|                              |           |           |
|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| May 1, 1941 - April 30, 1942 | \$ 700.00 |           |
| May 1, 1942 - April 30, 1943 |           | \$ 400.00 |
| May 1, 1943 - April 30, 1944 |           | \$1400.00 |
| May 1, 1944 - April 30, 1945 |           | \$1000.00 |
| May 1, 1945 - April 30, 1946 |           | \$ 500.00 |
| May 1, 1946 - April 30, 1947 |           | \$ 400.00 |
| May 1, 1947 - April 30, 1948 |           | \$ 500.00 |

Public Accounts of the Province of Manitoba for the Fiscal Years ended April 30, 1942, 1943, 1944, 1945, 1946, 1947, 1948.

<sup>149</sup> Sister Helene Chaput, private interview, October, 1981. Marie Paule Robitaille, St. Boniface Historical Society, private interview, October, 1981.

#### 4.0.18 Summary

La Société d'Enseignement Postscolaire du Manitoba was founded in 1934 in St. Boniface by Father Antoine D'Eschambault, as a local chapter of the older Société d'Enseignement Postscolaire in Quebec and, following programs in Quebec, this Manitoba group offered a course in handweaving at St. Joseph's Academy. This instruction, which was offered jointly with the Manitoba Department of Education, began on July 27, 1941 with two nuns from Quebec serving as instructors. Following this course one of the nuns, Sister Donald, taught weaving in several rural Manitoba parishes and then taught a second summer weaving course at St. Joseph's Academy in 1942. After the second summer course, Sister Donald returned to Quebec but a Manitoba nun, Sister Maximilla, was trained as a weaving instructor and continued the courses in rural and city parishes, teaching in some English speaking, as well as the French, communities.

Grants were paid by the Province of Manitoba to this group under the English translation of its name - "Manitoba Association for Adult Education", in varying amounts for every fiscal year, beginning with 1941-42 and ending in 1947-48. By this time, SEP was no longer published and the weaving activities were believed to be winding down. Father D'Eschambault himself, died on May 18, 1960.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> La Liberté, Saint Boniface, September 24, 1981, 2.

These courses, while they were in operation, were very much a manifestation of the contemporary Franco-Manitoban cultural objectives. An obvious objective was to teach a practical skill to the women of the community, thereby providing a mechanism for aiding their entire families, as well as being a source of pride and self-esteem for the women themselves. The classes also provided a creative hobby for these women, as well as to the men and young girls who were included in the program. The instruction had implications for the French language too, since it was given in French at a time when the provincial government had denied the rights of French-speaking students to be given their schooling in their own language. In terms of religion, the involvement of the Roman Catholic church in this project acted to provide the church leadership which was no longer allowed in Manitoba public schools. Finally, the Quebec origins and instructors of this program provided a tangible link for these French-speaking people, who were surrounded by a much larger English-speaking population, to the older, larger and better established French community in Quebec. This program of weaving education thus provided one focus for the activities of the French-speaking Roman Catholic community and aided in the cause of non-assimilation of these people into the broader culture of Manitoba.

## Chapter V

### SEARLE GRAIN AND WEAVING

#### 5.0.19 Philosophy

In the early 1930's, Augustus L. Searle, who was then the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Searle Grain Co. Ltd., had set up within the company, the Research Department and "Crop Testing Plan". This was because Mr. Searle felt "that an organization that handled the farmers' products owed a duty to farmers to try to assist them in improving their welfare, besides efficiently and well handling their grain".<sup>151</sup>

In 1940, he decided that some effort should be made to assist the farm wives, "many who lived quite isolated lives on our western prairies".<sup>152</sup> During the depression of the previous decade, Western farmers had found a need to become more self-sufficient, growing their own vegetables and raising their own livestock. Handweaving of clothing and household textiles was another way in which the farm household could become less dependent on purchased goods. "[I]nspired by the astonishing success that attended the revival of

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<sup>151</sup> H.G.L. Strange, "Rural Home Weaving", (Winnipeg: Searle Grain Company Ltd., July 21, 1943), 2.

<sup>152</sup> Dorothy Rankine, letter to the author, October, 1981.

home-weaving and handicrafts in Quebec, the Company.....[embarked upon a program of weaving instruction] with the particular object of helping the farmer's wife".<sup>153</sup> The Searle Grain program of weaving instruction was thus, an attempt on the part of this company to assist the prairie farm wives directly, and their families indirectly, by teaching them the craft of weaving. The Winnipeg Tribune summarized the philosophy of the program very well:

The purpose of the new course is not to establish a new farm industry but merely to show farm women how to weave so they can improve their own individual surroundings.<sup>154</sup>

By the fall of 1942, after the program was in place, the Searle Grain Company decided that other advantages to their home weaving program (still philanthropic) existed for western Canada, and issued a circular describing these advantages:

ADDITIONAL TO SEARLE CIRCULAR ON RURAL HOME WEAVING:

It has been drawn to our attention that there are advantages with home weaving in Western Canada additional to those we have enumerated in the circular entitled "Rural Home Weaving" as follows:-

It is thought that when the war is over, numbers of young women who have left the farms to serve in various war capacities as stenographers, clerks, and as members of the women's forces, will be out of employment, and will return to their farm homes. Home weaving would provide for them a very useful occupation.

<sup>153</sup> Kathleen Strange, "Weaving is Back!", National Home Monthly, August, 1942, 11.

<sup>154</sup> Alice McEachern, "Grain Firm Sponsors Weaving Instruction:", Winnipeg Tribune, April 18, 1942, 3.

It is also thought that soldiers when they are demobilized, after the stress and strain of war, will feel an urge to do something with their hands. Many demobilized soldiers after the last war took up various forms of knitting, needlework, tapestry and other forms of work. It is felt that a certain number of the demobilized soldiers who will return to their farms, would find weaving a useful and satisfying occupation until they can be re-established in a permanent occupation.<sup>155</sup>

Clearly the Searle Grain Company felt that their program of weaving instruction had positive implications for the war effort, even though these benefits would seem to have come as an after thought. Weaving would provide a useful occupation for some of the surplus work force of women returning to the farm and also, temporarily, for demobilized soldiers. It was viewed too, as a potential form of occupational therapy to counteract some of the physical and emotional effects of the war on many of the returning soldiers.

#### 5.0.20 Early Beginnings

Having decided to offer this type of instruction, the Searle Grain Company contacted Oscar Beriau in Quebec, to obtain advice on setting up the program. Oscar Beriau's daughter Renee, who was herself an extremely competent weaver and weaving instructor,<sup>156</sup> came to Manitoba early in 1942, to assist in organizing the endeavour. Searle Grain and Miss Beriau recruited four local farm girls to be

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<sup>155</sup> Searle Grain Company, Ltd., (Weaving Department), Winnipeg, September 11, 1942.

