

From Trading Posts to Suburbs: Histories of Fort Garry

by

B. Robert A. Ross

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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Abstract

An examination of what Fort Garry represents in the Red River and Manitoban landscape from its earliest manifestations to the present day as well as a look at four fictional adolescents growing up in the current neighbourhood.

The historical text begins with a look at the man and event responsible for the name's origin, progresses through the trading posts and settlements known by this name, and then ends with a look at the development of Fort Garry during the twentieth century as a suburb of south Winnipeg.

The fictional text follows the lives of each character from early adolescence into adulthood and examines the socio-cultural conditions of where they were raised. Each story contains one or more parallel to Fort Garry's past and demonstrates the connections and disassociations of the characters to this past and the place in which they live.

Acknowledgments

This thesis would not have been possible without the assistance, support and resources of the Manitoba and Hudson's Bay Archives, The Legislative Library, The Fort Garry Historical Society, The St. Vital Historical Society, St. John's Ravenscourt School, The University of Manitoba Libraries, my advisor, Alison Calder, and Marla Williams.

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Dedicated to Daniel Lenoski,

For plucking yellow plums at St. Paul's College.

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Introduction



1. Winnipeg from space. Courtesy of NASA

1.

What you hold in your hands is the first book dedicated solely to the topic of Fort Garry, one of the longest standing names in all of western Canada, being continuously in use from 1822 to the present day. In its rich past, the name Fort Garry has represented such diverse places as trading posts and suburbs, and in the geography of metropolitan Winnipeg, only the names of rivers and lakes are older. It is even said that Winnipeg was born out of Fort Garry, that Manitoba history begins in Fort Garry, but despite this rich heritage, very little is done to preserve its place with those who have inherited it in the twenty-first century, so I have written the histories of Fort Garry in the hopes that they will benefit those curious about their city and how it developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Winnipeg's past has recently become a topic of much interest to certain, well-respected intellectual communities and a great number of books about Winnipeg's early boom years have been published in the past decade to commemorate the rich urban past of the city. These books often include numerous old photographs depicting the city in its hey day, street cars and East Broadway mansions peeking through trees, shots of old Main Street with the gothic pink and white brick city hall towering above the neighbouring buildings. While these wonderful books awaken our nostalgia for times long past and educate us about what the city once was, they often rely on a method of discourse, though effective in its own right, which often leaves out many important aspects about a place and how its people interact, for while they are able to show the cultural shifts and social climates of a region, they are never able to really demonstrate

what it's like to live in Winnipeg, to pass through its seasons and walk on its streets. These books are unable to show the dreams and imaginary lives of Winnipeggers—people who conduct an active role in pretending they are somewhere else, but perhaps I should give a word about this formidable city first.



2. Garry Street

Capital of the first Canadian province created after Confederation, Winnipeg is one of the most notorious places in the country and a city of extremes. It has a reputation for being the murder, car-theft, arson, teen-pregnancy and slurpee capital of Canada, where more whiskey and beer is consumed than anywhere else in the country. The city is home to the most millionaires per capita and the second poorest neighbourhood in Canada. It has one of the largest francophone populations outside Québec, the largest Icelandic population outside Iceland, and more musicians per capita than California. With only about 700,000 people, cultures and nations from every corner of the globe are

represented in the population, and the city is sometimes viewed on globalist charts as a microcosmic icon of national multiculturalism, a place where solutions to a shifting nation can be solved on a small scale and delivered en masse. But perhaps Winnipeg is not Canada writ small at all. Perhaps it is a place where an extreme minority of all ethnicities are somehow able to thrive through some inexplicable and as-of-yet-unknown commonality.

In Winnipeg, temperatures vary from summer to winter from -40 to +35 degrees Celsius in most years, and it is the coldest city in the world with over 600,000 people. It is situated on the cusp of the great western plains of North America and the great boreal forests of the north, hours away from the centre of the continent as well as the latitudinal centre of the country. It is the first city of western Canada, and the first English settlement west of the Great Lakes.

Today, amongst the urban centres of the western Canadian prairies, Winnipeg is like the older, less successful brother. The one that could've been something, had even set out on the right foot, but somehow lost it somewhere. Now you only see him at weddings, where he's predictably taking advantage of the open bar and the hors d'oeuvres trays, wearing a suit that's a bit too small and a dress shirt with a dark, yellow stained collar. If a fight breaks out or someone's date is rudely hit on, you know Winnipeg had something to do with it.

If I were to extend this metaphor, Fort Garry would be Winnipeg's old friend who was a bad influence on him in the early days, the one that dared him to drink his first beer and taught him how to steal cars, but then got a good job and moved to the suburbs when he grew up. Unfortunately, Fort Garry is far too flexible and prone to metamorphosis to

be considered human. It is a shape shifter more akin to creatures from ancient lore and mystic legends and cannot be accounted for in modern cosmologies. It has always been able to adapt and endure, even when all that surrounds it has died.

2.

Now the roads were only of dirt, which the wind lifted in dusty whirlwinds. The houses spaced themselves out, became smaller and smaller. Finally they were no more than badly constructed shacks, put together out of various odds and ends—a bit of tin, a few planks, some painted, some raw—and they all seemed to have been raised during the night only to be demolished the next day. Yet, unfinished as they were, the little houses still seemed old.

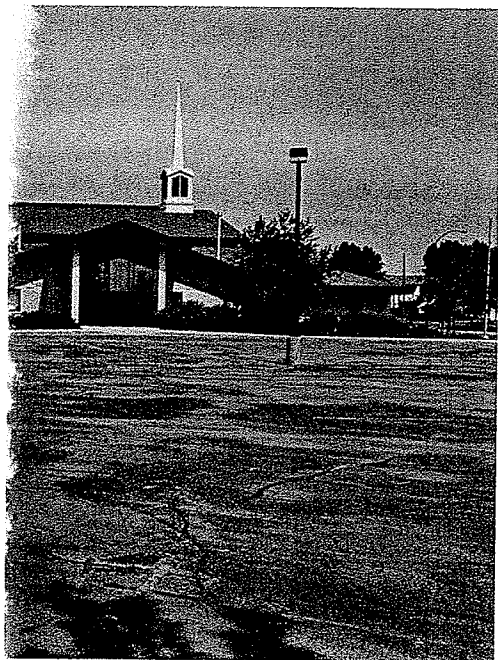
-Gabrielle Roy, "The Move"

The first time I read this description of Fort Garry, I was in my grade eleven English class and seventeen years old. The feeling which came over me was singular, being as it was the first occasion I encountered my neighbourhood in something I read about. I don't know why it was such a big deal to me. I didn't pick up books very much in those days, only the stories and textbooks I was given in school, but at this moment two very keen interests awakened in me which have recently led to the pages you, dear reader, are holding in your hands.

As I sat at my desk and looked out the window at the street lined with tall elm trees and stately mansions, the grassy lawns and tended flower beds aesthetically designed to complement the SUV parked on the driveway, I recalled an early memory of the old nuisance grounds that used to be close to my house.

I was on a bike ride with my father and we stopped at what I knew as the garbage field, a half acre of unoccupied land along the main street of my area. There were some

old cars, some fridges and stoves, piles of mattresses, some burnt, some so old that the flakes of rust from the metal springs fell to the ground like sand when they were touched. There were wooden panels, sheets of metal siding, old chairs and sofas with holes in their cushions, things broken down and abandoned, and wearing away with age.



3. The nuisance grounds are now the property of the Jesus Christ Church of Latter Day Saints.

I'd seen a mouse scurry through the grass as we rode through the place, so my dad stopped the bike and let me look for it under the random sheets of tin and wood, the broken window frames and disintegrating pieces of furniture. I found him cornered in an old upturned bathtub. He was a grey one and sat frozen on the smooth chalky surface as I approached to catch him, but my dad placed his hand lightly on my shoulder.

"Better let him go now," he said.

I asked my father why, and in his instructional voice, he explained, "Because this is his home. You wouldn't want to be taken from your home, would you?"

I tried to imagine myself being taken from my home against my will and concluded that he was right. It was better to let the mouse go. Seeing my desire to leave the mouse, my father lifted me back onto the bike and we continued on our ride.

As I sat in that classroom recalling this early moment, two things occurred to me:

1. I had my own experiential truth to corroborate Roy's fictional story. The garbage field must have been the remains of those shacks she was talking about. That something labelled fiction included something that was real confused me and led me to question my perception of fiction as talking only about things that were made up.
2. It was also the first time I saw the place I lived in as having a history, apparently one very different from what it had become, and I wanted to learn more about this Fort Garry described in Roy's story. I became fascinated with the idea that there was a history to the place I lived and baffled that the suburb could be anything but what it already was—a bunch of houses with parks here and there, some community centres, some schools, stores, restaurants, etc.

After school that day I took the bus to the library close to my house, and in their computer I typed 'Fort Garry' into the search box. I remember eagerly anticipating a handful of books that would tell me about the past I knew nothing about, but when the search was done, the computer only said "no matches found."

Naive and unfamiliar with books and history as I was at the time, I was absolutely flabbergasted that nothing about Fort Garry had ever been published. I was outraged that my neighbourhood was never important enough to document.

Had I been smarter at the time, I probably would've gone to a librarian and asked if there were any books about Fort Garry, but instead I walked out of the library dejected, and remembered a place my parents would take me on bike rides close to the river, a ruin made of stone tucked into the forest that I heard somewhere was once a dance hall. I decided to go there and see if maybe it could tell me something the library could not. Because I hadn't seen the place in years, I wasn't sure it still remained—it was close to the river bank, and to protect some big houses on low ground, they had built a dike in the place to fend off the '97 flood.

On my bike I rode to the river and went into the forest where the ruin stood. It was barely discernable standing as it did amongst the vines and trees next to a large dike, but it was still there, its door of wood and iron still lying on the ground in front of the doorway, its windows and roof long gone. It was probably the oldest thing in the neighbourhood and there wasn't even a sign or a plaque explaining what the building was or when it was built



4. The Ruin of Fort Richmond

I left the old hall discouraged and not knowing anything more than when I had begun, only how little I really knew, not just about my neighbourhood, but everything. How could I know anything if I didn't know about where I was from?

Thinking back on my reasoning at the time, I'm not entirely sure I reached the correct conclusions, but the experience left a lasting impression on me. After High School, I went to University and majored in English, preferring what I learnt in stories like Roy's to anything I came across in a textbook. Canadian literature classes were my favourite as the books often provided small pieces to the history where I lived. The atrocities and triumphs of the world wars, the roaring twenties and dust wind thirties, the stories of Canadians in the booming fifties and revolutionary sixties, all of it was related to what Fort Garry experienced, just not specific to the locale. I pored over these books with a lust and fascination and learnt many things about Canada and the world I live in.

It was in one of these classes that I encountered *Wolf Willow* by Wallace Stegner. Through this book alone I came closer to understanding the history of where I lived and I found myself relating to the authors experiences of western Canada. Stegner starts his book by saying that the history he learned in school and the history of where he lived were two completely different things. In school, Stegner learnt about European wars and kings with little or no attention paid to the country he was living. Unsatisfied with this disconnection to his boyhood home in the Cypress Hills, Stagner starts to bridge this gap in his understanding through books he felt he ought to have read in school, books such as Cowie's *Company of Adventurers* and Howard's *Strange Empire*, books that dealt specifically with the North West corner of America. Through his research, Stegner discovers that the Cypress Hills is where the Great Plains frontier ended; where the

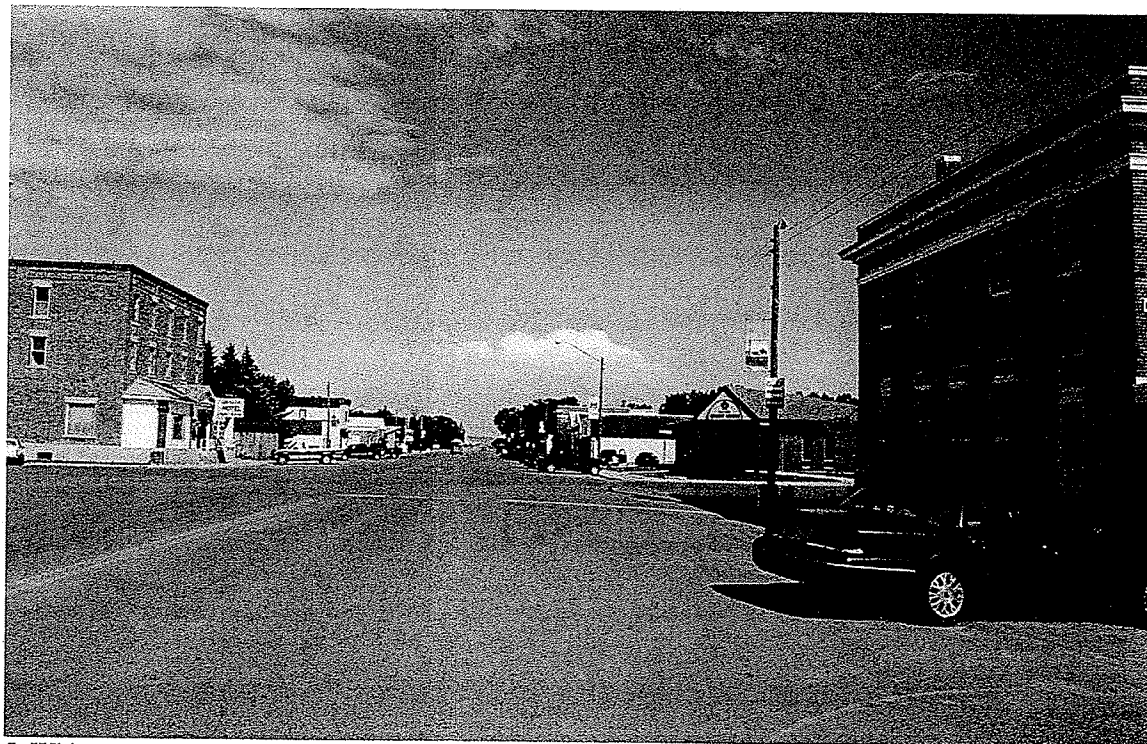
remnants of the last great buffalo herds resided on the brink of extinction; where the indigenous nations of North America grouped in their last attempt at independence when European agriculture began to encroach on the prairies, and where the last large scale cattle ranchers held out before being replaced by more industrial farming operations.

To my astonishment, all these people and movements which ended in the Cypress Hills in *Wolf Willow* seemed to have come from Red River valley and Fort Garry: the Assiniboines and Cree, the fur traders, the Métis, the farmers and cowboys, they all appeared to have started out on the prairies from this same point of departure. I got the notion that, if the Cypress Hills was the end of the Great Plains frontier, then Fort Garry was probably the beginning.

What also baffled me about Stegner's book was that there appeared to be no real distinction between history and fiction, between personal account and documented history. The book simply read as a story, only instead of being focused on any specific character, as novels are known to do, *Wolf Willow* was more about a place and its past, a book of intense nostalgia where an old man journeys back to his boyhood home only to find it gone; its remnants largely erased, and its knowledge only in the memory of a few old timers and scattered documents. He concludes there's no future in the Cypress Hills and his home town of Whitemud; that the dreams of its early pioneers would never come to fruition amongst the arid hills.

Several years later after I read the book, and fifty years after *Wolf Willow* was written, I was fortunate enough to go to Stegner's hometown and see for myself this place of no future, these hills that are the highest point between the Rocky Mountains and Labrador. It was mostly the same as what Stegner had described, the main street still a

line of short buildings, most of them new or renovated. In the fields around the town you could see a few oil rigs pumping away. There was even a museum now in the town's old theatre hall. It was full of dinosaur bones, arrow and spear heads, antique furniture and photos of Mounties and pioneers. There was also a first edition of *Wolf Willow* and a picture of Stegner under a glass cabinet—the local boy who did well. I spent a few hours milling about the place, reading the plaques and studying the photos. I remember the young woman at the front desk looked absolutely baffled at my fascination when she looked up from her magazine. I guess I was another city slicker to her. Someone who should not have been interested in this past as much as I was, but who knows what she really thought.



5. Whitemud

Afterwards I went to the store to buy a drink, hopped in my car and drove away, almost hitting a gopher on the outskirts of town. They were everywhere out there, their

carcasses in pieces on the highway, their blood caked into the baking cement. In the hills their little heads peeked out of the ground. Some would just stand there in the grass and stare off into the distance like centurions. They were no doubt watching for predators. I must've driven right over that gopher, and I bet if he'd stood up, I would've nailed his head clean off his shoulders. He kept low though, and when I drove past I watched him from my rear-view mirror as he continued across the street. There's a survivor, I thought, part of the new generation of gophers smart enough to stay low when a big hunk of metal and fibreglass comes flying at you.

In a way the gopher reminded me of Whitemud: able to adapt in order to survive. It wasn't anything dramatic or drastic, but it was enough to keep going, keep moving. It seems that change characterizes the prairies no matter where you go. Fort Garry is about change.

After my bachelor's degree, because I was still unable to kick my selfish desire for a book that dealt with the development of south Winnipeg, I decided to write one. I wanted to write the *Wolf Willow* of Fort Garry and in a form akin to Stegner's work. Oddly enough, this idea of mine was accepted as a thesis proposal for a Master's degree, but while *Wolf Willow* is over three hundred pages, a thesis is only about a hundred and ten, and so I had to alter my original idea quite extensively. As I began my research, I acquired a guilty pleasure in perusing the many books published about Winnipeg, the ones full of old photographs and snippets of history and geography. These books were often fairly short, light reads and a most enjoyable alternative to nineteenth century works of history. It was here that I found a new form that, once adapted, could satisfy my shifty subject, for I found a history to Fort Garry far more bizarre and relevant to the

development of the entire Winnipeg region than I could have ever imagined, a story that epitomizes the ever changing prairies of central-western Canada.

Without further ado, I give you this unexpected history, which dates back to the earliest European settlers of the region and continues to this very day. Rather than documenting every disintegrating newspaper and shoe box full of old photos I have bothered to rummage through, and having an endless list of last names and page numbers barraging you at the bottom of every page or in a swath of minuscule print at the end of the main text, I decided to omit the documentation of references in my text. Many historical books of this sort, however, often provide documentation of some sort, so a select bibliography of titles can be found at the end of the book. Also, rather than including archival photographs of what Fort Garry once was, I decided to focus on contemporary scenes. In Winnipeg the past is everywhere. It is just not always acknowledged as such.

Finally, I must ask you to recall that my interest in the history of Fort Garry was only half of the dilemma that Roy's "The Move" brought about in my adolescent psyche and that the possibilities of fiction were another concern that began weighing on my mind at the time. I have read many pages about Manitoba and Canada and none of them have affected me as much as the pages of that short story. The characters you will encounter in this book are purely fictional, every action and word they say is a fabrication, and yet; it is because they are fiction, and able to express something that a conventional history could not, that they are offered as a supplement to the past you, dear reader, are about to encounter. They all inhabit Fort Garry in its current transitory state and all belong to that age group undergoing tremendous change on a personal and social level much as the city

in which they live. Each of them contains some remnant or verisimilitude of Fort Garry's past, but I'll leave it up to you, dear reader, to decide what those connections might be.

The Writer

1. Nicholas Garry



6. Garry (taken from a print of the Royal society of Canada, 1900, which was taken from a portrait in the possession of Francis, N. A. Garry)

Nicholas Garry's last name was a popular label for botanists and explorers traveling through North America¹ because he was deputy governor of the Hudson's Bay Company from 1822 to 1835. In the Great Drama of the North West Fur Trade, Nicholas Garry stands at centre stage playing the lead role. During the summer of 1821, in the wilds of North America, nestled comfortably in a canoe, smoking a pipe and recording his observations, Nicholas Garry traveled through forest and bugs to all the trading posts in that part of Canada known commonly at that time as the Indian Territories to execute

¹ Garry Oak, Garrya, Garry Lake, and Mount Garry, are a few examples I found on the internet.

the amalgamation of the North West Company² with that of the Adventurers Trading into Hudson's Bay.³

Before Garry's departure for North America, the NWC and the HBC had been having a slow and mostly uneventful⁴ business battle over the control of the lucrative North West fur trade. With a smaller trade network, the HBC was losing and a decisive blow had to be struck if the company was to survive. After many meetings and much research on behalf of the Board of Directors in London, a plan was devised to subordinate the NWC on their own map—the one they charted themselves in the wilds of North America. An integral part of this plan was executed through Lord Selkirk's settlement at Red River.

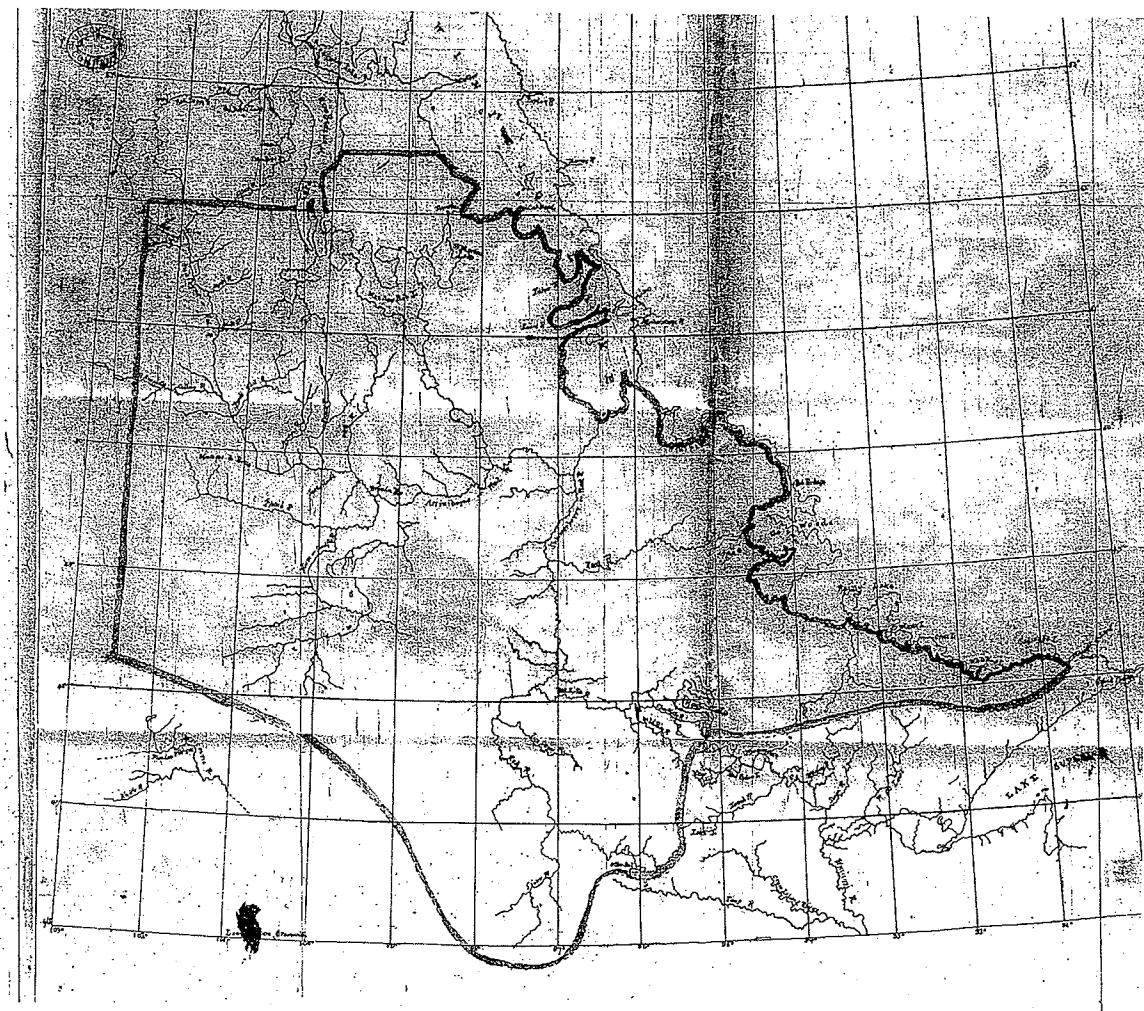
In 1810, Lord Selkirk bought a controlling interest in the Hudson's Bay Company, and with his wife's familial connections to the board of directors, he obtained a grant of land called Assiniboia in the south of Rupert's Land. Assiniboia was larger than Britain and Ireland combined, comprising most of what would become Southern Manitoba as well as parts of future Saskatchewan, Ontario, South Dakota and Minnesota. Under Lord Selkirk, Assiniboia was to become an agricultural settlement supplying produce for the fur trade and land for up-rooted farmers. The HBC chose to sell Assiniboia to Lord Selkirk because they knew it was a key region for the NWC. At Forts Qu'Appelle and Gibraltar, in Assiniboia's Red River drainage system, NWC agents

² Otherwise known as the NWC.

³ Otherwise known as the Hudson's Bay Company, or HBC.

⁴ Some sources I've read say it was the contrary and in fact quite eventful.

bartered for pemmican⁵ with buffalo hunters in order to feed its traders in the far North West where supplies were scarce and beaver pelts plentiful.



7. Map of Assiniboia (4M106 E6/16 FO 31, Manitoba Archives)

A settlement at Red River would disrupt the North West Company's provisional arrangements and possibly take down the entire company through its stomachs. The arrival of hundreds of settlers led to what is known as the Pemmican Wars. Cajolings, intimidations, arrests, confiscations, fort dismantlings and field burnings escalated hostilities between the two fur trade companies until the Battle of Seven Oaks.

⁵ I heard the creation of pemmican is attributable to the Assiniboines, or Nakota, of Red River, but I don't remember where.

On June 19th, 1816, a large caravan of pemmican carts destined for the North West Company posts was being accompanied by armed Métis. The cart brigade was heading to an area north of Selkirk's colony called Frog Plain under the leadership of Cuthbert Grant, their first chief, entrusted with the brigade's passage past Selkirk's settlement. On the flat plains, distant some mile and a half from Fort Douglas, Grant's brigade was spotted by the HBC fort's lookout and Robert Semple, the Governor of Assiniboia, with some twenty five men, went out to protect the settlers in the fields and enquire about the Métis' intentions in gathering above the settlement.

Hearing of Semple's assembly marching towards the encampment at Frog Plain, and interested in protecting the pemmican shipment from being confiscated, Grant and the Métis forces rode back to intercept Governor Semple's brigade and prevent them from reaching the carts.



8. Seven Oaks Monument, Rupert's Land and Main St.

The two parties collided south of a long wooded ravine where seven large oak trees grew. At first Semple seemed to have the advantage of more men, but as time progressed, more Métis hunters arrived from Frog Plain, emerging from the Seven Oaks Ravine and forming a crescent of over eighty armed men around Semple's poorly organized brigade. Semple attempted a dialogue, but the animosity was too great. Shots were fired, first by Semple's party, then by Grant himself, or first by Grant then by Semple's party.⁶

Outnumbered, surrounded, and underprepared, it was not long before most of Semple's men fell to the Métis gunfire. In accordance with the customs of war practised among the Cree, Assiniboine, Ojibwa, Métis and the Dakota, the wounded and dying were knifed and tomahawked, scalped, stripped of their clothing and valuables, and their mutilated bodies were left in the fields for the crows.⁷ The devastating though unplanned victory led to the surrender of the colony, but the NWC victory was short lived. Lord Selkirk himself arrived at Red River the following summer with a military regiment to re-establish the colony and ensure its permanence.

As news of the clash at Seven Oaks spread to Canada and Great Britain, it attracted the attention of the imperial British government and pressure began to be put on the rival companies to arrive at a resolution. The conflict had ruined careers and fortunes, taken lives and uprooted families. The valuable fur-bearing animals had been driven to near extinction and the industry was ready to collapse.

⁶ depending on which account you read

⁷ Also known as the Seven Oaks Massacre, the Seven Oaks Incident, and *la triumph des Métis*, the event has created lasting political ramifications in Manitoba, and there are numerous conflicting versions of the story.

Documents for a merger were drawn up on March 26th, 1821. In the agreement, all assets were to be united under one interest called the Hudson's Bay Company and inventory had to be taken for each North West and Hudson's Bay trading post in the Indian Territory. The act was to be supervised by two members of the new amalgamated Board of Directors, one from each original company. Together in a canoe they would act as a gigantic zipper, uniting a business that had been divided for centuries. They were to depart from Montreal into the Great Lakes and stop at every trading post en route to York Fort on Hudson's Bay, including a detour to Red River and the Selkirk Settlement. They were to explain the merger to all employees and customers, assuring everyone that business would remain as before. Nicholas Garry was chosen for this arduous, dangerous, and adventurous duty by the Hudson's Bay Company. The NWC was represented by Simon MacGillivray.

There is little known about Garry's life before his involvement with the Hudson's Bay Company. He was the illegitimate child of Isabella Garry, a renowned London beauty, and Nicholas Langley, who died very early in Garry's life. Apparently, he spent some time in Ryga⁸ prior to his employment on the HBC board of directors, which he joined in 1817. He was introduced to the company by his uncle, Thomas Langley, who had joined the board, himself, in 1807. It appears that Nicholas Garry was selected by the other HBC directors to accompany Simon MacGillivray to North America because he was the only member without a wife and family. In the diary of Garry's travels, we are able to acquire a second-hand experience of the administrative conduct that carried into effect this historic fur trade merger.

⁸ Ryga, Latvia. The spelling is Garry's. There are no documents revealing what he was doing there, but he left a substantial sum of money in his will to the woman who took care of him while he was in the city.

The diary was communicated to the Royal Society of Canada and published in 1900 by Garry's son, the Reverend Canon Nicholas T. Garry of "The Rectory," Taplow, England through Sir John Bourinot. The text was copied and annotated by Garry's grandson, Mr. Francis N. A. Garry, who had many difficulties deciphering the illegible scrawl of his grandfather, written as it was in the North American wilderness in the discomfort of camp or canoe voyage. The text was written on both sides of the page and accompanied by random notes and scraps of information, accounts, routes, and names, scattered throughout the journal, written in the margins and between the lines. What did not fit cohesively into the narrative was selectively chosen for the creation of an index to follow Garry's account. Notes in the index as well as illustrations were also added to the text by the editor of the Transactions for the Royal Society.

Nicholas Garry departs England from Liverpool March 31st, 1821 with a servant he calls Raven⁹ on board the Amnity, an American vessel traveling to New York. Of the voyage, Garry writes it is accompanied by sea sickness and uncomfortable weather, which contrasts greatly to the hospitality and excellent fare of the vessel itself.

On the sea voyage, two NWC agents travel with Garry: Dr. John McLaughlin and Mr. Angus Bethune. Both gentlemen had appealed to the Hudson's Bay Company for an end to conflicts and a merger. Their weakness and infirmity as representatives of the North West Company allowed the HBC to acquire the upper hand in the merger. Garry finds these two Nor'westers contradictory and duplicitous, causing him great anxiety and discomfort.

⁹ Peter Raven is with Garry on the entire journey but is barely mentioned. Little else is able to be learnt of Raven from other sources as well.

1. In London, Angus Bethune assures Garry that rheumatism is an affliction never contracted by fur traders in North America, but Bethune suffers a violent attack of the disease on the sea voyage.¹⁰
2. Dr. John McLaughlin previously assures Garry that traveling by canoe is safe, but tells a story about the sinking of a canoe on Lake Superior where nine men drowned and McLaughlin himself was removed lifeless from the water.¹¹

Garry arrives in New York and bemoans the lack of English hospitality at the American inn where he stays because the landlord is unable to prepare supper for him. He is even forced to dine at a restaurant. The next day, armed with letters of introduction, Garry presents himself to New York high society and spends the rest of his time in the city mixing business with pleasure at his own convenience, awaiting the arrival of Simon MacGillivray by sea. He leaves the city regretfully and concludes that, Americans, despite their ideals and rhetoric of equality, are very fond of social status and rank, particularly amongst the upper class.

Traveling up the Hudson River by steamboat, Garry is barraged by conflicting emotions about Simon MacGillivray, a man previously unknown to him except as the most strenuous opponent to the interests of the Hudson's Bay Company. Any act of duplicity on MacGillivray's part in the merger would reveal to Garry a type of hypocrisy in the world far too treacherous to be possible; and yet, at the gateway to the west, such a

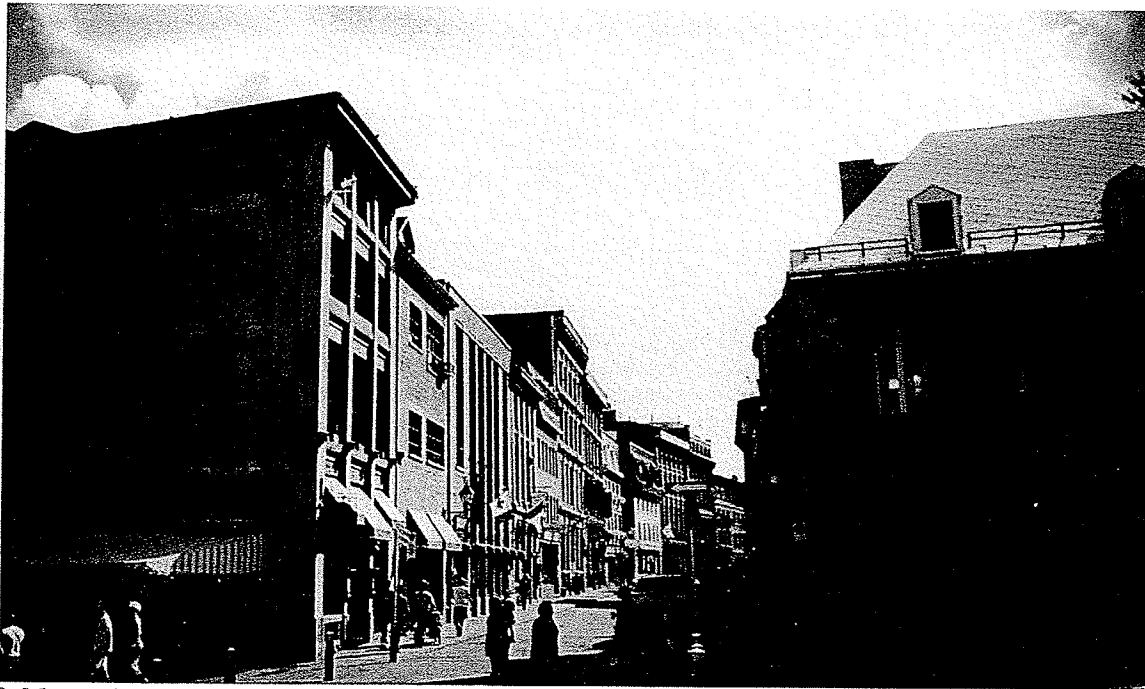
¹⁰ Rheumatism was in fact a common disease for fur traders in North America. Simon's older brother William MacGillivray, Chief Superintendent of the North West Company, died from it in 1826.

¹¹ McLaughlin was a prisoner of Lord Selkirk at the time, due to the capture of Fort William, and was being sent to Montreal in an overcrowded canoe for trial when the delicate, birch bark hull was compromised. Overcrowding a canoe was usually avoided when travelling thousands of miles by water.

monstrosity floats before him in his own mind. He records his thoughts in his diary, trying to forget them.

As they travel onwards the journey begins to awaken Garry's Romantic imagination. At night, in the Allegheny Mountains, he envisions the peaks forming beautiful, romantic landscapes and dreams of forested hills with soft running rivers. In the morning, he catches a glimpse of the Catskill Mountains and writes the real vistas are far more bold and dramatic than the chimeras of his mind.

One day, Garry departs by carriage from a breakfast at a manor in the village of St Ann's. The driver tells Garry a story about the young hostess and how she was left at the landlord's door as an infant. He rides away envisioning a successful novel from her story and in a separate journal he begins outlining the plot where she is reunited with her lost father, who was kidnapped by Indians in the American Revolution.



9. Montreal

In Montreal, Garry is struck by the tin plate roofs adorning the numerous houses and churches. His chauffeur explains to him the metal was adopted to prevent the many fires and sieges from ravaging the city. Inside the buildings Garry finds the heat trapped by these magnificent roofs unbearable. Adding to his discomfort is the presence of a massive swarm of flies which accompany the annual migration of Shad fish to their freshwater spawning grounds from the ocean. The flies cover the entire city and Garry is forced to keep his mouth shut when outdoors to avoid ingesting them.