<sup>156</sup> H.G.L. Strange, op. cit., 2.

trained as instructors, each of these girls being fluent in English and at least one other language. These recruits were: Miss Helen Boilev of La Broquerie and Miss Germaine Chaput of St. Adolphe who spoke French, Miss Laura Muirhead of Carberry who spoke Swedish and Mrs. Ann Yakimischak of Winnipeg who spoke Ukrainian and Russian.<sup>157</sup> Miss Periau spent three months giving these four girls an extensive course which prepared them as weaving instructors and they went out to begin teaching in April of 1942,<sup>158</sup> each of these instructors going to a community where her language would best serve.

Oscar Periau was apparently most helpful in locating a collection of woven articles which the instructors could take to the rural communities to display and use as examples.<sup>159</sup>

#### 5.0.21 Searle Grain Weaving Courses

The first weaving course in this program began on April 20, 1942 and was taught by Laura Muirhead in Melford, Saskatchewan; the second course began on April 27 at Blaine Lake, Saskatchewan and was taught by Ann Yakimischak; the third course began on May 4 at Iqal, Alberta and was taught by Germaine Chaput, and the fourth course, taught by Helen

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<sup>157</sup> Dorothy Rankine, letter dated November, 1978 and K. Strange, op. cit., 11.

<sup>158</sup> McEachern, op. cit., 3.

<sup>159</sup> Dorothy Rankine, private interview, October, 1981.

Boiley in St. Paul, Alberta, began on May 11.<sup>160</sup> Because la Société d'Enseignement Postsecondaire had been teaching weaving in rural Manitoba for more than half a year at this point, and was continuing with a strong program of weaving instruction in Manitoba, most of the courses which the Searle Grain Company taught were in Saskatchewan and Alberta. They did however offer their instruction in some Manitoba communities and their base of operations was in Winnipeg. As such, the Searle project does constitute a major contribution to the weaving education in Manitoba during the 1940's.

The courses were taught in towns or villages which had a Searle Grain elevator, and the local agent assisted with the unloading and setting up of looms and other equipment, which had been shipped to that location by rail. A church basement or town hall was usually used for the instruction - anywhere that could be obtained for a reasonable rent.

In connection with the weaving courses, the Searle Grain instructors asked the pupils in each community of instruction to form a weaving circle, the formation of which was to be guided by a set of explicitly stated rules and regulations provided by Searle Grain.<sup>161</sup> These regulations provided the terms of reference for the courses themselves as well as a mechanism for continuation of the weaving program after

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<sup>160</sup> McEachern, op. cit., 3.

<sup>161</sup> Searle Grain Company, Limited (Research Department), Winnipeg, February 1, 1943. [See Appendix F]

the formal instruction had ended.

"Membership in the Farm Home Weaving Circles [and the weaving classes was] to be open to any farm woman or girl who is interested in the work".<sup>162</sup> The wives of Searle Grain customers were given first choice at the courses and vacancies, if any, were filled by other farm wives and then by townspeople.<sup>163</sup> Participation in this program was not limited by religious or ethnic affiliation.

The courses were offered completely free of charge, although a nominal fee of 50 cents annually, was required of the weaving circle members. A secretary-treasurer was to be elected from within the circle, and this person was to collect the annual fee and use it for "paying incidental expenses such as postage, stationery, telephone calls and so forth".<sup>164</sup> It was to be used strictly for the maintenance of the individual weaving circle and was completely independent of the Searle Grain Company.

Looms and other weaving equipment were provided for the use of the students during their instruction. Raw materials such as cotton, wool or linen yarns were also provided, although if a student wished to keep a finished article for her own use, she was required to pay the Company's wholesale cost for the yarns used.

<sup>162</sup> Searle Grain (Research Department), op. cit.

<sup>163</sup> Dorothy Rankine, private interview, October, 1981.

<sup>164</sup> Searle Grain (Research Department), op. cit.

Clearly, the Searle Grain Company made every effort to keep the costs incurred by individual students as low as possible, with the Company assuming financial responsibility for the instructor, equipment, place of instruction and such materials as were used in articles to be retained for demonstration purposes.

All of the instruction was to be given following a standardized format, where each course was to be of six weeks' duration, running a minimum of two and a half hours per day, five days a week. One group of students would receive this two and a half hours of instruction in the morning and another group would be taught in the afternoon. The capacity of each section was restricted to six students (for a total of twelve students) so that each person had the exclusive use of a loom for the duration of the course.<sup>165</sup>

It is perhaps indicative of the corporate nature of the grain company sponsoring this program that the parameters for these courses were so completely specified. The hours of instruction were defined in much the same way as a work day and the maximum number of participants was specified in terms of the available resources. The nature of the commitment expected of the students was also a reflection of the business orientation of the sponsoring organization. The participants were required to "guarantee to attend regularly

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<sup>165</sup> Dorothy Rankine, private interview, October, 1981.

<sup>166</sup> Searle Grain (Research Department), op. cit.

five days a week"<sup>166</sup> and also to "agree to carry out faithfully the detailed instructions of the teacher, and to weave only during the period of instruction such materials and such designs as the teacher shall approve, and which form part of the teaching course".<sup>167</sup>

Searle Grain felt that diligent effort spent on these courses would however yield very positive benefits for the students.

It has been found from years of experience in Quebec, in the Maritime Provinces, in Newfoundland and in the United States that a five or six weeks' course is sufficient to teach farm women or girls to be able to make almost anything in their homes in the way of blankets, curtains, bedspreads, tablecloths, towels, material for making dresses or suits and so forth.<sup>168</sup>

Although the period of instruction was relatively short, the courses were very intensive. Many of the students were mature women who were highly motivated to produce attractive and useful woven textiles and who were willing to expend the effort necessary to gain a good grasp of the principles and skills. These people did live up to Searle Grain's stated expectations and it was found that, after completing the course, "pupils are quite competent weavers of those weaves, some thirty in number, that are necessary to produce most of the things needed in a farm home:- clothing for men, women and children; bedspreads, curtains, tablecloths, towels, handbags, scarves and many other beautiful and useful arti-

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<sup>167</sup> Searle Grain (Research Department), op. cit.