At night Garry dines with William and Simon MacGillivray along with several other North West partners at William MacGillivray's opulent manor, a shrine to the wealth he had accumulated in the fur trade as Chief Superintendent, wealth made from furs Garry could only have seen as the rightful property of the Hudson's Bay Company. As they dine, MacGillivray is unable to entirely mask the sheer contempt he feels towards the new merger and its young representative. Garry records no comment about this encounter with the great Canadian Fur Baron, though his own contempt for MacGillivray table would have been nearly overwhelming. There is little doubt that the rendezvous was quite momentous: animosity bubbling beneath the surface of both directors while cordiality and composure were observed the entire evening.

It is at this point in the diary that Garry becomes very sparse in his responses to both the people he meets and the landscapes he encounters, making the diary nothing more than a brief description of places and people seen on his journey. He presumably does so because he fears the perusal of his diary by those employed under the MacGillivirays, who no doubt intend to sabotage the venture at the first available opportunity and leave Garry in the wilderness to die.

The young HBC director spends the rest of his time in Montreal supping with the ruling class, whom he finds hospitable and far less duplicitous than their New York counterparts. He finds the time to stop and pray for his life in the Anglican Church, then buys new clothes for both himself and Raven in anticipation of the great journey before him.

On a day trip Garry is accompanied by William MacGillivray to witness a brigade of canoes departing for the North West from Lachine. The mode of transportation by which Garry is to travel thousands of miles into the Indian country greatly alarms him, but MacGillivray assures the young director, saying in all his years of trading, a half percent of a year's entire profit covered every loss.

On June 13th, 1821, Nicholas Garry and the two MacGillivrays, twelve voyageurs, three servants, a guide and an Iroquois depart in a canoe into the wilds of North America, heading to the Great Lakes by way of the Ottawa River. In the early afternoon, the party stops at a village where Miles Macdonell, ex-Governor of the Selkirk colony, is residing. Garry hears that the man is mentally deranged from his experiences in Assiniboia and pushes out of his mind the thought of receiving a similar fate. It is also not long before he is introduced to mosquitoes. He declares the insects his sworn enemies.

As Bourgeois Directors of the fur trade, Garry and the MacGillivrays sit in the centre of the canoe with their servants, at liberty to smoke and admire the scenery as the twelve voyageurs paddle along, décharging and portaging the canoes over foaming white rapids and through dense mosquito-filled swamp-forests. The servants carry the gentlemen's personal effects and set up their tent and lodgings each night. Raven is eager

to befriend the servants of the MacGillivrays, but Garry is quick to punish his socializing, fearing that the MacGillivray servants will trick him into betraying his master.

In the Indian Territories, Garry admires the many elm trees. They remind him of England, along with other deciduous specimens such as oak, ash, and maple. The plenitude of large, mature trees, many of which have fallen over into the flowers and shrubs below, suggests to him an unlogged forest seldom destroyed by fire. The scene is nature in all its glorious beauty and decay, its full contrasting existence and sublime power, devoid of people, divided by large rocky waterfalls and darkened by dense looming forests that continue forever into the unknown, the unexplored, uncharted wilderness.

At Lac des Chats, Garry records an encounter with a man encamped on the shore. The hunter gives a whoop and fires his gun, a customary signal to indicate a desire to converse, but when the canoe comes to the man, he laughs and says he has nothing to say. The incident leaves Garry baffled at the customs of the region. On a portage through a burnt forest, Garry encounters the wooden frame of a sweat lodge and his guide explains its use as a remedy for rheumatism used by local inhabitants, this being only one instance of Bethune's duplicity on the voyage across the Atlantic.

Abandoned and occupied encampments on the waterways are meticulously recorded throughout the entire journal. Garry makes particular note of the revelry at Sault Ste Marie and the Ojibwa's ease of catching whitefish by dipping a net into the water below the rapids. He finds the ease with which the Ojibwa make their living and their seeming continuous inebriation despicable, marvelling at the godlessness of the land. On Lake Superior, Garry encounters a man whose nose is bitten off from a fight

and describes the practice of jealous husbands who would bite off the nose of their wives so that they would appear ugly to others. What he finds even more surprising is that a more serious act was cutting off a woman's hair, which would often lead to suicide. He gathers these customs into his notebook with confusion and horror, as proof of the sordid land he is passing through.

Plunging deeper into the Indian territories, Garry also comes across more and more voyageur burial sites. The first one he encounters is on an island next to the Matawans, dangerous rapids on the Ottawa River. It is not long before he learns that every rapid is met with tales of capsized canoes and lost men, rendered all the more real by the numerous graves next to them. These markers only serve to assure Garry of his inevitable doom waiting in the wilderness. Past Lac Windigo, Garry crosses Portage des Morts, so named because of the many fatal accidents occurring there and illustrated by the overwhelming number of wooden crosses. The sight convinces Garry he will never return to the quiet comforts of civilisation and his daily thoughts become more and more clouded with anxiety. Lost and apprehensive, he reprimands his fellow travelers for deciding to run a set of rapids forbidden by both companies, even though they do so without any damage or loss.



10. Rapids along the Winnipeg River drainage system.

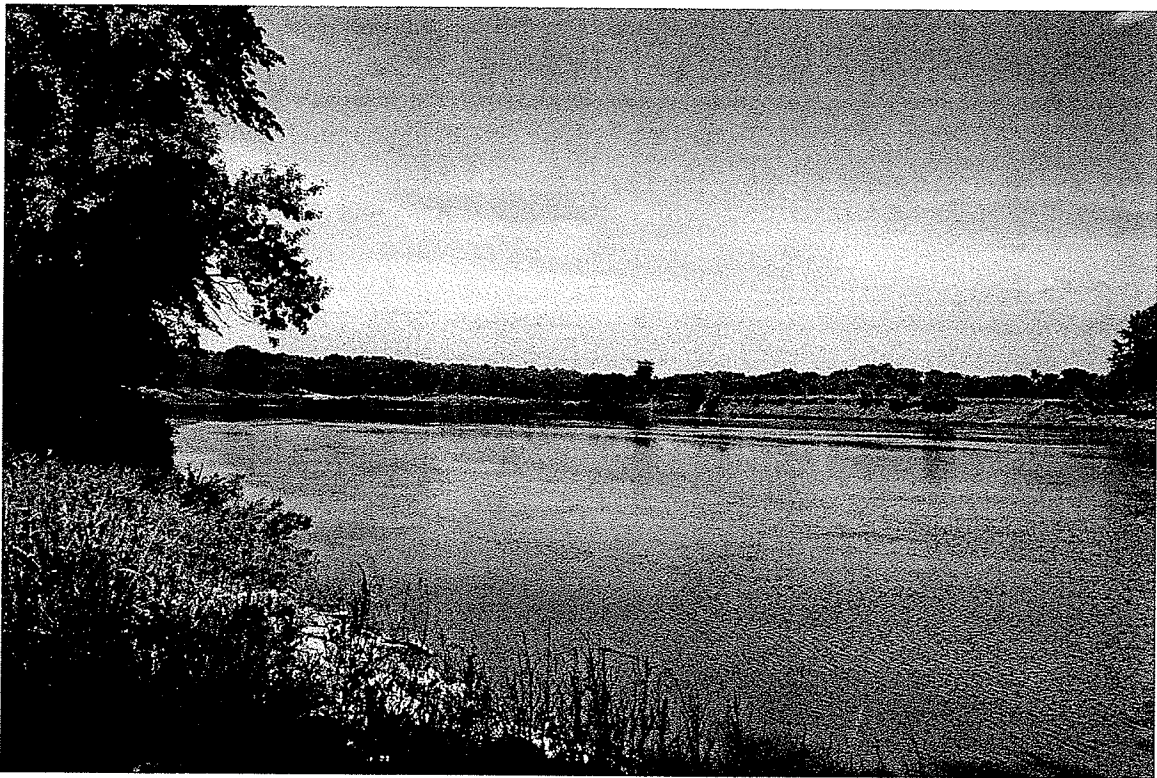
Deeper west, Garry perceives a landscape desolate and hostile, and finds himself in the throes of a depression as the country's enormous isolation engulfs him. The maple, elm and ash trees which brought him joy earlier become increasingly replaced by birch and aspen whose foreign appearances resemble nothing to him of home. During the night he is so harassed by mosquitoes, spiders and sand flies that he is unable to sleep and he begins to travel from day to day in an insomniac daze, unable to find solace in the landscape, nor find comfort in his companions who are daily covered in their own blood from the numerous insect bites they receive and seemingly immune to their torture. Garry watches them with awe and jealousy, and eventually suspects they have acquired black powers to be free from the agony. Alone in his misery, the only relief Garry finds comes through fires made from entire tree trunks found standing dead in the forest—the flames are so high and so hot that no mosquito dares to approach.

July 1st, Garry arrives at Fort William and witnesses two chiefs offering ceremonial gifts to William MacGillivray. He thinks the entire presentation reeks of barbarism and demonic influence, with MacGillivray on the false throne. The next day the war dances make him fear assassination by the warriors he is forced to sleep amongst. He spends most of his time in all day business meetings and inventory surveys where he placates employees seeking re-employment, promotion, or dismissal. These transactions assist Garry in not thinking about the journey ahead for the time being, and he finds little time to write in his diary. He leaves Fort William and William MacGillivray on July 21st with immense relief, folding the once great base of operations of the North West Company into the lap of the Hudson's Bay.

In two smaller canoes designed for the northern waterways, and usually manned by voyageurs known as North Men, Garry and Simon MacGillivray depart from Fort William on their way to Red River. Garry keeps a keen eye on MacGillivray behind the veil of his pipe smoke, anticipating duplicity at every rapid and campground. On this leg of the journey the mosquitoes become still more severe, the rapids more frequent and hazardous. The landscape becomes more melancholy, uninteresting, and unfriendly, but Garry's new crew provides him with the camaraderie he so desperately needs.

The North Men are great rivals of their Great Lake counterparts, the Porkeaters, so named from the pork they eat with their corn. Simon MacGillivray had taken a crew of Porkeaters in his north boat so that he could return to Montreal from their final destination at York Fort on Hudson Bay. The slow goings of MacGillivray's Porkeaters provides Garry and his crew of North Men great satisfaction and Garry's advantage becomes so great that MacGillivray is required to pick up an extra paddler at Rainy Lake.

Also returning Garry to higher spirits is the reappearance of oak trees. A single oak tree brings Garry's mind back to England and all he loves, his friends and companions; they are the anchor to the civilized world from which he feels increasingly detached. The occasional oak peeping over the canopy fills Garry with a sense of superiority in the forest and, identifying himself with the tree, gives him strength to endure the remainder of his hazardous voyage amongst the aspens and birches.



11. Red River

On August 3rd, Garry enters the mouth of the Red River from Lake Winnipeg in advance of Simon MacGillvray, eager to reach the colony before this formidable opponent, turned business associate. The Red River Valley impresses Garry with its dense, rich deciduous foliage, and its plentiful oak trees are reassuring to his uneasy mind. Numerous species of birds, plentiful catfish and bass in the river, healthy, tall grasses and flowers enchant Garry and indicate to him a valley hospitably fertile. The

canoe makes its way down the river and an Ojibwa settlement appears on the bank. He stops to greet and thank them for their support of Lord Selkirk's colony during the pemmican wars and promises a formal visit to honour them and their chief, Peguis, upon his return.

When he reaches the Colony, he describes Red River as a series of small miserable wooden shacks lining both sides of the river, a state not entirely discouraging. He finds the crops, though again plagued by grasshoppers, not entirely destroyed thanks to the pestilence coming in fewer numbers. He also records his satisfaction in knowing that official marriages are taking hold in the country with the opening of St. Boniface in 1820 and the construction of an Episcopal church well under way. The sight of churches fills Garry with insurmountable joy and he calls them the roots of western civilisation taking hold in the country.

During the long, warm afternoons, Garry takes time to admire the excellent black soils and wild meadows rich with hops, rhubarb, flax and hemp as he rides on horseback through the colony. In general, he finds Red River to be in plenty, well connected to its surrounding resources and a place where Christianity could prosper, but he also fears that, unless law and order are brought to the colony, it will breed a culture of outlaws. It will not only pose a threat to the interests of the Hudson's Bay Company, but will branch out over the entire continent, a poison seeping through its veins. He also finds the administrators of the colony incompetent and dishonest in their daily duties and menial tasks, a serious impediment to the development of any Christian nation at Red River.

Garry leaves on August 6th, commencing his arduous journey to Hudson's Bay and York Fort via Lake Winnipeg. On the way he will encounter more treacherous

portages, more life threatening rapids, and more blood-thirsty mosquitoes. At York Fort he will calculate inventories and respond to employment inquiries; he will ride on horse back and take in the sights and dine at the governor's table with other distinguished guests at the fort, supping on the local venison and duck, as well as on the wild berries growing along the marshy valleys of the northern rivers. On September 13th, Garry will board the Prince of Wales and return to England. He will find that, despite his fears, the journey did not kill him, but left him stronger and invigorated.

The following year, he will be made deputy governor of the Hudson's Bay Company in honour of his successful journey and co-found a school with Governor Pelly to educate native children in English at Red River. It is in order to facilitate trade with western nations and prevent bringing them to Europe where they inevitably would die of smallpox. In 1829 or 1830 he will get married to Phoebe Vesey and father one child, a son who becomes a priest.

On July 22nd, 1839, a committee will be formed by the Hudson's Bay to enquire into the mental health of Nicholas Garry. The committee will conclude Garry is suffering from lunacy and in a deranged state of mind since July 1st, 1835. The nature of his lunacy, or its origin, will never be mentioned in the company records, though there is little doubt it was lead poisoning, brought about by the felt polish he used for his luxurious beaver skin hat. Garry will die of natural causes on December 24th, 1856, still insane, after spending his days in the English countryside of Surrey, an incoherent relic of a time long past.

2. (1991)



12. Ecole St. Avila.

Mark locked his mountain bike to the rack behind the school. From the other side of the building, he could hear the school bus idling in neutral and voices intermingling in the air—the two grade six classes were already lining up outside. He slung his backpack over his shoulder and sauntered across the playground, knowing they would wait for him.

At the bus, his teacher Mme. Dalnavert gave an exasperated look.

“En retard encore, Monsieur Mark?”

With his eyes half shut he nodded in agreement. He had been late so frequently over the past year that Mme. Dalnavert simply knew Mark was sleeping in. Every morning he had come to class with matted hair and wrinkled clothes. Today was no different.

Mark simply didn't want to go to school. He had no desire to get out of bed when the world seemed so far away and foggy. His mother had tried to wake him up at 6:30 before she left for work in the mornings but he'd go back to bed. She even told his older brother, Benedict, to wake him up before he left for school, but he claimed to forget about Mark each morning in his own rush out the door. When the school started calling about the absences, his mother started grounding him—one week for every late slip. After two weeks, he started waltzing into class five minutes after O' Canada every morning and the phone calls stopped.

The yellow doors of the school bus swung open and Mme. Dalnavert's children swarmed like wolves attacking a wounded buffalo. It was a free-for-all towards the coveted back seats, where a bump on the highway could send a child soaring into the air and onto the floor at any moment.

John had been first in line. Fending off the horde of little bodies with kicks to the shins and elbows to the stomach, he took the back and held his position—arm across the seat as kids pulled out their lunches, bartering for the spot next to him with pop cans, chocolate bars and chip bags.

Mark stepped into the bus and the bitter smell of diesel interspersed with industrial cleanser and vomit engulfed him. It hung in the air and clung to the dark green pleather seats cracked on their sides and down their centres, worn out from the many children they had carried. He walked to the back and took the seat John had been keeping for him. From his backpack, he took out a walkman and gave his friend one of the earphones. He pushed play and turned up the volume, then leaned his head back and closed his eyes, wishing he was still in bed.

At the front of Mme Chaudière's class, Stephanie and Emily took the seat across from Mark and John with no challenge. Their supremacy amongst the class was undisputed. If someone else took the back seat, Stephanie would be able to convince the occupant to sit elsewhere. She had long, thick blond hair and a new dress every week—the wardrobe all the girls wished for. She was the best in the class, the best at sports and she didn't even try. Emily was her protégée, striking with her dark features and seeming indifference to the popularity she had amassed as Stephanie's best friend.

Through the locks of her curls Stephanie glimpsed John staring vacantly at her from across the aisle and gave him the finger. He had been in love with Stephanie for her blond hair and pointed nose for weeks. She kept her hand up until he looked away, trying to make it obvious to him that they were friends and nothing more.

It had started when the four of them had ridden to Mark's place after school one day. Trying to impress her and Emily, the boys brought out a can of gasoline Mark's mom used for the lawnmower from the garage. They poured some of it onto the cement walk in his backyard, lit a match and watched the cement go up in flames. When it went out, Stephanie wanted to light the next one, only she poured a much larger puddle—Mark said it was okay. It was a dry summer. The grass was brown. None of them expected the wind to pick up and blow the flames onto the grass, singeing it black. The whole yard would have gone up had John not sprung to the garden hose and turned on the tap.

"What am I gonna tell my mom?" is all Mark could say as he stared at the disaster.

It was John who came up with the best excuse. He had noticed Mark's brother smoking a cigarette before leaving for work. They would say he threw the butt carelessly

onto the lawn before he left, and that they were in the kitchen drinking kool-aid when they saw the flames and came out with the hose. "It was four against anything Mark's brother could say," he reasoned.

Fortunately for them, Benedict couldn't remember what he did with the cigarette when he left, as he never paid attention to where he threw them, and Mark's mom believed their story.

John had asked Stephanie out that day when they were riding home, and she had said, "No, but give me a call if you want to burn things." The next day John brought toy figurines to melt in the long jump pit with an aerosol hairspray can and a lighter he stole from the dollar store. He never asked her out again and she enjoyed watching G.I. Joes melt in the sand, but every once in a while, she'd catch him staring.

With everyone accounted for, the teachers took their seat at the front of the bus. The driver shifted into gear and the bus started rolling. They left the fresh cut lawns and white wooden houses of their neighbourhood and drove past the university, heading north to downtown. On the highway, gas stations, fast food restaurants and mini malls with large parking lots gave way to smaller, older shops built closer together alongside the road. Dividing the six lanes into two opposing directions was a large grassy boulevard on which the occasional oriental elm tree struggled to grow. They all thought it was hideous.

The bus drove into the city where residential avenues passed by with houses gradually becoming older, taller and built closer together towards downtown. Large white elm trees stood before the sidewalk, branching out and meeting together several storeys above the middle of the road, everything becoming older and taller.