<sup>168</sup> Searle Grain (Research Department), op. cit.

cles".<sup>169</sup>

The Searle Grain Company, through the formation of the Weaving Circles, also tried to provide a means of keeping weaving active in a community after the instructors had left. One function of the weaving circles was to teach new weavers who had not attended the classes. "[O]ne single request is made of the Weaving circles which is that because the members have been taught weaving free by the Searle Grain Co. that they in turn will teach free any farm women who desire to learn weaving."<sup>170</sup>

The weaving circles were also supposed to act as a focus for the weaving activity in the community. It is difficult, if not impossible, for weavers to maintain an interest in their craft when working in isolation<sup>171</sup> and the meetings of these groups of weavers were intended to provide a source of communication and inspiration for the individuals involved. The circles, which were meant to become as autonomous as possible, were to form a social institution which would bring together women with a common interest and help to overcome the isolation and loneliness of prairie farm

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<sup>169</sup> Searle Grain Company Ltd., "Hand Loom Weaving: The Story of the Searle Grain Company's Effort to Sponsor Hand-Loom Weaving Among the Farm Women of the Prairie Provinces", (Winnipeg: Searle Grain Company Ltd., July, 1944), 2.

<sup>170</sup> Searle Grain (Research Department), op. cit.

<sup>171</sup> Laura McHugh, private interview, May, 1981.

<sup>172</sup> Dorothy Rankine, letter to the author, October, 1981.

life.<sup>172</sup>

The motive of the Searle Grain Company in undertaking the weaving education project was "to assist in the revival of farm home-weaving because the Company believes it is a good thing for the homes of Western Canada".<sup>173</sup> It was also true of course that an increase in the productivity and prosperity of the western grain farms would have its corresponding benefits for the company which handled the prairie grain.

In 1944, the Searle Weaving Competition was held, to which almost two hundred pieces were submitted. "The entries were sent to Quebec where they were judged and placed on display",<sup>174</sup> and then returned to be displayed in Winnipeg. H.G.L. Strange, the director of the Searle Grain Research Department, sent an open letter to the weavers on June 19, 1944, in which he stated:

The judges in Quebec were most enthusiastic about the high quality of the workmanship, and the clever designs and composition of the various pieces. They said that these qualities were quite unexpected. We are told that the Supervisors and teachers in Quebec who have had twelve or more years of experience "examined this material not without some jealousy."<sup>175</sup>

By July of 1944, 62 classes had been held, at which 794 women and girls were taught to weave. These pupils purchased 246 of the 45 inch looms endorsed by the company for rural use, and the pupils who purchased looms wove an esti-

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<sup>173</sup> Searle Grain (Research Department), op. cit.

<sup>174</sup> Searle Grain, "Hand Loom Weaving", op. cit., 2.

<sup>175</sup> H.G.L. Strange, open letter to weavers, June 19, 1944.

mated 10,000 yards of 45 inch material on these looms.<sup>176</sup> Later that year, as a result of the newly imposed gas rationing, the weaving instruction program came to an abrupt halt. Farmers could no longer spare the gas for their wives to drive to town and their weaving lessons. A course which was being conducted in Two Hills, Alberta at the time could not even be completed. The instructors and looms returned to Winnipeg and this part of the Searle weaving program was disbanded.<sup>177</sup>

#### 5.0.22 Searle Farm Home Weaving Service

At the same time that the Searle Grain Company developed their weaving education program, they also opened the Searle Farm Home Weaving Service in their head office in the Grain Exchange Building, Winnipeg. This Farm Home Weaving Service acted in the capacity of a retail outlet for the equipment and materials necessary to practise hand weaving. It also had a consultant, Dorothy Rankine, on staff who looked after the operation of the Winnipeg office, in addition to giving advice and assistance to weavers.

Prior to this time, the Nilus Leclerc loom company had sold all of its looms directly from the factory through catalogue sales, so that the Searle Grain Company thus became

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<sup>176</sup> Searle Grain, "Hand Loom Weaving", op. cit., 3.

<sup>177</sup> Dorothy Rankine, private interview, October, 1981.

<sup>178</sup> Robert Leclerc, private interview, June, 1981.

their first dealer.<sup>178</sup> If a student of the program wished to buy her own loom, she could purchase a 45 inch Leclerc loom like the one that she had been using, from Searle at a cost, in 1942, of about \$48.00 which included delivery from the mill in L'Islet, Quebec to the farm home. The customer also had the option of paying for her loom at the rate of five dollars per month, with no interest charged.<sup>179</sup> Dorothy Rankine had been given clear guidelines to follow in the operation of her department by Stewart A. Searle (the son of Augustus Searle) and Norman Leach, who were two of the directors of the company at the time.<sup>180</sup> "Looms and weaving accessories were to be sold at no profit."<sup>181</sup>

The Searle Weaving office also stocked a large variety of yarns for weaving. Linen was brought in from Ireland and France, as were tweed yarns and fine wools from Great Britain and cotton and novelty yarns. The primary function of the weaving office was to assist the farm wife by providing a good selection of yarns at a reasonable price, but in order to make these orders economical, relatively large quantities of any particular yarn were purchased. Because these large stocks were maintained the Weaving office did a mail

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<sup>179</sup> Searle Grain, "Hand Loom Weaving", 3.

<sup>180</sup> Searle Grain Company, Limited was incorporated June 27, 1929 under the Companies Act. The Application for Registration dated Dec. 17, 1932 listed Stewart Augustus Searle and Norman Lawrence Leach, grain dealers, as the first two of the five directors.

<sup>181</sup> Dorothy Rankine, letter to the author dated October, 1981.

order and retail business which went far beyond the range of the prairie farm wives. The Searle Weaving Office in fact shipped both yarns and equipment all over the world.<sup>81</sup>

It was the policy of Dorothy Rankine, the consultant, that one spool of every yarn sold by the company should be on display in the Grain Exchange building office, so that the weaver could actually feel the yarn and see it in its complete colour range before making a purchase. These spools or cones of yarn were displayed on large racks along one wall of the office. Another wall had drapes hung which had been woven in the patterns found in Oscar Beriau's "Home Weaving" book and made up. Looms were also set up in the office, both the Leclerc model and the "Hand Skill" invented by Elphege Nadeau, imported from the United States as an experiment.<sup>82</sup>

For customers who were unable to get to the Winnipeg office, a mail order service was established. Mimeographed sheets of yarn information were mailed out, as well as details of books and equipment. Along the left hand edge of the sheet were attached short (approximately 2 cm.) snippets of the yarns described, in the complete colour range.<sup>83</sup> The process of assembling these sheets was of course, greatly

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<sup>81</sup> Dorothy Rankine, private interview, October, 1981.

<sup>82</sup> Dorothy Rankine, private interview, October, 1981 and Greeting Cards with photo and text printed by the Searle Farm Home Weaving Service

<sup>83</sup> Searle Grain Farm Home Weaving Service, mail order price lists.

aided by the comprehensive yarn display in the racks on the wall. Dorothy Rankine said that her assistants became very efficient at gathering up these small samples of yarn and making up the price lists.<sup>84</sup>

The Searle weaving department had another regular publication as well. Every month, when the invoices went out, a bulletin entitled "Searle Suggestions" was included. These newsletters covered a variety of topics and fulfilled a number of functions. They maintained a friendly contact between the weaver and the weaving department, through Dorothy Rankine's inclusion of descriptions of exhibitions, tales of other weavers' activities, excerpts of poems, quotes, little notes of interest and items of this nature. Also included was information about new arrivals of yarn, and helpful hints for specific weaving tasks.

The newsletters often included small samples of actual hand woven fabric. Weavers would ask Mrs. Rankine for assistance with a project, either in person or by mail, and then when it was completed would often take or send her some of the fabric left over from the completed project. This was strictly their own choice. She would then cut up the fabric and include it in a bulletin, along with details of the weaving and the project, and an acknowledgement of the weaver. Contact of this type would certainly have acted as an inspiration for a woman weaving in an isolated community

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<sup>84</sup> Dorothy Rankine, private interview, October, 1981.

without the benefit of other weavers' company for stimulation.<sup>85</sup>

## 2.0.11 End of Searle Grain Weaving

The Searle Grain Company's involvement with weaving terminated in two stages. As previously discussed, the education portion of the program was disbanded in 1944, but the Farm Home Weaving Service continued for another twenty years, until the fall of 1964.

On October 31, 1964 the final edition of "Searle Suggestions" was mailed out and the Weaving Department closed its doors. "For three years afterwards letters continued to arrive from all over the continent. Authors of weaving books had recommended our [the] dept. highly, in listings on back pages. Cheques [and] money orders had to be constantly returned."<sup>86</sup> Dorothy Rankine was employed for two years on a part salary basis, working out of her home, attending to this correspondence, and after that a form letter was used by the company.

Dear Hand Loom Weaver:

This letter is to inform you that the Searle Grain Weaving Department has been closed since 31st October 1964. The reason for closing was due to the change of buying habits, such as Group Purchasing, to obtain threads at lower costs. Our Company felt that this is a good idea. Our Weaving Department has completely closed, all weaving equipment and threads have been sold.

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<sup>85</sup> Dorothy Rankine, "Searle Suggestions", Winnipeg (not always dated)

<sup>86</sup> Dorothy Rankine, note to the author, October, 1981.

As the form letter states, the changing buying habits of weavers was instrumental in the decision to close down the Weaving Department. Weavers would mail order yarns as a group, thereby obtaining a bulk order discount on the purchase, and likely paying very little if any more than the Searle Grain wholesale cost. Since these individuals could order exactly the types and quantities of yarns that they required, they would not have large amounts of money tied up in an extensive inventory, as did the Searle Weaving Department. This type of purchasing would greatly reduce the effectiveness of Searle Grain as a retail outlet.

Because of Searle Grain's stated reason for closing its Weaving Department, one might assume that the isolation of the prairie farm wife had been successfully broken down. It must be remembered however that the retail outlet was not restricted to farm women but almost certainly derived a great deal of its business from Winnipeg weavers. By 1964, there were several Winnipeg based weaving organizations, and these likely formed the focus for much of the group purchasing. Although the farm women may, in many cases, still have been using Searle Grain's Weaving Department to its full advantage, their numbers were not sufficient to maintain the economic viability of this department as a retail outlet.

There was also an additional factor which brought about Searle Grain's decision to close its Weaving Department. In 1965 Searle Grain and Federal Grain amalgamated and, in

preparation for this move, the Searle Grain Company streamlined its operation, closing down all its peripheral areas, and unfortunately the Weaving Department was one of these.<sup>87</sup>

## 2.0.12 Summary

The Searle Grain Company's involvement in weaving education in Manitoba came about as a result of Augustus Searle's efforts to find some manner in which his company could assist the wives of the prairie grain farmers. Seeing the success of the Quebec government's program to re-vitalize handweaving in that province, Mr. Searle consulted with Oscar Beriau, who had been instrumental in establishing the Quebec program, for advice in organizing a similar project for the prairies. In early 1942, Oscar Beriau's daughter Renee, who was herself a very competent weaving instructor, came to Winnipeg to help with the Searle project. Four local girls were also recruited, fully trained as weaving instructors by Miss Beriau, and sent out to different rural communities to teach weaving. These classes, the first of which began on April 20, 1942, lasted until 1944, when gas rationing meant that the farmers could no longer spare the fuel for their wives to drive to their weaving lessons.

Although Searle Grain's handweaving instruction ended in 1944, another component of their weaving program continued for the next twenty years. The Searle Home Farm Weaving

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<sup>87</sup> Dorothy Rankine, private interview, October, 1981.

Service which acted as a retail and mail order outlet for supplies, as well as a source of help and information for weavers (primarily through the efforts of its consultant, Dorothy Rankine) did not close its doors until October 31, 1964, the year prior to Searle Grain's merger with Federal Grain.

## Chapter VI

### OTHER HANDWEAVING ACTIVITY IN MANITOBA IN THE 1940'S AND AFTER

#### 6.0.25 Related Manitoba Activities

In addition to the two large weaving education projects initiated by la Société d'Enseignement Postsecondaire du Manitoba and the Searle Grain Company, several other movements took place in Manitoba in the 1940's which were related to handweaving.

In March of 1943 the Winnipeg Tribune described a four week weaving course which was given by the local chapter of the Canadian Handicraft Guild. This course, which was the earliest specific mention of weaving instruction by the Manitoba branch of the Handicraft Guild, was apparently so successful and the enrollment of new pupils so continuous, "that afternoon and evening courses [were to be] given during March".<sup>189</sup>

It should be noted however that, although these weaving courses were successful, the scale was much smaller than either of the two large projects. The Manitoba branch of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, which had been formed in 1928,

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<sup>189</sup> Lillian Gibbons, "'What's On Your Loom Today, Madam?' - 'Why A Web of Beauty, I Hope!'", Winnipeg Tribune, March 6, 1943, 9.

was concerned with all types of crafts and the total membership was said to be small. Also, during the 1930's and 1940's, the Guild did not have a permanent home base but maintained its sales shop and headquarters in rented rooms.<sup>190</sup> Thus, with these limited resources and the wide diversity of interests, the Manitoba Crafts Guild was not in a position to mount a weaving education project with nearly the scope of those instituted by la Société d'Enseignement Postscolaire and the Searle Grain Company.