Immune to the familiar scenery, John looked disapprovingly at Mark for trying to sleep. Like Mark, he too was tired, but it was from waking up at six in the morning to deliver papers. After work he had eaten the breakfast his mother had made him and ridden his bike to school early to play on the tire swing, spinning on the ride with other kids to see who could get sick first. He had been up for over three hours already and didn't understand how his friend could be so lazy.

The bus bounced over newly filled potholes and tar-sealed cracks on the highway, causing the children at the back to momentarily lift from their seats only to come crashing down milliseconds later.

The unexpected airtime woke Mark. Opening his eyes, he took out a large bag of sunflower seeds from his backpack. He shoved them into the side of his mouth, their tart, salt-seasoned shells burning the inside of his cheek with intense pleasure. He offered the bag to John who gladly dipped in his hand. When they were done with a shell, they spat it onto the floor between their feet.

Downtown traffic was heavy. Every intersection was backed up and the school bus was reduced to an intermittent crawl. John and Mark stared at the unfriendly buildings and empty sidewalks, listening to Mark's walkman and eating seeds. Stephanie and Emily looked out the window.

Nothing to say and the dismal scenery stationary, John shoved an extra large handful of seeds into his mouth and began to machine gun them out onto the back of the seat in front of him.

A few landed on Mark. In retaliation, he spat a shell into John's blond hair. It was a sunflower war. They plunged their hands into the bag, one after the other, filling their mouths as much as possible.

Stephanie watched the boys' cheeks bulge ever bigger with seeds and she hatched a plan. Just as Mark was about to open fire, she tapped his shoulder.

"You guys got Spitz?" Her words caught the attention of Emily and John.

"Maybe," Mark replied, seeds dropping uncontrollably from his mouth.

"Can we have some?"

"No. They're ours."

"Mark, give'em or I'll tell. You know I will." Stephanie returned Mark's flustered look with antagonism knowing full well he'd cave to her. Snatching the bag quickly over the aisle she delved in. They were Seasoning Salt, her favourite kind. When she was done she spat the shells back into the bag. With a smile, she held it out, zip-lock open towards Mark.

Mark calmly took the bag and spat a seed at her. It bounced off her arm and landed on Emily. She tried to move out of the saliva-soaked shell's trajectory, but let out a scream when she failed to avoid its landing on her lap.

Mme. Dalnavert left her seat. Mark shoved the sunflower seeds into his backpack and he and John emptied their mouths onto the floor, placing their feet together in front of them. They sat straight and looked calmly ahead, watching her approach from the periphery of their vision in the vain hope they would not get blamed for the commotion.

"Est-ce qu'il y a une problème ici les filles?"

"Non, madame."

Mme. Dalnavert gave a quizzical look at Emily and turned to kneel beside Mark and John. With her finger, she motioned for them to lean forward.

“Écoutez les gens. If I have any trouble with you two, it’s sitting on the un-air-conditioned bus with the bus driver all day. Vous comprenez?”

Mark gave a shocked and ignorant look at the teacher.

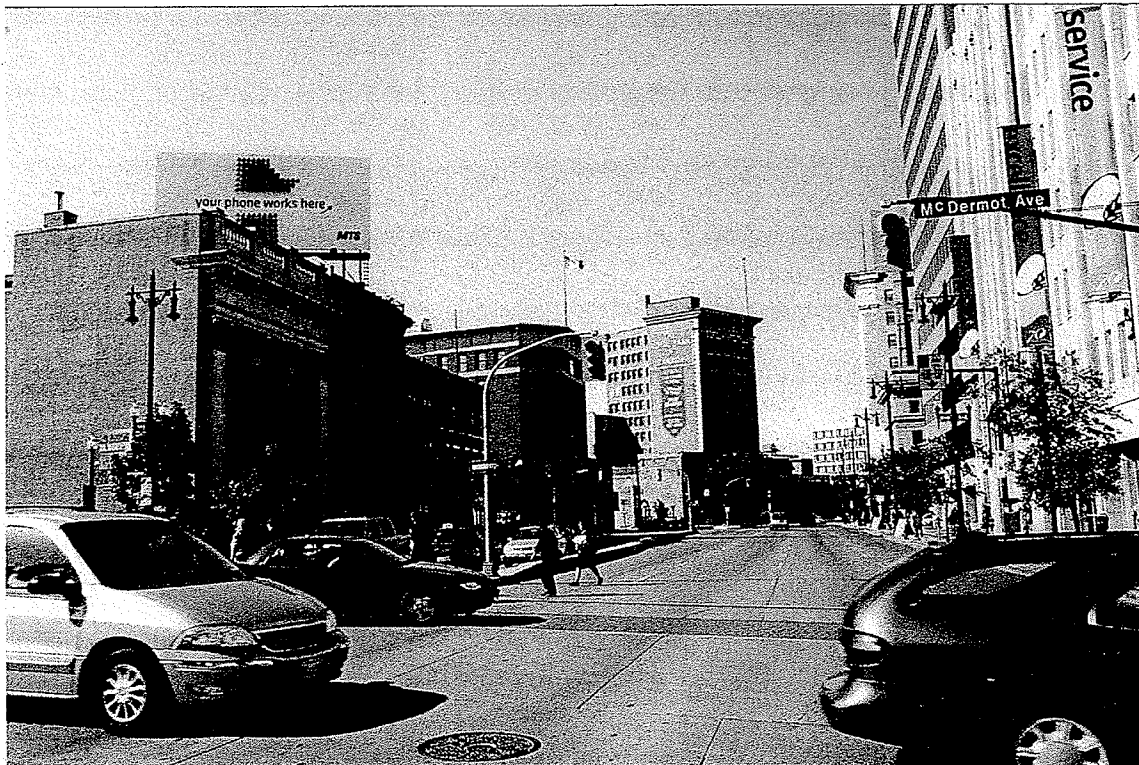
“Bien sur, madame.”

“I’m serious, Mark, another thing from you and you’re stuck in this seat all day.” She stared straight and fearless into Mark’s eyes until he looked away. Mme Dalnavert was stronger than him and he knew it. There was no point in challenging her opinions once formulated. They were unshakable.

“Yes, Madame.”

With Mark cowering, Mme. Dalnavert stood up, her eyes locked on John as she slowly backed away, making it clear that the same attitude from him would unleash the same punishment.

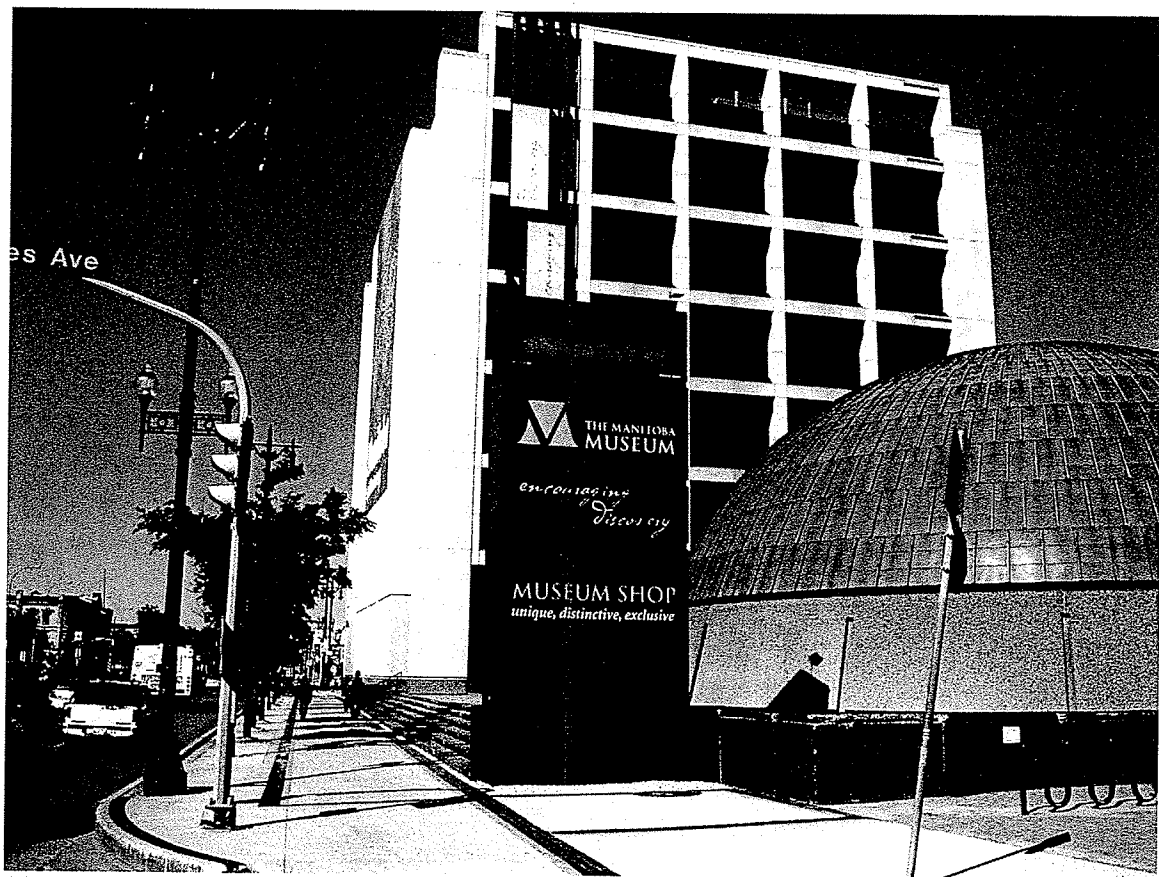
When she was gone, Mark spat a lingering shell in front of him. He looked intensely at the children looking back at him until they looked away. Then he pulled out the bag of seeds from his backpack and glanced derisively at Stephanie and Emily. The two were smugly returning his glare from the comfort of their immunity, free from blame because they were girls.



13. Main Street

In the dense traffic the bus turned onto Main Street and drove past a train station into several blocks of old brick buildings, some with cement columns and elaborate facades. They approached the museum—its sterile composition of concrete and glass a familiar field trip destination and stark contrast to its aged and impoverished urban setting.

Emily looked out the window and expected the bus to turn and park in front of its doors but the bus drove past and dove down an underpass, entering the city's North End. She had forgotten where they were going. The bus trip had something to do with looking at history, but it was all the same to her when she tried to describe what she saw on these trips.



14. The Manitoba Museum.

Bordering the street, old dilapidated buildings of brick were adorned with pawn shop signs and hotel names. There was a boarded up soup kitchen housed in an old theatre. Many other buildings were vacant as well, with closed signs hanging from their gated windows. In the distance, several onion shaped domes protruded into the sky, and just as on the south side of downtown, the road intersected with avenues lined with elm trees and tall houses behind them. Some of the houses were boarded up. Others had paint flaking off their sides, revealing the rotting wood underneath.

Emily watched the streets unfold bewildered. Unlike in her part of town, the sidewalks were filled with people. They were standing in doorways and leaning against buildings smoking cigarettes, pushing shopping carts and waiting on the boulevard for

traffic to clear. They were dressed funny too. At a red light on a bench a round woman sat with plastic grocery bags in her hands and ratty sweatpants—clothes Emily would never wear outside. Behind her two younger men leaned against the shack. One was very thin and wearing black, the other was much larger with blue jeans and a cowboy hat. She had never seen this part of the city before, had never heard of such poverty in her home town. Her parents had told her downtown was bad and full of bums and criminals, but this wasn't downtown anymore.

John and Mark stared at the people too and the man in the cowboy hat caught their gaze. In response, he flipped his middle finger. Eventually John gave him the finger back. The man started yelling and shaking his fist, his words inaudible through the window and over the sound of the idling engines at the intersection. They stared dumbfounded at the man, amazed at his hostility and unable to understand what he was saying. They followed him until he faded into the distance behind the vehicle, even when he lowered his arm and returned to his friend.

Emily shook Stephanie, who was lost in thought and looking off to the front of the bus.

“Where are we?”

Stephanie glanced back at her friend, her eyes still somewhere else, a sad smile on her perplexed face.

“This is the North End. It's where the poorest poor people live.”

It was times like these that Stephanie pitied Emily in her naivety. The farthest she ever went from home was St. Vital Mall or Polo Park and, as far as Stephanie could tell,

she never thought to ask questions about the world beyond where her parents had already taken her.

In an alley Mark caught a glimpse of a man star-fished belly-up on the pavement, a wet stain surrounding him. In his right hand he held a large rectangular can with rounded sides tipped on its side. Mark strained to read its name, but it disappeared from view as the bus pushed forward, passing a fast food restaurant and police station.

He turned to John.

“Did you see that guy?”

“The guy who gave me the finger?”

“The one on the street. The one passed out.”

“Yeah.”

“Did you see what was in his hand?”

“No. What was it?”

“I couldn’t tell.”

“Guy gives me the finger I figure I’ll give it back.”

Mark gave a distracted nod of approval and went back to his own thoughts. His brother had told him the North End was where all the big crime went down, where all the prostitutes and drugs were. No doubt the guy had taken something pretty heavy. He entertained the notion that it was some cheap alcoholic beverage, maybe even Lysol. He’d heard people drank Lysol.

The world of the North End fascinated Mark, stories of all night parties, gangs and drive-by shootings, people living in boarded up houses and children who’d never seen a day of school in their lives. It gave Mark a vision of a secret world bubbling

beneath the city's apparently calm surface. A city he'd only seen the likes of in movies and late night TV where normal, everyday rules didn't seem to matter. His brother had told Mark to never fight a guy from the North End, said he'd get his teeth knocked out if he did. The kids there grew up tough, poor, and lean. They had fought all their lives and were people not to mess with.

The bus passed the onion domes they had seen in the distance. The buildings became smaller and newer looking with storefronts right on the highway. They drove past mini malls and gas stations, large grocery and hardware stores, the buildings slowly moving away from the highway, and the gaps in between being paved with concrete, until they finally left the suburbs entirely. It was just like the neighbourhood they had come from, only a completely different place. Mark stared blankly at it rolling by, the man on the sidewalk remaining in his head.

Along the highway the houses were becoming smaller and the trees more aged and abundant. On one small incline, there was a wooden shack grey with age. The windows were boarded and the roof was caving in at the centre, causing the building to slowly collapse in on itself. Several tall deciduous trees stood around the house, and to the left was a large wooden barn in similar condition, but with 'Class of 82' spray painted on the wall.

Suddenly John leaned down, picked up the sunflower shells at his feet, and began throwing them out the window, letting them float down onto the highway. Mark watched with amusement, and noticing the car behind them turn on their windshield wipers, he enthusiastically picked up the pile at his own feet and threw it out the window too.

When the car sped up to pass them, they made faces at the driver and laughed at the sour look he gave back.

Stephanie watched with mild amusement. She tapped Mark on the shoulder.

“Can I have some?”

She extended her arm expectantly and Mark tightened his grip on the seeds.

“No way. You’ll spit them back into the bag. I’d rather madame take them away than get your spit all over them.”

“No, I promise I won’t. We just wanna spit them out the window, like you guys. C’mon, please?”

From her outstretched arm, Stephanie offered her small finger to Mark. Unsure of her intent, Mark looked to John for guidance.

“You might as well give ‘em up, Mark. They’ll just find a way to get them from us anyways.”

Reluctantly, he locked his finger into Stephanie’s. The submission appeared like madness, but he respected John’s advice—it being usually effective in unforeseen ways. With his free hand, he handed her the bag of sunflower seeds and, with Emily, she began to eat. They chomped and chewed and filled their mouths until bursting, then began spitting them back into the bag.

John raised his hand and caught the attention of Mme. Dalnavert.

“Madame, Emily et Stephanie ont des Spitz.”

In panic, Stephanie flung the bag towards Mark, spilling sticky seeds all over the floor and the children in front of them. The bag bounced off Mark’s head and landed in the middle of the aisle.

Mme. Dalnavert stood up at the front of the bus and began to yell.

“That’s it! All four of you. You’re staying on the bus until we get back to the school. Do you understand?”

Tears started to melt from Emily’s eyes, and Stephanie’s face became beet red.

Mark nodded and smiled to himself. Being alone on the bus with John would have been tedious, but with Stephanie and Emily for company, they could play truth or dare.

A glance Mark and John shared with each other caught the eye of Mme. Chaudière. Looking displeased, she began to whisper to Mme. Dalnavert as the bus turned into a parking lot on the side of the highway. On a sign above the gate, it read, “Lower Fort Garry National Park – Parc national de Lower Fort Garry.”

The yellow doors swung open and the children began to exit, single file, forming a line next to the bus. In the grass beyond the parking lot, clumps of dandelions in seed sprouted off in every direction. Mme. Dalnavert walked towards the back of the bus.

“Alright, you guys, clean it up.”

Stephanie picked up the bag and held it open while the others began to sweep the seeds towards her with their hands, shovelling them back into the plastic bag. When they finished, Stephanie handed the seeds over to the teacher.

“Est-ce que vous êtes prêtes à obéir?”

“Oui, madame,” they replied in turn.

“Bon. Vas y au but de la ligne. J’ai changé d’opinion et vous pouvez aller.”

Stephanie and Emily thanked her and stood up eagerly to enjoy the field trip. Mark and John slunk their shoulders in disappointment and trudged off the bus. When they got in line, Mme. Chaudière was already taking attendance.

Waiting to be counted, Mark looked into the grassy fields and the dandelions sticking out across it, their tall feathery bulbs high above the tallest blade of grass, each gust of wind shaking their tender stocks, letting small tufts of the seed separate and float into the air. Mark pondered the tall flowers and with a shock realized what the man lying in the alley had been holding. It was the same type of gasoline his mom used for the lawnmower. Mark stared off at the wild dandelions realizing the man was a gas-huffer. He was lying in a puddle of gas.

3. The Two Fort Garrys



15. Lower Fort Garry

In the Red River Settlement, there are two Fort Garrys. During the nineteenth century, they were both trading posts operated by the Hudson's Bay Company, exchanging European goods for local furs and food. The two forts played important roles in the HBC but served very different purposes in the industry. Lower Fort Garry was intended to be Governor George Simpson's residence but was used principally as a store involved with the provisional supply of other posts. Upper Fort Garry was the seat of government for the Red River Settlement and the major centre of trade in the region. The two Fort Garrys received two very different fates and exemplify the dichotomous and duplicitous approach to history in the Red River region.