January of 1944 saw the introduction of "Loom Music", a new weaving journal, published by Ethel Henderson, a Manitoba weaver, and Mary Sandin of Edmonton, Alberta. A foreword contained in the first volume of the journal outlined the goals and format of the new publication:

It is the purpose of the authors to offer to hand-weavers a Canadian publication similar to those available in the United States. "Loom Music" will appear monthly, with plans and explanations simple enough for the new weaver to understand and follow, and with practical material for all weavers. The experience of the authors in weaving studios as well as that gained as weaving instructors at the Banff School of Fine Arts during the past few summers, will be placed at your disposal.<sup>191</sup>

In 1947, Ethel Henderson was instrumental in founding another group which furthered the interests of Canadian hand weaving when she, along with Mary Black of Nova Scotia and Mary Sandin, drafted a plan for the organization of the Can-

<sup>190</sup> Evelyn Ames, talk given to the members of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild (Manitoba Branch), October 10, 1963.

<sup>191</sup> Ethel Henderson and Mary Sandin, "Loom Music", Vol. I, No. 1, January, 1944, 1.

adian Guild of Weavers.

"The purposes of the guild were many, but the main objective was to raise the technical, mechanical and artistic standards of handweaving among Canadian weavers."<sup>192</sup>

Local chapters of the guild were formed in each of the provinces and meetings of these local groups were, and in fact still are, held on a regular basis. These meetings provide an opportunity for members to study various aspects of weaving together, as well as to share their own weaving experiences with each other.

Despite "Boom Music" and the Canadian Guild of Weavers having had their origins partially in Manitoba, they were not exclusively provincial organizations, but relied on all of Canada for support and participation. Therefore, although these projects were large, their Manitoba component, however significant, was not necessarily extensive.

#### 6.0.26 Weaving After the 1940's

The weaving activity of both La Société d'Enseignement Postscolaire and the Searle Grain company diminished considerably by the end of the 1940's but the local chapters of both the Canadian Handicrafts Guild and the Canadian Guild of Weavers do still continue to promote handweaving. The purpose and emphasis of this handweaving has however, changed over the years.

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<sup>192</sup> Guild of Canadian Weavers, "Member's Handbook", undated.

During the 1940's, the focus of all the Manitoba weaving education was primarily the production of functional articles. Weaving was seen as a means of producing clothing and household textiles while, at the same time, pursuing a hobby. After this decade however, weaving, which was still practised as a hobby, became more concerned with art and artistic expression and less involved with practical production of fabrics. Shirley Held described perfectly the shifts of emphasis in handweaving which took place generally after the 1940's.

Since the 1940s the output of the handloom has changed considerably. New materials--nylon, rayon, plastics, metallics--have broadened the resources of the weaver immeasurably. The production of yardage, accomplished much more efficiently by power looms, has declined, and there is a new emphasis on wall hangings, garments, rugs, and sculptural constructions.<sup>193</sup>

Although Shirley Held referred primarily to an American situation, the same trends were followed in Manitoba. At least as early as 1953, rayon was advertised in "Searle Suggestions"<sup>194</sup> and by the early 1960's a large selection of man-made and metallic yarns was included in Searle Grain's stock.<sup>195</sup> As the shortages of the depression and war were alleviated, weavers became free to concentrate more on the

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<sup>193</sup> Shirley F. Held, Weaving: A Handbook of the Fiber Arts, 2nd ed., (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978), 76.

<sup>194</sup> "Searle Suggestions", March 1953.

<sup>195</sup> "Searle Farm Home Weaving Service - Price Lists", June, August and November 1961 and February 1962.

creative rather than the practical aspects of their craft.

## Chapter VII

### CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this thesis was to document a period in Manitoba history with specific reference to handweaving. In studying this handweaving activity it was, of necessity, viewed within the larger historical and comparative context.

One of the first points that should be noted is the tremendous influence of the Province of Quebec on these projects and, through them on Manitoba, during the term of their operation.

The program carried out by la Société d'Enseignement Postsecondaire du Manitoba has obvious ties with Quebec, since the language and cultural heritage are shared. This organization in Manitoba was actually a branch of the same Roman Catholic church affiliated group in Quebec, which had been in operation longer. As such it took considerable guidance from this older organization. Home Economics and Domestic Arts programs were operated successfully by la Société in Quebec and this example was passed to the Manitoba group. Priests who were involved in this type of education spoke strongly in Manitoba on its virtues and nuns were sent out from Montreal to organize the instruction, once its benefits for the Manitoba situation had been recognized. There was

therefore a strong tie between the two provinces, through the church and church affiliated organizations.

The government of Quebec also exerted an influence on the program offered by la Société d'Enseignement Postsecondaire du Manitoba. Being a French language group within a larger non-French community, this segment of the Manitoba population looked to Quebec for cultural and intellectual support. The need for Franco-Canadian reinforcement was especially acute in Manitoba since, after the passing of the Public School Act of 1890, Catholic schools received no public funding in Manitoba and, after a 1916 amendment to this act was made law, all bi-lingual teaching was abolished.

Oscar Beriau, the Minister of Agriculture in Quebec, who had worked so hard to re-vitalize the home weaving of that province, spoke to the nuns of St. Joseph's College, encouraging them, in the interest of maintaining their heritage, to follow Quebec's lead in the area of domestic education. He had also written a book called "Le Tissage Domestique" which, since most of the other handweaving books available were American and written in English, provided one of the few reference books suitable for use in teaching weaving to French speaking Manitobans.

The influence of Oscar Beriau and Quebec was not restricted to the French community, but had a great effect on the program sponsored by the Searle Grain Company as well. When Augustus Searle sought a vehicle to assist the prairie

farm wives, he was impressed by the success of Quebec's attempt to re-vitalize its handweaving. He therefore chose handweaving instruction to be the base for his program and solicited advice from Oscar Beriau on organization. Beriau's own daughter, Renee, was recruited to train Searle's weaving instructors, and his book, which was translated into English and called "Home Weaving", was used as a reference for these courses. When Searle Grain sponsored a weaving competition, a number of years later, the entries were all sent to Oscar Beriau in Quebec, who arranged for them to be judged.<sup>196</sup>

The manufacturer who supplied the vast majority of the looms to both la Société d'Enseignement Postsecondaire and the Searle Grain programs was the Nilus Leclerc company. This family owned business, located in the village of L'Islet in the eastern townships of Quebec, was endorsed by the Quebec provincial government in its weaving education scheme due to its good design of a "modern" hand loom. This loom was adopted as the standard one used in the western programs as well as in the east.

Based on this evidence, it is clear that, in this aspect of culture and education in the 1940's, Manitoba took considerable direction from Quebec and that this influence was

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<sup>196</sup> Searle Grain Company Ltd., "Hand Loom Weaving: The Story of the Searle Grain Company's Effort to Sponsor Hand-Loom Weaving Among the Farm Women of the Prairie Provinces", (Winnipeg: Searle Grain Company Ltd., July, 1944), 3.

by no means restricted to the French speaking population in Manitoba.

A second point was that the handweaving movement in Manitoba was largely centered in the agricultural population. The Searle Grain Company designed its program for farm wives and included villagers and townspeople, only if space was available after the farm women had enrolled. La Société also taught extensively in rural areas, although its instruction was not limited to farm people, and both projects attempted to encourage local domestic production of textile fibres such as linen<sup>197</sup> and wool.<sup>198</sup> The agricultural nature of this movement was in fact, one of the factors in its decline after the 1940's, since during that decade, and the one following it, there was a dramatic "shift of population from the country to the city. In 1941 the rural population of Manitoba had been 407,871, the urban 321,873. In 1951, the rural was 392,112, the urban 384,429. By 1961 the figures were 332,879 and 588,807".<sup>199</sup>

Although this period coincides with the Second World War, neither of the projects was primarily a war effort. As previously noted, they were both to some extent, a continua-

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<sup>197</sup> H.G. L. Strange, "Rural Home Weaving", (Winnipeg: Searle Grain Company Ltd., July 21, 1943), 3 and Verena Garrioch, "Villagers of St. Agathe Present Display of Weaving", Winnipeg Tribune, November 17, 1942.

<sup>198</sup> Kathleen Strange, "Weaving is Back!", National Home Monthly, August, 1942, 11.

<sup>199</sup> W.L. Morton, Manitoba: A History, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 477.

tion of a movement that had started in Quebec a decade earlier. This movement was towards self-sufficiency and a renewal of interest in home industry and manual arts. The Searle Grain Company issued a statement that its weaving program would help war veterans and people returning to the private sector labour force after the war, but this statement came after the weaving program was in place and was clearly a secondary consideration.

It is however, highly probable, that the mood of the people during the war and the attitudes which were shaped by it, contributed significantly to the success of the programs. They were operated in a culture and a time which was shaped by memories of the great depression of the 1930's and by the shortages and uncertainties of the war. People had adopted a "make do", no waste attitude<sup>200</sup> and programs which taught a means of some degree of self-sufficiency and effective use of "leisure" time would naturally be very well received. Indeed, the gradual shift of attitude after the war was certainly one factor in the eventual decline of interest in handweaving in Manitoba.

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<sup>200</sup> "During the Second World War, there was a nifty little slogan for consumers....

Use it up.  
Wear it out.  
Make it do.  
Do without."

Betty Jane Wylie, "Winning the War on Inflation", Homemaker's Magazine, October, 1981, 118.

As pointed out by Ruben Bellan:

The decades since the war have been a period of general confidence that no national economy would again suffer the kind of cataclysm experienced in the 1930's. This assurance was itself a significant influence on the level of economic activity. Confident that there would be no general collapse of market demand such as had occurred during the 1930's, business firms invested heavily in new plant, the general public spent money freely and undertook all kinds of financial commitment. High levels of spending by business men and the public helped maintain prosperity. Confidence that prosperity would continue fostered attitudes and behaviour which in fact helped assure that it would do so.<sup>201</sup>

Clearly, in this time of economic expansion and prosperity, people no longer felt the need to produce as much as possible at home but became more consumer oriented.

This leads to the final point, that after the actual programs offered by la Société d'Enseignement Postsecondaire du Manitoba and the Searle Grain Company were disbanded, the level of interest and activity in handweaving was not sustained in Manitoba. Apart from attitudinal changes,<sup>202</sup> new

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<sup>201</sup> Ruben Bellan, Winnipeg First Century: An Economic History, (Winnipeg: Queenston House Publishing Co. Ltd., 1978), 239.

<sup>202</sup> For example, the increasing fashion for synthetically produced materials:

"immediately after the war [trends appear slightly later in Manitoba] the fashion was for technology: what could be synthesized in a laboratory and produced in a factory seemed intrinsically more reliable, and certainly more manipulatable, than what was merely grown"

Colin Tudge, "The State of Rubber", New Scientist, July 9, 1981, 80.

forms of leisure activity developed in the 1950's, especially with the introduction and widespread acceptance of television.<sup>203</sup> Manitoba also produced, and still produces, only a tiny fraction of the yarns used in handweaving. Materials therefore had to be imported, either from other parts of Canada, or from outside countries. This forced a need for retail outlets in Manitoba for these supplies. These retail needs were filled by the Searle Grain Company until 1964, but by that time weavers had started to join together and mail order yarns directly from manufacturers in order to obtain bulk order discounts. This resulted in a loss of effectiveness of the Searle Grain retail operation and was one significant factor in its closing down that operation. Mail ordering of yarns however, requires a great deal of careful advance planning and some individual stocking of yarns, due to the time lags involved. It also requires greater perception and imagination on the part of the weaver, since all choices must be made from catalogue descriptions and small samples. These considerations would have weeded out the less disciplined and dedicated weavers and reduced the general level of weaving activity, while not lowering the standards of the articles produced.

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<sup>203</sup> Blair Fraser, The Search for Identity: Canada, 1945-1967. (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Limited, 1967), 205.

Thus, the answer to the hypothesis stated in Chapter I is that there were a number of identifiable social causes for the increased level of interest and activity in handweaving in Manitoba during the 1940's, and the decline of this interest in the 1950's.

The Franco-Manitoba community was under great pressure during the 1940's due to provincial government legislation which had effectively kept French instruction and the Catholic church influence out of the public schools for the preceding twenty years. The opportunity to institute a program of French adult education which was affiliated not only with the Roman Catholic church, but also with the larger French community in Quebec, was therefore eagerly seized. Considerable support for this project was provided by Quebec, both in terms of advice and encouragement and also in the more tangible loan of qualified instructors to get the project started.

By the beginning of the 1950's, the French language group in Manitoba had become more organized and had begun to formally petition the government for changes to the laws regarding bi-lingualism, particularly with regard to education. La Société d'Enseignement Postsecondaire du Manitoba submitted a brief, for example, to the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, 1949-1951, (report), (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1951), 429.

Although changes to the Manitoba Public Schools act to allow instruction in the French language did not come about for many years, the process of organizing and submitting these briefs acted to relieve some of the cultural pressure on the Franco-Manitobans. Thus, when Sister Maximilla, the local Manitoba weaving instructor, reached retirement age there was no perceived need to replace her in this function since the Franco-Manitobans had new outlets for the expression of their unique cultural identity.