The first Fort Garry was the North West Company's Fort Gibraltar, built around 1805-1810. It was constructed on the western side of the Red River north of the Forks,

close to the graves of the Cree and Assiniboine who perished in the 1780-82 smallpox Epidemic. The fort had fourteen foot oak defensive walls with two watch towers on opposing corners, two servants' houses, a store, blacksmith, stable, kitchen and later, an icehouse. Although this fort was destroyed and torn down to reinforce Fort Douglas in the pemmican wars, it was rebuilt further south of its original location.¹



16. Reconstruction of Fort Gibraltar in Whittier Park, St. Boniface.

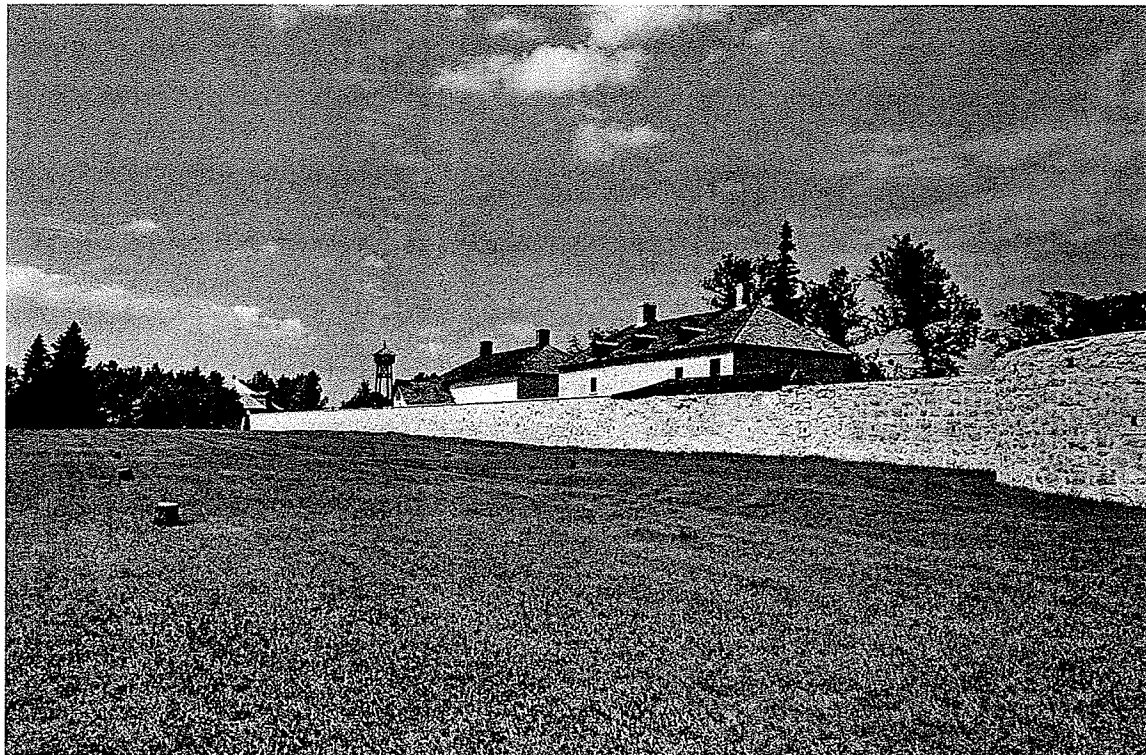
After the merger, when Nicholas Garry visited Red River, he wrote that Fort Gibraltar was the better situated of the two Company posts in the region and regretted Fort Douglas's establishment as the administrative and commercial centre of the colony. Fort Gibraltar was renamed Fort Garry in honour of Garry's visit to the colony in 1822 by order of Governor Simpson and repairs were made to the existing structures as shifting river banks had left the buildings in deplorable condition.

¹ some sources say it was actually built in the same place.

When Fort Douglas was carried away in the large spring flood of 1826, Fort Garry became the principal trading post in the area. Because the flood had left the structure severely damaged, Simpson decided to rebuild the fort twenty miles further north than its predecessor on the Red River below St. Andrew's falls, this time on ground significantly higher than the flood-prone river. The site was also chosen by Governor Simpson for two reasons:

1. The primary reason was because the new site was considered to be a more advantageous location to defend against attack. Simpson feared both Métis unrest and the possibility of Yankee invasions.
2. Secondly, portaging York boats around St. Andrew's falls was inconvenient and time consuming. At the new fort, provisions for the area could be unloaded for the Red River settlement without crossing the rapids. As limestone was abundant at this location on the river, this new Fort Garry would also be able to have walls and buildings built of stone.

Construction began on the stone fort in 1831 and did not finish until 1839. The seven and a half foot walls were an immense undertaking, needing five years to complete. As the only stone structure in the North West in the nineteenth century, other than the ruin of Fort Prince of Wales on Hudson's Bay, the stone fort became a well known landmark. The walls are built three feet thick and encompass an area of four and a half acres. Four rounded towers on each corner guard the structure and are adorned with rifle holes, but despite the unparalleled fortifications and architectural prominence of the stone fort, this Fort Garry did not play the central role in the fur trade it was intended to have.



17. South wall of Lower Fort Garry.

After completion of a house in 1833, Governor George Simpson and his family spent only the following two winters at Fort Garry. Their stay was short lived because, disliking the cold winters, the local population, and after losing a child, Frances Simpson, Governor Simpson's eighteen-year-old cousin and wife, insisted on leaving. At her request, the family moved to Lachine, Quebec.

The site never became the commercial centre of the settlement either. Because the new fort was built below St. Andrew's falls, it was not favoured as the centre of business by the local inhabitants. The majority of them lived south of the fort in Kildonan, St. Boniface, and elsewhere along the Red River banks as far as the La Salle River. The new Fort Garry was too far away to be of any convenience and the commercial centre of the region had already been established at the Forks. The plains

hunters involved in the pemmican trade did not enjoy carrying their produce an extra twenty miles as well.

As trade never stopped at the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, and and as there was need for a new store in the area, the final Fort Garry was begun on the north bank of the Assiniboine River, close to its original location, in 1835. This fort had stone walls as well, built fifteen feet high with four large towers at each corner. A gallery from which to look over the walls was provided for guarding the place. This new, new Fort Garry included a barracks, officer's quarters, Chief Factor's residence, general store, fur store, pemmican store, and the Governor of Assiniboia's residence. Eventually a liquor store was built just outside the south wall. At this new Fort Garry, the buildings were not made out of stone but lumber, which was more readily available in the region, as well as less time-consuming for construction and less expensive.

To distinguish between the two Fort Garrys on the Red River, the forts were called Upper and Lower Fort Garry. The names refer to their position on the Red River drainage system. In the days of canoe transportation, the direction of water flow was essential to one's bearings, indicating the direction one traveled. Because the Assiniboine River flows into the Red River, it is on higher ground, and the HBC post on its banks was called Upper Fort Garry. The post along the Red River is on lower ground, so it was called Lower Fort Garry. Most residents of the colony, however, called Upper Fort Garry simply Fort Garry and Lower Fort Garry was known as the Stone Fort.

The Stone Fort remained Governor Simpson's principal residence whenever he was in the region, and gained a reputation for its rural beauty. It was the country fort, with rustic wiles that enchanted many travellers paddling past its stately comfort. The

Stone Fort was also famous for the annual departures of company boats transporting produce from Red River to outlying posts for provisions and its annual arrivals of European goods from Hudson Bay to Red River for trade. These large trading brigades converging on the site resulted in wild celebrations that often carried into the following day. There would be bonfires with dancing, fiddlers for entertainment, and unlimited food and beverage for the revellers.

By contrast, Upper Fort Garry was the major commercial centre of the region and known for its lively bustle of business and administrative affairs. It was the seat of the colony governor as well as the council of Assiniboia. By 1852, business operations had become so considerable for the company at the Forks that Upper Fort Garry was extended to the north side and the area occupied by the fort was nearly doubled. Because of high costs, the extended walls were made from two rows of squared oak logs filled with dirt instead of stone. These wooden fortifications were considered a slight to the Company's importance in the area and eventually Alexander Hunter Murray, a Chief Trader for the HBC, designed a stone gate for the north wall in order to rectify the addition's impermanent appearance.

Upper Fort Garry was the political, economic, and social centre of the Red River Settlement for the nineteenth century. It was built to reflect the HBC's dominance in the region and be a symbol of British political authority. In 1869, the Upper fort was taken over by Louis Riel's forces in the revolt that led to the province of Manitoba's entrance into Canadian Confederation.

When Upper Fort Garry was occupied by the Riel government, Lower Fort Garry remained in HBC hands and served as a base of operations for the Canadian opposition to

Riel's government. Relations between the two forts and their opposing communities, however, remained cordial, with only one botched attempt at overthrowing the provisional government, a few escapes, and attempted imprisonments occurring during Riel's time.

After the city of Winnipeg was incorporated in 1873, the land owned by the Hudson's Bay Company at Upper Fort Garry became more valuable as city lots and part of the walls were demolished in order to straighten Main Street. In 1875, the mound opposite the north gate was excavated and large quantities of human skulls and bones were unearthed and carried off by curiosity seekers. The rest of the land was largely sold off and the buildings destroyed. Government House, the residence of the Governor of Assiniboia became the residence of the Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba until 1888, when it was sold at auction for \$100.00 and torn down for firewood. Stone from the dismantled walls was incorporated into an apartment called Fort Garry Court that stood on the North West corner of Broadway and Main for decades, but it has since been demolished as well. All that remains of Upper Fort Garry is the "Governor's Gate," the north side entrance built by Alexander Murray, donated to the city of Winnipeg as a park in 1897 by the Hudson's Bay Company. The last vestige of the fort was spared thanks to pressure from the Society of the Gate, Manitoba's first historical society, formed solely to preserve the remains of the once-great fort.

With Manitoba's entrance into confederation and the decline of the fur trade, Lower Fort Garry was used for a variety of purposes by the province, including a prison and a mental hospital. It has also been the site of several important events. The Stone Fort was the site of the first treaty made between the Canadian government and the First

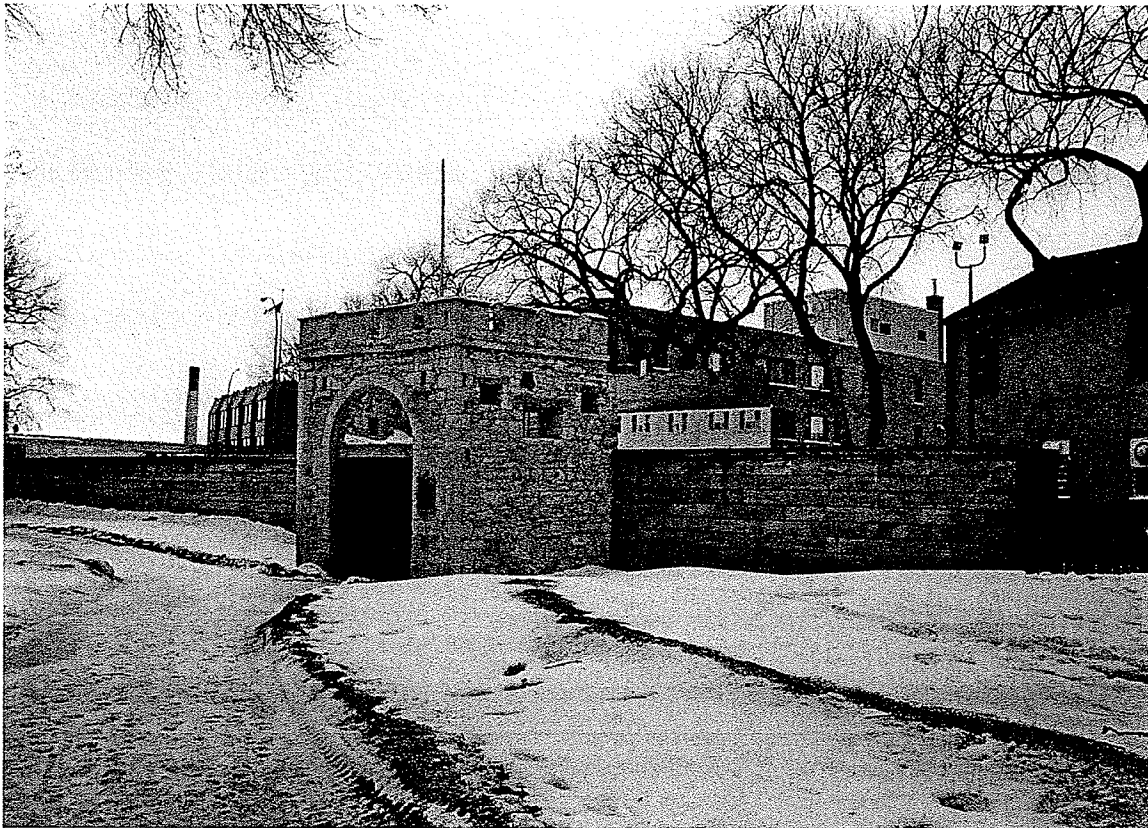
Nations of the North West. The Stone Fort Treaty was negotiated and signed at Lower Fort Garry in 1871 by Ojibwa and Swampy Cree nations. It was also where some members of the first detachment of the North West Mounted Police were trained for their duties in the North West. Although Lower Fort Garry served various purposes for the province, the stone fort remained in HBC hands until 1951 and was used occasionally for company purposes. In 1920, for the Hudson's Bay Company's two hundred and fiftieth anniversary, representatives of all the First Nations of North America who dealt with the HBC were invited for celebrations. With the rise of automobile travel in the 20s and 30s, its grounds were converted to a golf course and its buildings used as a clubhouse by the Winnipeg Automobile Association.

Today, Lower Fort Garry is the oldest intact fur post in Canada and contains the largest grouping of fur trade buildings from the nineteenth century in the country. It was given to Canada and preserved by Parks Canada as a national historic site. Thousands flock to its one-of-a-kind setting every summer.

Fort Gibraltar was reconstructed in St. Boniface near the mouth of the Seine River in Whittier Park. It is the location of the city's annual Festival du Voyageur and provides a unique venue for conferences and banquets where people in 1820 period dress guide visitors through its duplicated buildings. The tours are so popular that they have started to be offered in the summer as well as during Festival.

What remains of Upper Fort Garry is still owned by the city as a municipal park. It is hidden by a gas station on the corner of Broadway and Main Street in downtown Winnipeg and homeless people often use it as a place to sleep. As part of a historical preservation project launched by the city to reconstruct the entire fort, a portion of the

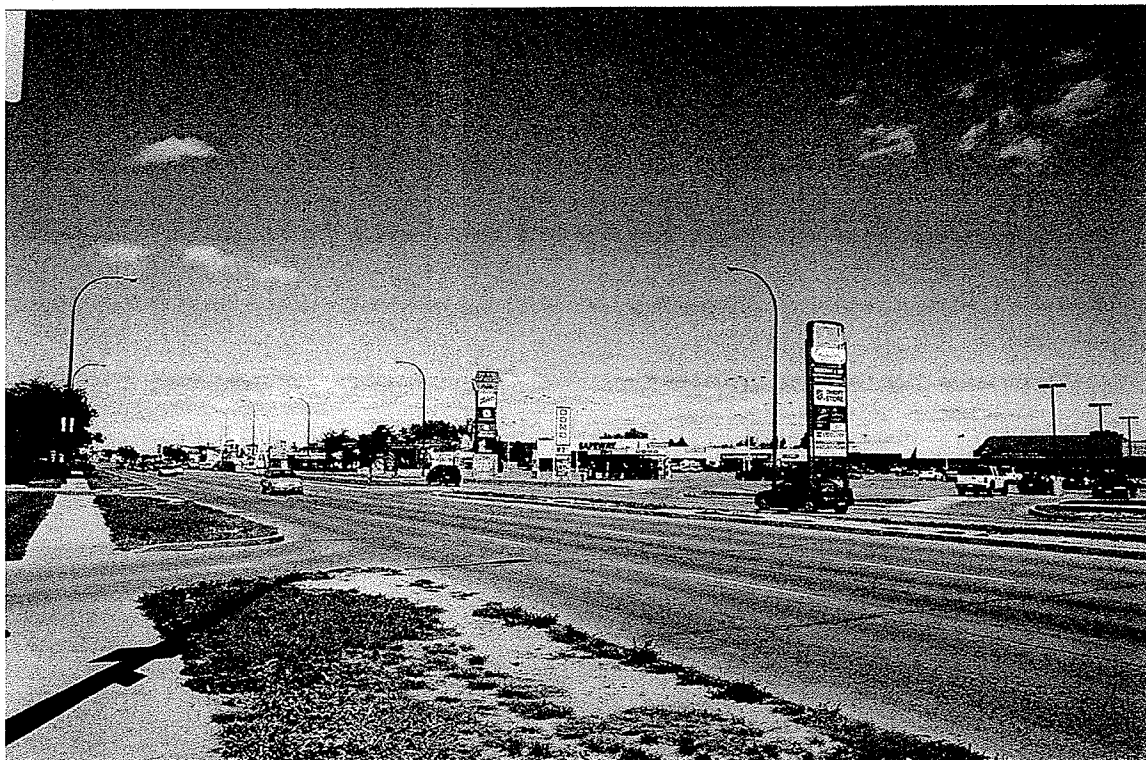
oak walls were rebuilt in the early 1980s, but little else was accomplished, apart from the excavation by archeologists of two outhouses. In 2006, the buildings behind the park were deemed surplus by the city and in 2007, the municipal council approved the construction of a fifteen storey condominium on land adjacent to the exterior walls where an interpretive centre was envisioned for the fort. How the council chose profits—ensured by a condo development—over the integrity of the fort’s reconstruction project exemplifies the negligence and disregard that characterizes the site. From time to time there is a cannon in the park, but each replacement gets stolen.



18. The Governor's Gate, Upper Fort Garry.

4. Stephanie

(1992)



19. Pembina Highway at Fort Richmond Plaza

Stephanie stood in front of a mirror at the cosmetic counter of Consumer's Pharmacy, trying on lipstick. She had dyed her hair blond when it started to go brown and now she noticed dark roots beginning to show next to her scalp. It made a nice contrast, she thought, the dark brown creeping in from the top, suddenly turning platinum blond. It could grow another inch and still look good. Now she had even found a nice lipstick to match and bring out the colour.

From the periphery of her vision, Stephanie watched the cosmetician on the other side of the counter helping a lady select perfume. She waited for the right moment when both would be distracted with a new item before she shoved the lipstick into her pocket.