These practical, skill-oriented courses, both in La Société's program and also the one mounted by Searle Grain, were begun at a time when Manitobans were recovering from the great depression and coping with the shortages of the war. Under these circumstances, the population was very receptive to a program that would help to make it more self-sufficient and productive. By the 1950's however, attitudes had changed considerably. Manitobans were more prosperous and had more money to spend on both goods and services. Leisure time could now be spent watching newly acquired television sets. The moral lessons of patience and perseverance learned through self-disciplined participation in a productive activity and creative use of leisure time were not emphasized in the 1950's, as they had been in the previous decade. Man-made fibres and other synthetically produced articles came into vogue in Manitoba in the 1950's, with the corresponding loss of interest in home-made items.

The population shift of Manitoba also had its effect on handweaving, since the 1940's weaving activity had been primarily farm oriented. The move of large numbers of people from the country to the city acted therefore to somewhat reduce the number of potential participants in these weaving programs. In addition, the predominant character of the remaining farms changed, becoming larger and more specialized. Self-sufficiency was not stressed in the way that it had been earlier, and the interest in handweaving as a means of textile production declined. Also, due to advances in communication, such as radio and television, isolation was no longer perceived to be a problem for the 1950's prairie farm wife.

#### 7.0.27 Areas for Further Study

Handweaving which has been practised in Manitoba by some of the ethnic minorities who make up this province's population was briefly mentioned in Chapter II. Some of this weaving is very distinctive and would form the basis for a fascinating study. There would be considerable interest in studying, not only the weaving which these people are doing in Manitoba, but a comparison of this work to that which was, or is, done in their countries of origin.

The observation has been made that the level of interest and activity in handweaving in Manitoba decreased after the 1940's. There is currently, however, a renewal of this in-

terest and activity. Further study could involve a documentation of the current handweaving and its relationship to modern Manitoba culture and attitudes. Comparisons could then be made between the 1940's Manitoba handweaving situation and that found here today.

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Appendix A

LETTER - WILLIAM SMITH TO GEORGE MUNRO

London 17th Febr'y 1830

Mr. George Munro Weaver  
Helmsdale, Soth Sutherlandshire

Sir

Your letter of the 12th instant covering one to you from James Mathison of RR has this day been submitted to the Governor & Committee and I am to acquaint you that James Mathison's letter will be considered sufficient authority for Twenty pounds the amount of the passage for yourself, Wife and two Children from Stromness to York Factory...for the third child you will have to pay Three pounds Sterling to Mr. Rae the Company's agent at Stromness, who on showing this letter to him will give you an order to be received on board the Vessel bound to York Factory, it will be necessary for you to be at Stromness about the 15th June, and should it not be convenient for you to pay the Three Pounds you must give Mr. Rae an acknowledgement that you are indebted to the Company to that amount.

I am

Sir

Your most obedt

William Smith

Hudson's Bay Company Archives, A5.9, fo. 79, Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

Appendix B

LETTER - WILLIAM SMITH TO DONALD SUTHERLAND

London 27th Jany 1830

Mr. Donald Sutherland  
(from Hudson's Bay) Colspie by Clyne  
Sutherlandshire

Dear Sir

Your letter of the 19th instt. respecting George Munro and family who wish to go to the Red River Settlement has this day been submitted to the Governor and Committee and I am to acquaint you that there is no objection to their joining their friends provided they are able to pay the stipulated rate of Passage money say

from Stromness to York factory Seven pounds each for himself and Wife 5 [pounds] for each child under 15 years of age and 3 [pounds] for each child under 10 years of age, and as they wish to write by the Spring Packet their letter should be here not later than the 25th February. I notice your observation respecting Munro having a letter from James Mathisons for Twenty pounds, if it is send here and found correct, it will be accepted in part of the Passage money and an order given for Munro and his wife to be taken on board ship at Stromness next June. I have spoken to Mr. Colville respecting Munro's letter to him which must have miscarried as it never reached him.

I am

Yr mo h st

William Smith

Hudson's Bay Company Archives, A5.9, fo. 74, Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

# Appendix C

## LOWER RED RIVER DISTRICT ACCOUNTS 1821 & 22

The following is a partial inventory of the "Stock on Hand" in the Lower Red River District Hudson's Bay Company Store on June 1, 1821:

|                |                 |             |
|----------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Blankets       | 10/4 tbs        | 1/2 pr.     |
|                | Lqe. Striped    | 25          |
|                | 3 pts.          | 15 pr.      |
|                | 2 1/2 pts.      | 16 pr.      |
|                | 2 pts.          | 36 pr.      |
|                | 1 1/2 pts.      | 20 1/2 pr.  |
|                | 1 pt.           | 8 pr.       |
| Breeches       | Serge           | 12 pr.      |
| Cambric Muslin |                 | 4 3/4 yds.  |
| Capots         | blue 2nd cloth  | 3           |
|                | Mixed Kersey    | 1           |
|                | Grey Ratteen    | 1           |
|                | Molton 1 Fl     | 2           |
|                | Molton 2 Fl     | 3           |
|                | Molton 2 1/2 Fl | 8           |
|                | Molton 3 Fl     | 15          |
|                | Molton 3 1/2 Fl | 4           |
| Cloth          | blue Corded     | 12 3/4 yds. |
|                | blue plain      | 16 yds.     |
|                | blue 2nd        | 8 1/2 yds.  |
|                | Embossed        | 27 1/4 yds. |
|                | blue Coating    | 7/8 yds.    |
|                | green Corded    | 8 3/4 yds.  |
|                | green plain     | 3 3/8 yds.  |
|                | grey com.       | 4 3/4 yds.  |
|                | grey Supr.      | 2 yds.      |
|                | red corded      | 16 1/4 yds. |
|                | red plain       | 30 yds.     |
|                | white           | 1 3/4 yds.  |
|                | p. Table        | 1           |
| Coatees        | Grey            | 1           |
| Cotton         | printed         | 35 1/2 yds. |
|                | Striped         | 2 yds.      |
| Cravats        | Worsted         | 10          |
| Drawers        | Grey Flannel    | 8 pr.       |
|                | White Flannel   | 8 pr.       |
| Duffel         |                 | 20 3/4 yds. |

|              |                      |             |
|--------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Flannel      | white com.           | 49 5/8 yds. |
| Fringe       | white                | 11 yds.     |
| Frocks       | Duck                 | 6           |
| Handkfs.     | blk. silk            | 3/4 doz.    |
|              | fancy silk           | 1/4 doz.    |
|              | China silk           | 3/4 doz.    |
|              | Formals              | 1/2 doz.    |
|              | Soosec               | 1 1/12 doz. |
|              | Linen                |             |
|              | 5/12 doz.            |             |
| Jackets      | blue Cloth           | 3           |
|              | blue Serge           | 16          |
|              | drab Corduroy        | 3           |
|              | olive Corduroy       | 7           |
| Lace         | Orris Yellow & White | 365 yds.    |
| Linen        | Irish                | 6 1/4 yds.  |
| Shawls       |                      | 5           |
| Serge        | Embossed             | 6 1/4 yds.  |
| Shirting     |                      | 11 yds.     |
| Silk & Twist |                      | 1/4 lb.     |
| Shirts       | Calico Infants       | 21          |
|              | Calico Boys          | 1           |
|              | Calico Youths        | 7           |
|              | Cotton Striped       | 2           |
| Stockings    | blk. ribbd.          | 1 pr.       |
|              | blk. plain           | 2 pr.       |
|              | Lamb's wool          | 10 pr.      |
|              | Cold. Worsted        | 6 pr.       |
| Thread       | cold. sewing         | 2 1/4 lb.   |
|              | white sewing         | 3/4 lb.     |
| Towels       | Huckabuck            | 4           |
| Trousers     | blue Cloth           | 4 pr.       |
|              | Com. Cotten.         | 8 pr.       |
|              | fine Cotten.         | 4 pr.       |
|              | Duck                 | 18 pr.      |
|              | Gingham              | 1 pr.       |
|              | Grey Cloth           | 1 pr.       |
|              | Jean & Fustain       | 7 pr.       |
|              | Nankeen              | 12 pr.      |
| Waistcoats   | fustain              | 5           |
|              | quilting             | 1           |
|              | Nankeen              | 3           |
|              | Scarlet              | 2           |
|              | White Flannel        | 55          |

Hudson's Bay Company Archives, B235 d 3, Provincial Archives  
of Manitoba.

## Appendix D

### OSCAR BERIAU SPEAKS AT ST. JOSEPH'S ACADEMY

Oct. 27, 1941.

Ce soir, M. O. A. Bériau, directeur de l'Ecole des Arts Domestiques au Ministère de l'Agriculture de Québec et un véritable apôtre de l'artisanat nous exprime son plaisir de venir parler du sujet qui l'intéresse. Dans un langage pittoresque, il fait ressortir l'élégance, la noblesse paysannes: il parle d'une "aristocratie paysanne". On sent que son âme est éprise d'un idéal, celui d'intensifier chez-nous l'amour de nos traditions.

[This evening, Mr. O. A. Beriau, director of the School of Domestic Arts of the Ministry of Agriculture of Quebec and a true apostle of craftsmen expressed to us his pleasure in coming to speak of the subject which interests him. In graphic language he pointed out the elegance, the rustic nobility; he speaks of a "rustic aristocracy". One feels that his spirit is smitten with a vision, that of intensifying in us the love of our traditions.]

Institut et Collège St. Joseph, Chronicles, IV, October 17, 1941, page 69.

## Appendix E

### FIRST WEAVING COURSE AT ST. JOSEPH'S ACADEMY

July 27, 1941.

Sr Agnès de Rome et Sr M. Donalda de la province de Québec ont inauguré des cours de tissage. Ces cours d'été suivis avec intérêt par des religieuses de huit différentes communautés dont neuf de la notre, et par vingt-une dames et jeunes filles.

[Sister Agnes de Rome and Sister M. Donalda of the province of Quebec instituted weaving courses. These summer courses were followed with interest by the nuns of eight different convents of which nine were ours, and by twenty-one women and young girls.]

Institut et Collège St. Joseph, Chronicles, IV, July 27, 1941, page 65.

## Appendix F

### FARM HOME WEAVING CIRCLES RULES AND REGULATIONS

1. Membership in the Farm Home-Weaving Circles to be open to any farm woman or girl who is interested in the work. Fees to be 50 cents payable annually in advance.
2. The Membership fees to be kept by the Treasurer and used for paying incidental expenses connected with the weaving work such as postage, stationary, telephone calls and so forth.
3. The members of the weaving circle to elect a President, a Vice-President, Secretary-Treasurer, which officers form the executive committee.
4. The officers of the circle to hold office for one year and to be re-elected each year.
5. The Searle Grain Company will loan four looms and other weaving equipment at each weaving circle, and will provide also at its own cost a competent teacher, a professional supervisor, and will also bear the cost of providing the necessary accommodations for the class, for the looms and for the teaching of the pupils during the term of the first class of five or six weeks.

5. Classes to be a minimum of 2 1/2 hours each day to be held either in the forenoon, the afternoon or in the evening. Under some conditions it may be advisable to teach two separate groups of pupils each day.
7. Each class to consist of six pupils. Two classes each day would therefore teach a maximum of twelve pupils. One class would teach a maximum of six pupils.
8. Those who offer to take the five or six weeks' course must guarantee to attend regularly five days a week. (There will be no classes on Saturday or Sunday.)
9. The pupils agree to carry out faithfully the detailed instructions of the teacher, and to weave only during the period of instruction such materials and such designs as the teacher shall approve, and which form part of the teaching course.
10. The pupils will pay for such raw material, that is cotton, wool, or linen yarns which they use if they desire to keep for their own use the finished articles they weave during the instruction period.
11. The Searle Grain Company, however, retains the right to take for demonstration purposes all or any of the articles that are woven by the pupils during the instruction period, in which event, however, the Company itself will pay for the raw materials used.

NOTE: It has been found from years of experience in Quebec, in the Maritime Provinces, in Newfoundland and in the United States that a five or six weeks' course is sufficient to teach farm women or girls to be able to make almost anything in their homes in the way of blankets, curtains, bedspreads, tablecloths, towels, material for making dresses or suits and so forth.

12. At the start the yarns required - cotton, wool and linen - will be purchased by the Searle Grain Company at wholesale rates and available to the pupils at cost. It is hoped, however, that later wool from local sheep and linen from locally grown fibre flax may be made into yarns. The Company will assist eventually in this enterprise.
13. The Searle Grain Company will make available plans of looms so that those who are handy with tools can construct the greater part of the looms themselves, or if they desire, the Company will purchase looms or parts of looms at wholesale and make them available to the members of the weaving circles at cost.
14. The Searle or Home Agent will be available to the weaving circle to act in an advisory capacity, and to be a connecting link between the circle and the Searle Grain Company which is sponsoring the plan.

NOTE: It is the desire of the Company that the weaving circles as far as possible shall be entirely independent and self-governing. The Searle Grain Company's effort is merely one to assist in the revival of farm home-weaving because the Company believes it is a good thing for the homes of Western Canada, besides which home-weaving undoubtedly is a patriotic action that will help Canada's war effort.

Searle Grain Company, Limited (Research Department),  
Winnipeg, February 1, 1943.