In the mirror she pushed her bangs behind her ears and pursed her lips, making sure nothing was revealed in her eyes. She took out another colour and began trying it on when Emily came down the aisle.

“You ready to go?” She asked tapping her right pocket ever so slightly, indicating the red Bic lighter she had stolen from the cashier counter.

Stephanie scrunched her mouth into a kiss to emphasize the new colour she had on and replied in the best accent she could imitate.

“Bien sur, ma chérie.”

“Good, then let’s go.”

Outside, they unlocked their bikes from the rack. It was close to curfew and time to go home.

At her escape, Emily breathed a sigh of relief.

“God, I hate doing that. I wish they could just let me pay for it.”

Stephanie changed to a British accent.

“Ahh, but you are a child my dear Emily. You cannot be trusted with such dangerous toys as a lighter.” With a frown, she purposely let her lips swell to preposterous proportions, trying to get Emily to comment on their new shade. Finally, a glimmer of recognition appeared on her companion’s face.

“Is that new lipstick? I can’t believe you. What else did you take?”

“Just this—what do you think though?”

“It looks good,” Emily replied, an accusatory look in her eyes.

“Don’t get all high and mighty on me. It’s just lipstick.”

“I know, but don’t you think you’re being a bit careless. Do you really want to get busted for something as trivial as makeup?”

“But that’s precisely it, Emi. It’s trivial. Do you think the lady working for seven bucks an hour behind the counter gives a flying fuck about some missing lipstick?”

“Well, whatever. All I was trying to say was that if you want to keep that pristine reputation of yours, you better watch your step, miss straight ‘A’s by day, shoplifter at night.”

Emily had done it again. Just at the point Stephanie thought she had won, her friend’s rebuttal rang true. At school and with her dad, she was still the go-getter, the girl who got all the top marks and set the example for the rest of the class. She was captain of the volleyball team and, at track and field she always came home with a few red ribbons. She could torment anybody in her class, throw a rubber ball at the chalkboard when the teacher wasn’t looking, and if someone squealed on her, it would invariably be the squealer who got sent to the office. If she wasn’t careful her two lives would collapse into one.

“I wouldn’t talk, Ems, or did you pay for that new lighter in your pocket?”

“You know that’s different. I would buy lighters if they’d let me. Don’t try to turn this around.”

They glared at each other from across their handle bars until Stephanie lowered her eyes.

“Alright, simmer down. You know you’re right, but is it really so detestable to put yourself in the same category as me, a common thief?”

Emily’s anger dissipated at her friend’s reproach.

“No it’s not that, I mean, you’re right—I steal all the time too, and no one cares about some missing lipstick, I just think you should be more careful sometimes, that’s all, perhaps a bit more sparing in your thievery.” At the word she cracked a smile.

Stephanie returned to her British accent.

“Hmmm, yes, perhaps a little less thievery would be prudent. We don’t want Consumer’s to close now, would we?”

That was Emily, Stephanie thought, always looking out for her and prescribing what’s best, always the bad-ass who did the right thing, the shoplifter with a heart of gold. Her friend’s hypocrisy gave Stephanie a sense of superiority, for whereas Stephanie knew she did wrong, knew with every gleeful prize she nabbed that her five finger discount was deplorable, Emily tried to deny that she was stealing at all, tried to justify it as some noble cause, something she was even coerced to do through society’s silly rules.

The two brought their bikes to a halt at the end of Emily’s street.

“So I’ll see you later tonight then, Ems?”

“You know it.” Emily’s voice shifted to a softer, more cautious tone. “You’ll be okay, right?”

Put off by her concern, Stephanie rode off, leaving her friend at the end of the street with no response. After a few pushes of her peddles, she thought better of it.

“You know it.”

Whizzing by yellow-leafed bushes and parked cars, Stephanie biked home as hard as she could. The trepidation with which Emily spoke was unbearable to her: Jump in a fire too drunk one night and your friends have the suicide hotline on speed dial for

you. She didn't remember it at all. "It isn't worth living," they'd said she mumbled. It all seemed so absurd. Stephanie knew she wasn't always happy, especially recently, but she wasn't ready to die. She'd just had too much to drink and lost it. That's all.

Stephanie rested her bike at the side of her house and strolled to the back door. Inside she could hear the television in the living room and see the blue flicker of its images lightening and darkening the back wall. No doubt her dad was on his chair as he was every Friday.

"Hi, dad," she yelled in her cheeriest voice, skipping towards her room without waiting for a reply, dodging between the recycling bin full of empty soup and alphaggetti cans and the tower of empty pizza boxes leaning next to the garage door. She ignored the disorder, as usual.

Her father got her little brother ready for school in the morning. For lunch, he'd give her money. When the money ran out, he'd make peanut butter and raspberry jam sandwiches until he got paid again. It wasn't the best situation, but she couldn't complain. Her dad even did all the dishes and vacuumed the floors. He dusted the picture frames and wiped the windows. Stephanie couldn't complain. She wasn't starving or homeless; she wasn't persecuted for her beliefs or forced to do anything she didn't want, and if she wanted new clothes or a new bag, all she had to do was tell her dad and he'd buy it for her. Life wasn't unfair to her at all.

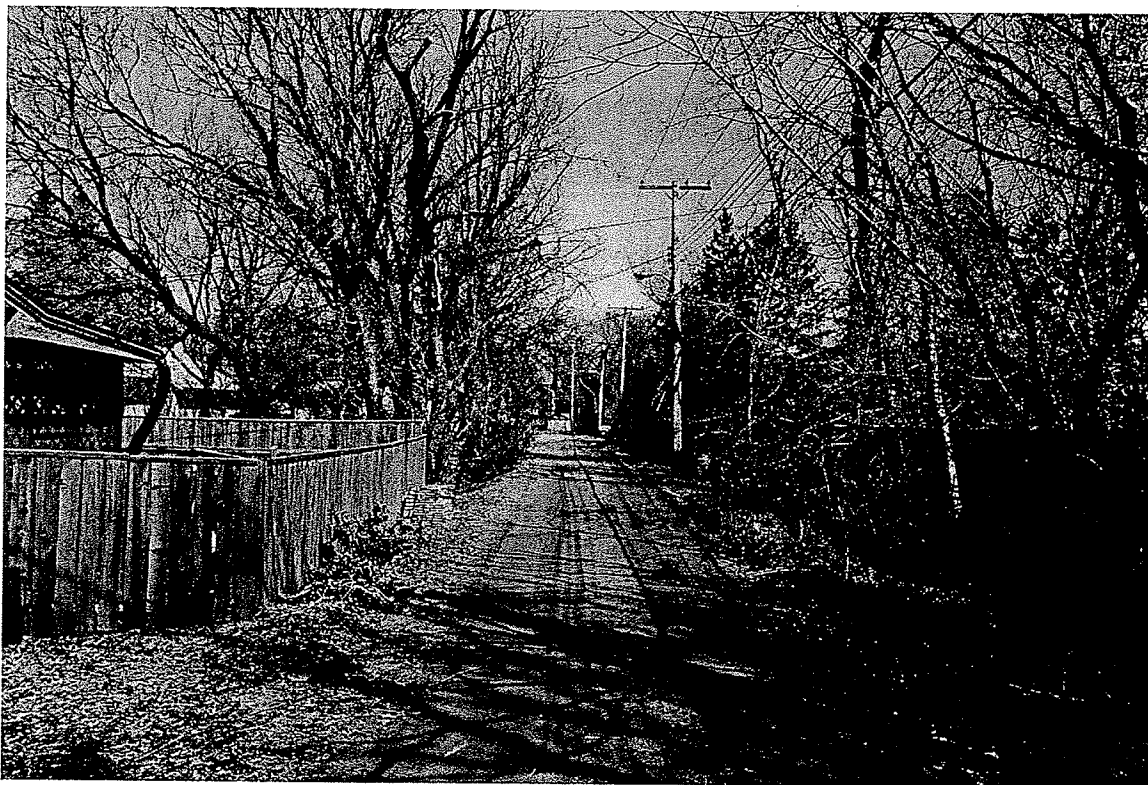
In her room Stephanie checked her new lipstick in the mirror. The dark colour leached out the blueness in her eyes and made them a pale grey, making her look colder, meaner, she thought. She decided to put more on. Soon she found herself straightening her hair, letting it hang loose past her shoulders like satin curtains pulling back for the

main attraction. To keep her long bangs out of her eyes, she decided to put them in a small ponytail at the back of her head. On her legs, she put on an old, worn-out pair of brown corduroys she found at Value Village, and after riffling through her closet, she decided on a white Nirvana T-shirt with the beige, chequered old-man-sweater she'd taken from her dad. Her black zip-up hoodie hung on the bathroom door, ready to be removed at any moment, but it was still early. Now that she was dressed, she could wait. She turned the light off and sat on her bed, resting her arms on her knees, enjoying the silence of her house and the calm nothingness that accompanied it in her mind. She used silence to let herself wander aimlessly, imagining tropical beaches or steep mountain scenery. From the corner of her eye, she occasionally peeked at the clock on her nightstand.

At 1:22, Stephanie put on her skateboard shoes, grabbed her hoodie and crept into the hallway. From the kitchen, she went into the garage and grabbed an empty whiskey bottle. She took it into the house and went to the living room. Her father was sleeping in the chair next to the stereo, the Beatles' Rubber Soul album playing quietly on the record player. His dark hair was thinning but well kept. In the dim light, she thought the wrinkles on his brow and cheeks were accentuated, making him look older and more worn out than normal. His white collared business shirt was unbuttoned enough to show the grey undershirt underneath and a half empty glass of rye and ice reposed on the arm rest in his left hand, softly clinking each time he inhaled.

The bottle on the table was three quarters finished. Stephanie was disappointed. The quarter bottle would go fast if it was alone.

With her left hand she grabbed the bottle on the table and replaced it with the empty one in her right. Silently, she moved back to the kitchen and grabbed a half empty two-litre Pepsi from the fridge before returning to her bedroom. Over her floor she delicately poured the rye into the Pepsi bottle, screwed the cap on tight and put it in her school bag. She opened her window, lifted out the screen and climbed out onto the back porch. She could hear her friends whispering impatiently as they waited on their bikes in the lane beyond the backyard. Stephanie grabbed her bicycle and peddled to meet them, nearly side swiping the gatepost and the stucco wall in the narrow exit between the fence and the garage.



20. Back Lane

It was a dark night, no moon in the sky and a chill in the air. Dead dried-up leaves rustled and scraped along the pavement as the four of them swooshed past.

Stephanie stretched her sleeves over her hands, keeping them warm as she held onto the handle bars, Mark's squeaky chain behind her as he pedaled to catch up.

"How much did your dad drink tonight? Was there anything left this time?"

"About a quarter, what did you guys get?"

"Me an' John got Beans to go to the vendor for us before he went to see Tanya."

Beans was Mark's older brother. He went by the pseudonym because he considered Benedict to be a cruel name. Tanya was a girl he went to see after he got off work. He was in high school and worked the evening shift at Boston Pizza as a waiter. For five bucks and a few smokes he'd occasionally buy Mark and John a case of beer.

"Emi, what about you?" Stephanie asked, craning her neck to see her friend.

"Two wines, red and white," she replied, indicating the plastic bag that swung from her handle bars.



21. Monkey Trail

At the trees, they left the road and traveled on monkey trails through the forest, whizzing by low-lying branches and over fallen twigs. It had rained earlier that week and the smell of wet dirt intermingled with the odour of rotting leaves. A snap of cold weather had killed off all the mosquitoes.

The bonfire pit lay beneath two large oak trees in a clearing. In its centre lay a fire tipi ready to be lit. Beside the dugout, a stack of large branches had been gathered together in a pile next to the trees. Stephanie eyed the preparations suspiciously. John spoke up.



22. Bonfire pit

“Since it took us so long to get the fire going last time, I figured I’d stop by after school and get everything ready.” He took a newspaper from his bag and stuffed it between the logs, lit the paper’s edges and soon they were gathered around a large fire,

the flames flickering across their faces in the cold night. Stephanie opened her Pepsi bottle, took two large gulps and passed it around the circle. Emily handed her the open red wine and with her new lighter, lit cigarettes and passed them down the line.

They finished the rye, then the wine when it became clear they would need more firewood. Mark stumbled into the forest singing voyageur songs and started trying to rip a small tree from the ground. John tripped on a log and threw it further into the forest before realizing what he had done. Seeing their difficulties, Stephanie went in search of a good sized fallen branch, herself, one that could provide a lot of wood, but was light to carry.

In the forest dark roots jutted out across her path and she could barely make out the trail in the moonless night. Eventually she lost it entirely and clutched at branches and tree trunks as she tried to find her way. She found herself on the river banks.

Next to the water the wind was calm and the river banks reflected on the smooth liquid surface. The light coming from the city blocked out the northern sky, but to the south, a few bright stars peeked out. On the other side of the river she could hear cars on the highway, but all she could see was a row of trees. Taken in by the picture, Stephanie sat down and noticed they reflected in the river, their bare sinuous branches interweaving with each other, growing thinner as they climbed into the sky and descended into the water. She had never seen it so clear before. It was like looking at two mirror images, two identical worlds sandwiched together as if they were complete, perfect, inseparable opposites. She lit a cigarette and began to wonder what her own image would look like in the river's unbroken surface, whether it would mirror herself with the same clarity as it did the trees.

Stephanie got up and went to the bank. She bent over the edge, but only saw the other side and the dark sky. As she leaned further over, she began to make out a light head of hair creeping further into the image. Soon she could make out the dark outline of her eyes and the dark tone of her lips, leaning out awkwardly as she did over the water.

It was a lie, she thought. Nothing more than an extravagant fortress she had built to keep the world from getting in and her self from spilling out. School, sports, it was all a meaningless charade, a routine. The cheap thrills she got from breaking rules the only whiff of life she ever inhaled. She wasn't surprised at all she jumped in the fire; she just didn't want to believe it.

Stephanie extended her hand to the calm river, almost skimming the surface with the tip of her middle finger. She leaned further and almost touched it, but she heard someone running towards her and she stopped. Her head turned in time to see John lunge and tackle her to the ground.

In the forest, for a moment, everything was silent and still, until Stephanie shoved John off her, ready to slap him across the face.

"What the hell are you trying to do? This place is covered in poison ivy. Are you trying to give me a rash?"

John sat motionless in the underbrush.

"Ems and Mark started to wonder where you were. I figured I'd try to find you."

"And practice your tackle on me?"

He faced towards her and grabbed her hand delicately, tried to look into her eyes despite the dark shadows cast by the forest.

“Steph, you don’t have to do this. I know things have been shitty for you since your mom left, but there’s so much out there. I know I sound like some cheesy after school special, but you don’t want to go, not like this. So many people care about you. Do you know how many people would be devastated if you left? You can’t just think of your own pain right now. You just can’t.”

Stephanie looked at John in bewilderment. She pulled her hand out of his grasp and started walking back to the fire. John followed in his inebriation.

“Steph?”

Stephanie stopped and turned to John, making him bump into her.

“Look, I realize what it must’ve looked like, but that wasn’t what was happening. I was just looking in the river.” She wanted him to believe her. He needed to know she was being honest with him, but instead he winced in disbelief. At her failure, she tried again.

“I was just looking at myself. Nothing more.” The words came out and she felt them betray what they attempted to defend. It all seemed so ridiculous now, so futile to try and explain.

“You were bending over the edge of a river bank in the dark looking at yourself?”

Stephanie shrugged her shoulders, turned and continued to walk, spotting the light of the bonfire ahead in the bushes.

“I know it’s a lame excuse, but you can’t seriously believe I’d jump into the Red River. Who would want to die from that stink? Seriously.”

Mark and Emily were sitting by the fire as she and John entered the small clearing. John went to them and started talking in a soft voice so that she couldn’t hear.

Stephanie plunked down on the other side of the fire, irritated by John's pointless veil of secrecy. Her friends' faces fell and Emily got up and sat next to her.

"What's going on?"

"I was just thinking of taking a dip is all, thought it would be a bit of a refresher."

Emily sat unflinching, her intense brown eyes on her friend. They both knew the river was murky brown and unpleasant. Stephanie wanted to tell her the truth, but she thought it wouldn't make any sense to her. The experience was too personal to be shared. She took Emily's hand and pulled it towards her.

"I'm serious. I'm fine. Really. I was just having a moment, okay." She didn't know what else she could say.

Mark spoke from across the fire.

"It's alright, Steph. All of our lives are shitty. If they were so great, why would we all be drinking here together?" He began to laugh, but as no one joined him, he quickly fell silent.

Stephanie stood up, lit a cigarette and paced the fire. She knew Mark was right, but they wouldn't understand that it wasn't really about being miserable—that was a given. It was about being able to live with your misery, being able to see yourself for who you really were. Grabbing a beer, she sat back down. She could sense the unease lying beneath the casual conversations of her friends but there was nothing she could do to reassure them. Their minds had been made up.

It was almost morning when they put out the dying embers of the fire. At the end of the bike path from the forest, they parted ways and Stephanie rode home alone in the early dawn. At her garage she got off her bike and entered the backyard. She saw her

father standing in the kitchen window at the back of the house. He was doing the dishes. Stephanie took her time putting her bike away and walking to the back door. She had to think. Taking the key from her pocket, she undid the lock. As she grabbed the doorknob, she could feel the force of her father's hand turning it from the other side. They stood face to face in the doorway.

"When did you wake up?" Stephanie smiled, waiting for her father's answer, the words bubbling out spontaneously from her mouth.

"A couple of minutes ago. Where were you so early?"

"I had a nightmare and couldn't fall back asleep so I decided to go for a bike ride."

Her father stared blankly at her for a couple of seconds. His eyes were swollen and red. Clearly, he hadn't even noticed she was gone. He put his hand on her shoulder.

"Things'll get better, honey. Don't worry." He looked up, scratched his head and went back into the kitchen. Stephanie breathed a sigh of relief, but not without a pang of remorse. She contemplated telling him that she was out all night and that she had been getting drunk as he had, but couldn't. He would make a big deal of it, ground her for lord knows how long and call all her friends' parents. She couldn't do that to them. She couldn't betray them like that.

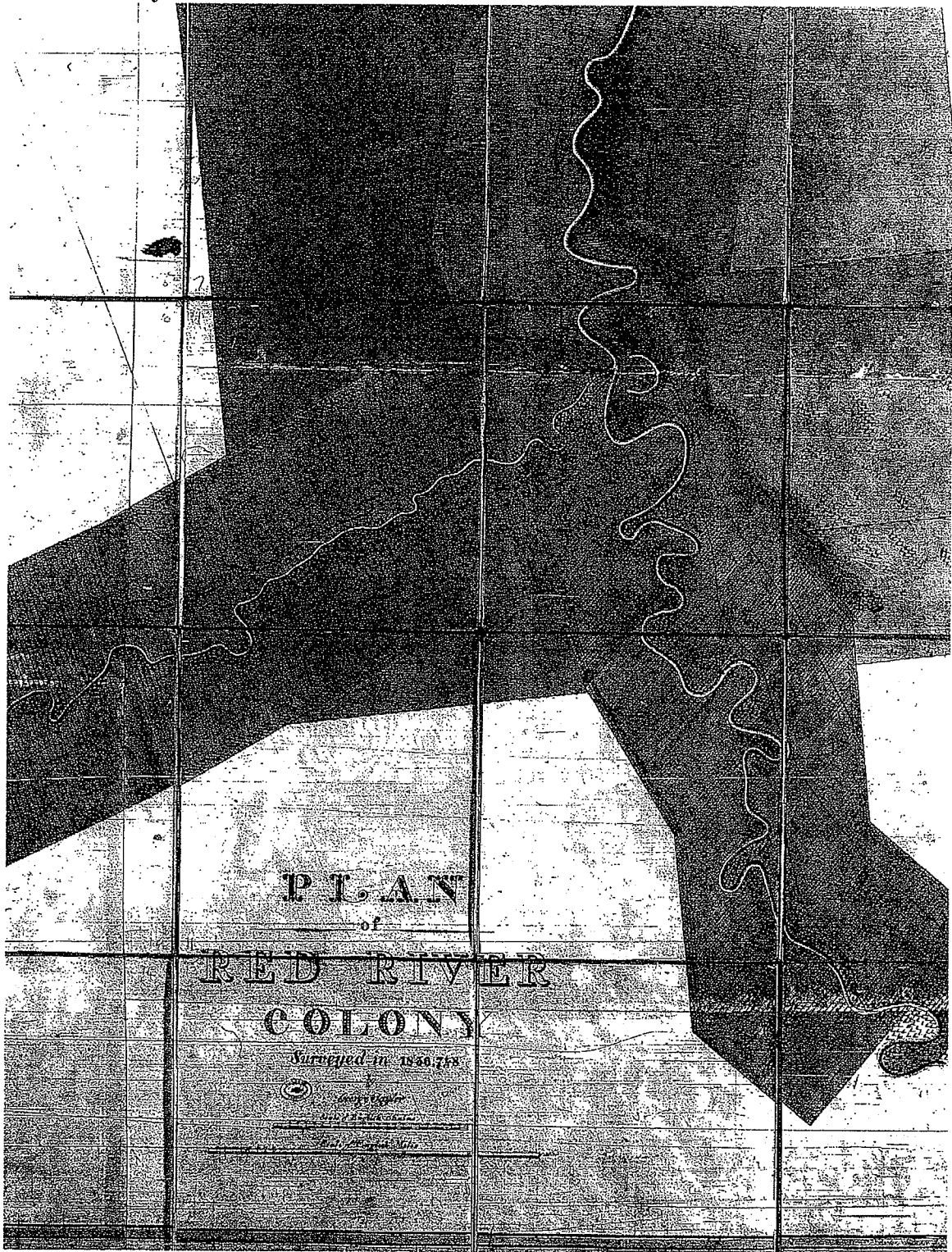
In her room, Stephanie closed her open window and put the screen back on. In front of the mirror, she wiped off the make-up still left on her face, barely able to keep her eyes open after the long night. From her pocket, she took out the dark lipstick she had stolen from Consumer's and threw it into her wastebasket next to her desk. As the

sun rose and birds began to sing, she took off her hoodie and crawled into bed, burying her face in the soft, cold comfort of her pillow.



23. Tropical Beach

5. Fort Garry Settlement



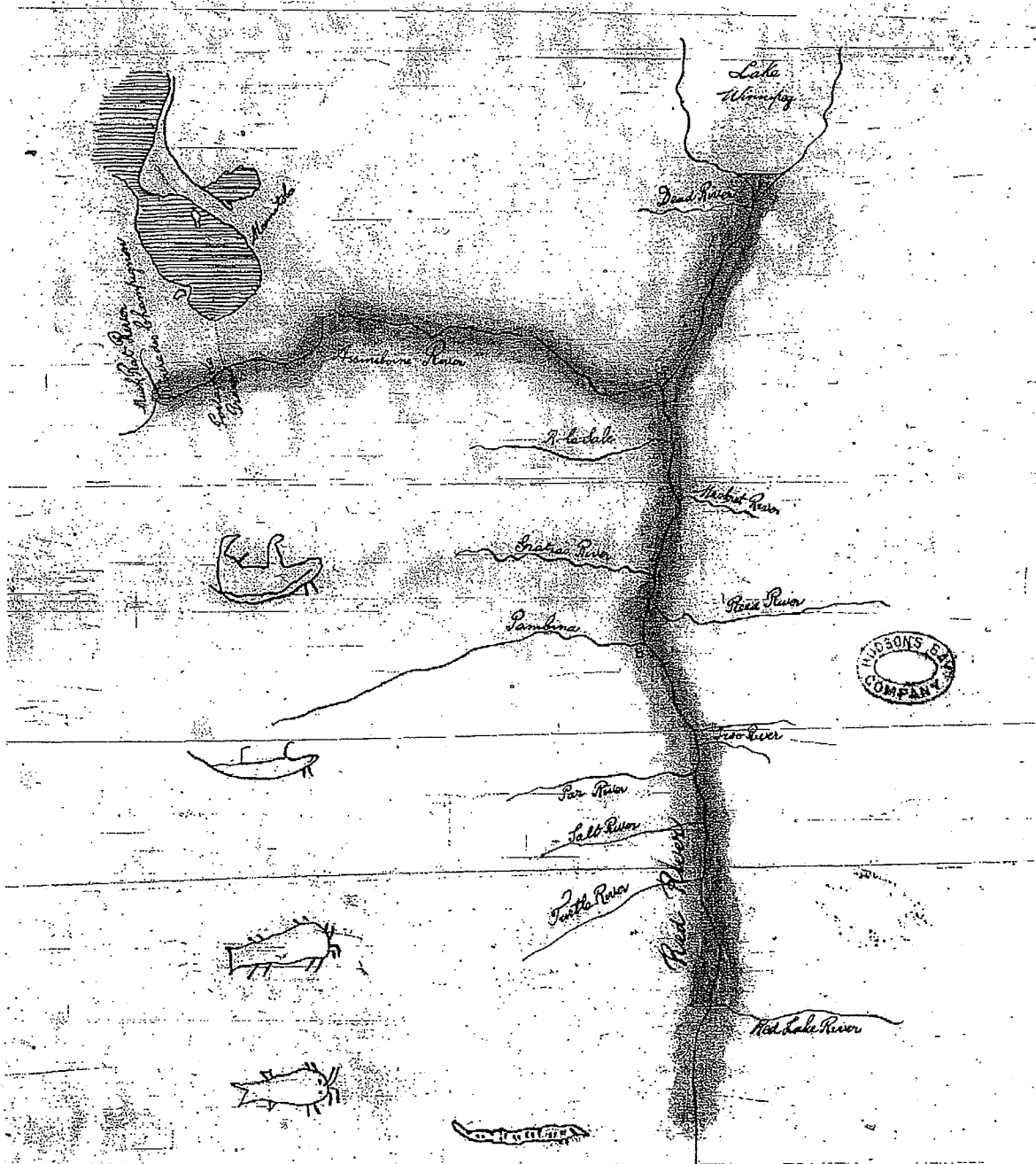
24. Plan of Red River Colony, 1836-38. (4M106 E6/14, Manitoba Archives)

. In the nineteenth century, the Selkirk settlement became known erroneously as Fort Garry, especially by those not living in the colony. It was a consequence of the post office. Because all mail was organized through the HBC, letters addressed to people in the region were sent to Fort Garry, Red River Settlement.

As the first English colony west of the Great Lakes, Fort Garry bred two distinct societies, both of which incorporated elements of European and Aboriginal culture. This cross-fertilization was necessary for the colony to survive in its isolation and unforgiving climate but as time progressed and industrial European civilization encroached on the colony, strong trading ties were developed with St. Paul, Minnesota and access to Fort Garry became greatly facilitated. As a rush of new pioneer immigrants began to flock to the colony, the unique character of the settlement was compromised, and all but wiped out with the area's entry into Canadian Confederation.

As a place that never really existed, the limits of Fort Garry were never clearly defined. Some sources say that the entire region under settlement was known as Fort Garry. These boundaries were defined in Lord Selkirk's treaty with the Cree and Ojibwa nations who inhabited the region when the settlers came. The treaty was signed in the summer of 1817 during Lord Selkirk's personal visit to the colony. For occupation of two miles of land along both sides of the Rivers, on the Red from Netley Creek to Grand Forks, North Dakota, and from the mouth of the Assiniboine to the Muskrat River, the Cree and Ojibwa both received 100 pounds of tobacco annually on October 10th.

Included in the negotiations was also the right to occupy the land within a six mile radius of Fort Daer¹ and Fort Douglas.



25. Map indicating the land acquired in Selkirk's Treaty from Cree and Ojibwa residents. The animals are the signatures of the five Chiefs involved in the purchase. (4M106 E6/16 FO 35, Manitoba Archives)

¹ Fort Daer was the HBC fort at the mouth of the Pembina River.

The land acquired in the treaty was subdivided for personal purchase into narrow strips which varied in width from three to ten chains along the river bank and extended two miles back into the prairie.² Many of the earliest lots included a wood lot on the other side of the river for use as firewood as well. Because the rivers were the main avenue of transportation, both in the summer and winter, houses were built close to each other along its banks for easy access, but also for a source of fresh water.

The first twenty-four lots were given to the Selkirk Settlers in compensation for the hardships they endured during the Pemmican Wars. They were each ten chains in width and began one mile north of Fort Douglas on the Red River and finished at Frog Plain.³ The rest of the lots were purchasable from Lord Selkirk's estate until 1836 when the land grant of Assiniboia was bought back by the HBC.

Along with the Selkirk Settlers, and the members of the Des Meurons regiment hired to protect them, the Red River Settlement also became inhabited by retired HBC employees and their Métis families accustomed to life in the wilderness. The differing communities settled in different regions, and Fort Garry became divided into parishes reflecting these cultural differences. The western and northern parts of the colony became Protestant as they were largely inhabited by English-speaking people. The eastern and southern parts, inhabited by those who spoke French, became Catholic.

The Red River was divided into north and south by the mouth of the Assiniboine River and the two regions were said to display a remarkable contrast in cultures, land use, and architecture. On the northern side of the divide, the principal agricultural producers

² 1 chain equals 66 feet or 20.1168 meters.

³ The area of these farms is more commonly known now as the North End.

of the colony lived in log houses,⁴ some of considerable size, covered in lime to seal the crevices in the wooden walls. Their interiors were often furnished with items made from resources in the vicinity. What could not be made locally was imported from Europe by the HBC. Barns and the occasional windmill also characterized this district.

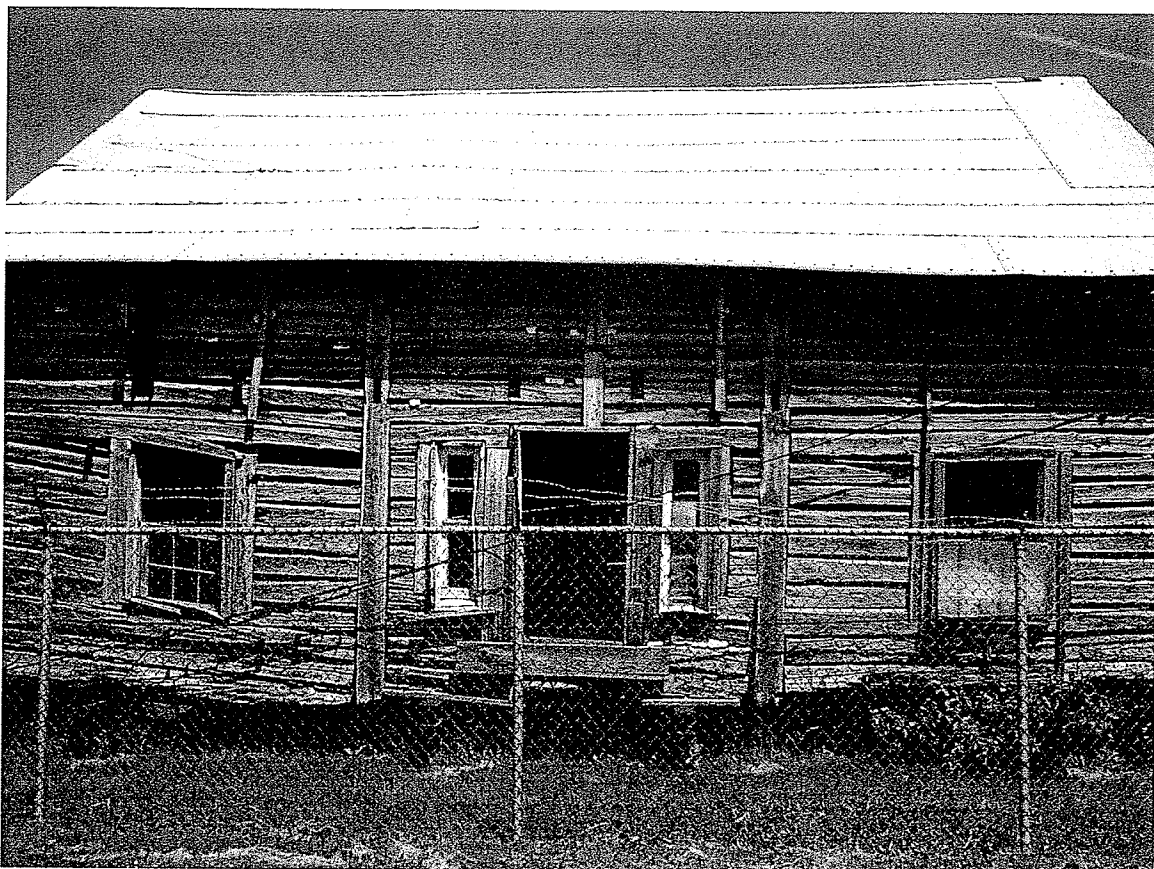


26. Seven Oaks Museum, built by John Inkster, 1853.

Those living south of the Assiniboine rarely cultivated the land to any great extent, but relied on buffalo hunting as their main source of sustenance. These houses were mostly of one or two rooms and also made of logs, but instead of lime, the crevices in these walls were filled with buffalo hides, clay and grass. As hunting would often

⁴ The method of house construction in Fort Garry Settlement is commonly called Red River Frame construction, or Hudson's Bay style, and is a method traced back to northern Europe and medieval France. It was a common method used in La Nouvelle France early on and imported to Red River by the French Canadian fur traders. It is known as Red River frame construction largely because the style dominated the region so thoroughly in the nineteenth century. The Selkirk settlers copied the style from Fort Gibraltar in their construction of Fort Douglas and the settlement houses.

carry off inhabitants for months at a time, these semi-permanent dwellings were left largely unfurnished, being occupied mostly during winter.



27. Maison Delorme, built 1853, St. Norbert Heritage Park.

In the two economic/cultural divisions of Fort Garry were four distinct societies living in proximity to each other:

1. The smallest segment of the population consisted of aboriginals who returned to live in the church mission parishes after the Selkirk treaty. There was St. Peter's, on the northern fringe of the settlement, and Baie St Paul, on the Assiniboine. In mission parishes, church missionaries from England and Canada tried to convert both Crees and Ojibwas to Christianity as well as agriculture. Both nations, however, had their own beliefs and found it absurd

to relinquish them in the name of a faith that did not offer the same respect to their traditions as they were willing to give Christianity. The Cree and Ojibwa also found it easier to live off the plains and forests than on the farm, resulting in these parishes being largely unpopulated. Those who moved to the missions often left discontented after several months. There were also a significant number of aboriginal women living in the colony who were married to European men.

2. The second smallest part of the population was the Europeans. Apart from the Selkirk settlers and their descendents, who married into differing cultures, the Europeans were largely of British descent and had moved to the region with their First Nation wives to take up agriculture or live off the savings they had earned working for the HBC. Favoured by the Company as former employees and Europeans, it was from this part of the population that the HBC appointed councillors and clerks to legislate the colony.
3. English and Scotch Half-Breeds, as they were known at the time, comprised the second largest segment of the population. They were of mostly British, Cree and Ojibwa descent and principally practiced farming, becoming the leading grain producers in the colony. Apart from growing crops such as wheat and barley, they also kept livestock such as cows and sheep. They were predominantly Protestant and highly literate, as a majority of them were educated in the schools operated by the parishes in which they lived.
4. The largest segment of the population was the Métis, descendants of French Canadian fur traders, who had inhabited the region as early as the 1730s, and

Native American women, who lived in the region for centuries. Unlike their British brethren, the Métis did not practice agriculture but maintained a semi-nomadic lifestyle. After the merger of the fur companies, the Métis developed buffalo hunting as their expertise in order to monopolize the HBC pemmican market. Twice a year, once in the spring and the fall, they organized large hunting parties where hundreds of carts would depart Red River for the Plains to the South and Sioux territory, returning laden with meat and hides to be bartered in the colony and used for winter provisions. Amongst the Métis, hunting skills and a good aim were valued more than a European education. They were also known for consuming copious amounts of black tea and tobacco.

The historical records indicate that these cultural and economic divisions were not along racial lines. In other words, Half-Breeds became buffalo hunters and legislators; Métis became farmers and fur traders; Europeans lived in the wilderness and on the open plains in what have been described as “mixed tent groups” with Cree and Ojibwa hunters, and a small amount of Aboriginals did stay in the mission parishes to take up agriculture.

One of the most prominent figures who blurred these racial divisions is Cuthbert Grant, the Scotch Cree who led the Métis at the Kerfuffle of Seven Oaks. Grant was an employee of the NWC and had been educated in Scotland by the instigation of his father. For years he ran a post at Fort Qu’Appelle. After the merger, Grant went to Montreal to stand trial for his part in the Massacre and was exonerated of all charges. When he returned, Grant became active in the buffalo hunts, and often led the entire brigade deep into enemy Sioux territory in search of game.

Seeing Grant's leadership capabilities, Governor Simpson appointed him as Deputy-Sheriff of Assiniboia, giving him a seat on the legislative council. Favoured by Simpson, Grant founded a settlement on White Horse Plain west of the forks with Simpson's encouragement to provide a defence against Sioux attacks.⁵ It was here that he took up agriculture on a large scale and encouraged others to do the same while still leading annual cart brigades in the buffalo hunt. With his continuous interaction with the Métis, Grant spoke fluent French and was eventually converted to Catholicism. He is remembered as the first leader of the French Métis, even though he was Scottish Cree.

The social divisions of Fort Garry are also complicated when considering women's roles in the settlement, as they shared similar duties in the differing cultures. On the buffalo hunt, women were responsible for food preparation, such as making pemmican, as well as preparing skins for trade and clothing, but also gathering other sources of nourishment such as berries, roots, and maple sugar. On river lots, Métis and aboriginal women also planted smaller crops, such as potatoes and barley, to provide alternate food sources to meat. Half-Breed and White women in the agricultural districts of the settlement were also largely involved in food preparation, making products such as butter, cheese and bread, as well as collecting seasonal berries and legumes. The making and maintaining of clothes were also the responsibility of women in the agricultural districts. With intermarriage between cultures being the basis of the two largest segments of the population, it was not entirely uncommon to be raised in one society and married into another.

Fort Garry's social divisions characterize the economic markets in which inhabitants participated and can be interpreted as symbiotic: each group produced

⁵ Grant called the settlement Granttown, but today it is known by its parish name, St. François-Xavier.

different foods and provided a market for the produce of the others. The First Nations sold wild game and furs but also traded maple syrup, berries, fish and fish oil (used for lamps), corn, wild rice, salt, bark, pitch and canoes. The half breeds could not only sell flour to the HBC, but also to Métis and Aboriginal families who did not farm. The Métis in turn could sell buffalo skins and pemmican in the settlement.

The interdependence among the groups was most noticeable in times of shortage. If crops failed, pemmican would be in high demand. If the buffalo hunt failed, agricultural produce and other wild game fed the settlement. Times when several, or all, food supplies were scarce resulted in starvation. The buffalo hunts were the most stable food supply available to Fort Garry, and were largely responsible for keeping the colony alive during these years.

When ideals of British racial superiority began to circulate in the colony, notably through its administrators and HBC employees, Fort Garry's societies increasingly began to be interpreted hierarchically, with the British fur traders seated at the top. Their children, the mixed blood farmers, were increasingly seen as a middle class; they were as good as Europeans, devoted Christians in the church and hardworking in the fields, but they were still inferior to their fathers because of their multi-racial lineage. Their French neighbours and relatives, the Métis, were placed below the mixed bloods because of their semi-nomadic ways, but as Christians, they were seen as superior to their mothers, whose nations and indigenous cultures were seen as primitive and barbarous in the increasingly colonial view which began to dominate the region.

Such a racialized class structure was not perceived by the majority of Fort Garry's inhabitants. Many households with differing patriarchal cultures shared a common

matriarchal background, and although they could not communicate in the language of their fathers, they could in their mothers'. Many nineteenth century writers deny any but the most limited interaction between the social divisions of Fort Garry, but the accounts of those who lived there often emphasize the interaction between groups in the small schools and during events such as weddings and funerals. A sense of connection rather than division was particularly true amongst the two Métis cultures. Although they practiced differing lifestyles and lived in different parts of the colony, they still saw each other as members of the same extended family.



28. Living Prairie Museum, Winnipeg. A large tract of tall grass prairie that has never been cultivated.

As an agricultural settlement amidst a vast uncolonized territory, Fort Garry came to be known as a sort of oasis of civilisation alone in an untamed wilderness occupied by exotic creatures and mysterious forests. It stood at the fringe of both the great western

plains of North America and the great boreal forests of the north, unknowingly near the centre of the continent, an abnormality in its tall prairie grasses and forest-lined rivers.

In Fort Garry, the population grew slowly. J. J. Hargrave, author and fur trader, wrote that it was because immigrants ceased to be imported to the colony after Selkirk's Swiss settlers arrived in 1821, but there were several factors contributing to marginal population increases.

The region was under the jurisdiction of the HBC monopoly over trade and a very limited number of professions were available to inhabitants of Fort Garry. Essentially, there were only two, and both depended upon the HBC for their existence: farming and hunting. Various supplements to these industries were attempted but unsustainable. A series of joint stock ventures in buffalo wool, tallow and sheep were attempted but failed due to the incompetence of their administrators and employees. The Company also made several futile attempts in operating experimental farms. The farms are known as the three tragic sisters. They provided occasional employment to residents, but all three failed from incompetent management resulting from the Company's hiring people favoured in the fur trade but ignorant of farming on the prairies.

Employment in the fur trade itself, on boat brigades and at trading posts, was the only other employment option for most of the male inhabitants, but as people of mixed race could not be promoted to the upper echelons of the Company, many became frustrated with its policies, causing large numbers in the community to move elsewhere—to Canada, the United States, and Europe—searching for more profitable opportunities.

Floods, droughts, pestilence and epidemics also took their toll on the population. The first large flood in 1826 inundated the flat prairie for miles just after the colony was

established, encouraging the Des Meurons regiment to move further south seeking drier ground along with the hundreds of Swiss settlers who had arrived only five years earlier.⁶ Subsequent floods in 1852 and 1861 also left hundreds of settlers seeking drier pastures elsewhere. By contrast, years of intense drought were accompanied by grass fires that could ruin an entire year's crop and swallow a family in seconds. Even a horse could not outrun the speed with which these fires burnt across the open prairie.

Pestilences, such as recurring infestations of grasshoppers, would decimate an entire year's crops and the young that hatched from the ground in the following spring would ruin the newly planted seeds all over again. To avoid such plagues, a method of fall planting was attempted, popularized in more settled regions, but these efforts were rendered futile by the large numbers of birds that passed through Fort Garry on their migration paths south for winter. Epidemics were even worse. The most devastating and recurring epidemic was smallpox. In 1781, when the Assiniboine dominated the region, it is estimated that the disease killed over two thirds of the nation, resulting in their absence from Red River afterwards. Another outbreak in 1837 caused similarly devastating results amongst First Nations, and many at Fort Garry succumbed to the disease as well.

The first epidemic that occurred amongst European settlers was an outbreak of typhoid fever that occurred in 1813 on the voyage by ship to Hudson's Bay, taking the lives of several settlers and crew members even before reaching the American continent. During the summer of 1846, Infectious Dysentery killed over three hundred people in the span of three months, often taking entire families in a matter of days. A priest recorded that, at one point, thirteen funerals were proceeding at the same time. Whooping cough,

⁶ I've read that the establishment of St. Paul, Minnesota is attributed to these settlers.

pneumonia, tuberculosis and bronchitis also plagued the colony on a regular basis, especially amongst children.

Despite the many cruel and deadly setbacks, Fort Garry persevered, and after 1850, industrial expansion in America and the British colonies increasingly encroached on Fort Garry's isolation, making the colony's links to the outside world more numerous and dependable. Two events mark the beginning of this new era for Fort Garry:

In 1845 an Ojibwa man killed a visiting Sioux warrior on colonial ground and was executed by the Assiniboia court. The Sioux had come as part of a group to visit the settlement after a peace treaty was signed between the Sioux and the Métis. The Ojibwa killed the Sioux in revenge for a brother who died in an attack the previous year and was acting according to the traditions practiced between the local cultures of the region. Unfortunately for the Ojibwa, he shot the Sioux in front of Upper Fort Garry and the Europeans who witnessed the seemingly unprovoked attack interpreted the incident as first degree murder. The Ojibwa was jailed, sent to trial and hung outside the courthouse, becoming the first Native American to be executed under the council of Assiniboia and the rule of the HBC on behalf of the English crown. The 1845 execution exemplifies the greater authority assumed by the HBC on behalf of Britain over the land it occupied as well as the people who frequented its soils.

The second event occurred in 1849 when a Métis known as Guillaume Sayer was arrested for trading in furs contrary to the HBC charter. When the case came to trial, a large number of armed Métis encircled the court to protest the charge. The jury found Sayer guilty but recommended mercy. Consequently, Sayer was convicted but released without punishment. When the verdict was communicated to the assembled crowd, it

was misinterpreted, and shouts of “la commerce est libre” commenced a great celebration amongst the populace. Unable to rectify the misunderstandings of an entire colony, the HBC ceased to enforce its monopoly in Assiniboia and free trade was introduced to Fort Garry.

The birth of this new era is also marked by the creation of the first post office west of Lake Superior, apart from the HBC mail service, in 1853. The mail was collected and delivered from the residence of William Whitney Ross, son of Alexander Ross, Sheriff of Assiniboia and early historian of Red River. The establishment of regular mail was occasioned by the opening of a post office branch at Pembina. The expansion of U.S. postal service provided an expedient means of communication to the outside world through St. Paul, Minnesota, and along with dependable mail delivery, the industrial development of the settlement opened a reliable trade route to Red River.



29. The house of William Ross, built 1853.

With free trade and accessible shipping routes, a few distinguished citizens with entrepreneurial ambitions opened business establishments along the Red River in the vicinity of the Forks. The most prominent of these free trade stores was owned by Andrew McDermot, owner of the farm lot on the Red River closest to Upper Fort Garry.

McDermot, a retired HBC trader, became the wealthiest man in Red River. Moving to the settlement in 1819, he made a substantial fortune in hunting buffalo before opening a store in Fort Garry where he imported goods through the Hudson's Bay Company under the guise of a free trader.⁷ He operated his store independent of the Company after the monopoly was broken. As a favoured dealer amongst the varied societies of Red River, it was not long before he expanded his operations, offering such diverse amenities as mill construction and the sale and repair of transportation equipment—mostly canoes, dog sleds, and oxcarts.

With the largest store in the colony, the variety of goods and services available from McDermot was said to surpass those offered by the HBC, but his success was also partly due to the location upon which he settled. Having established itself as the major centre of trade in the Assiniboia region, Upper Fort Garry was not even a mile away from his store. The proximity of McDermot's establishment to the fort made him a visible competitor to those coming to trade with the Company. It was not long before the financial success of McDermot began to attract other business entrepreneurs to the region, conglomerating on and around the McDermot property to take advantage of the location's commercial traffic.

⁷ In my opinion, McDermot is another example of someone who blurred Fort Garry's social divisions. He was known to speak fluent Cree and Ojibwa as well.

Growing trade relations between Red River free traders and St. Paul occasioned an increase in ox-cart use for transporting goods between regions, and after the HBC adopted the southern route to St Paul through the United States, oxcart traffic became a popular means of shipment between HBC trading posts as well. Due to the soft muddy terrain in the colony, it was more expedient for the large cart brigades to travel in rows instead of single file. At the intersection of these wide, muddy cart brigade trails Winnipeg was born, and they are responsible for the widths of Main Street, Portage Avenue, and Broadway.

The man said to be responsible for the location of Winnipeg was a man named Henry McKenney. In 1859 he purchased a store house along the main road on McDermot's land and converted it into a hotel, opening the first licensed accommodations in western Canada. Encouraged by its success, McKenney opened a store south of his hotel where a fork of the Portage Trail bypassed Upper Fort Garry and created a shortcut to the Main Road. McKenney's double financial success at the intersection led to other merchants opening up businesses along these two trails and it was not long before a small village began to take over the region. The name, Winnipeg, was proposed in 1866 by the *Nor'Wester*, the settlement's first newspaper started in 1859.

After the passing of the Manitoba Act, in 1870, an influx of people from Ontario and America seeking fortunes in the west began to flood into the village, causing the population to rise exponentially and the dominant culture to change dramatically. Adjacent farm lots were portioned off and purchased for the construction of stores and residences for the newly sprouting hub of the prairies. Half-breeds and Métis were

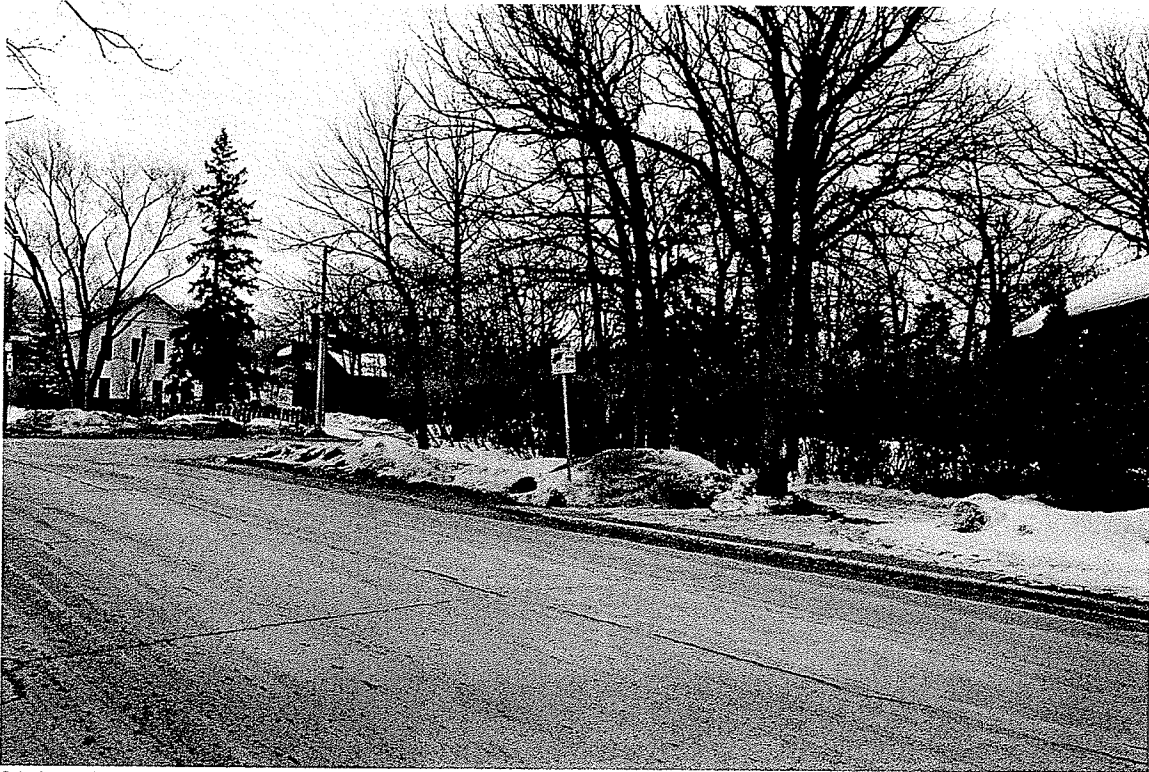
looked upon by the new-comers as unwelcome, inferior people who did not belong in the new province. After much activism and controversy, the village was incorporated as a city in 1873, even though there were only 700 residents in the city at the time.

With Winnipeg established as the official name, a new era of Canadian occupation was introduced to Fort Garry and the rural scenes and celebrations that once characterized the Red River settlement were replaced with the urban landscape of the English-dominated capital of Manitoba. A sign of the times is marked by the post office changing its name from Fort Garry to Winnipeg on May 1st, 1876. The first railroad came two years later.



30. No Parking

6.



31. Bus Stop

Emily

(1994)

Emily locked her door on the way to school. At the corner of her street, the bus to downtown was waiting. She jogged to its doors, walked up the steps and produced her monthly pass. The driver gave her a nod and she walked down the aisle, flopping next to the window on the second last seat at the back. From her bag, she pulled out Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

It was nice the bus driver waited for her. She was usually late and liked to sleep in. It was a routine: after dinner, she'd walk to Mark's place and spend the evening pretending to study in his basement, then she'd take the 10:06 bus back home where she'd complete the assignments she was supposed to be doing with Mark.

Because her curfew was ten, Emily was always fifteen to twenty minutes late, and her mother sometimes waited for her at the door. Emily would get a lecture, and sometimes be forbidden to go to Mark's the next day, but most of the time, her mother wasn't waiting for her at all. She was usually fast asleep beside Emily's dad upstairs, their synchronous snoring louder than Emily's careful footsteps through the front door.

Her parents were morning people, and enjoyed having long breakfasts before work. At 6:30 in the morning, they would be squeezing orange juice and thawing bacon, setting seven places at the kitchen table for Emily, her four siblings, and themselves. In the winter mornings, as they waited to eat pancakes and sausages, or waffles with brown sugar and whipped cream, Emily's brothers and sisters would sit around the kitchen table, with the lights on, flicking inattentive ears and giving unattended arms Indian burns. When breakfast was served, her parents would disappear into the large folds of the morning newspaper and only re-emerge to tell the boys to stop fighting, or the girls to stop swearing to each other in front of their brothers.

Emily had spent the larger part of her childhood breakfasts at the kitchen table hunched over crossword puzzles and novels, shutting out the din of her family, much as her parents did with their newspapers. She was the quiet one, the middle child, left largely to take care of her self because she demanded the least attention. When she started sleeping in at the beginning of junior high, and missing morning breakfasts, she would enter the kitchen after her siblings had left, re-heat the cold leftovers in the microwave, and sit at the kitchen table alone, nibbling at her crosswords undisturbed.

Emily peered up from her book to see if it was Mark's stop yet. Stephanie and John mostly caught earlier buses, but Mark always made sure to catch the same bus as

Emily, and if she missed the usual one, he would wait. He said it was because there was no point in going to school without her. She found the compliments Mark paid her a little silly—he was such a romantic—but they were an expression of his affection and she liked that.

It had been over a year. She hadn't been serious about it at first, but he had grown on her. Stephanie said it was a case of opposites attracting, magnetic forces pulling together like the ones between electrons and protons. Emily agreed. What fascinated her about Mark was how different he was. By bike, their houses were ten minutes apart, but they had grown up in two completely different worlds.

Mark's house was a four and a half room bungalow. He lived with his mom and his older brother in an older part of the neighbourhood, where the trunks of trees curled over the fence posts and swallowed them whole. His basement was half finished and accessed through a little narrow staircase by the back door. Mark moved his room down there when his brother moved out after high school.

Emily's parents lived in a much newer and larger house with a furnished basement and an upstairs. It included a double garage and a screened-in veranda in the backyard. The pine trees, planted on the front lawn when she was two, were only now growing taller than her head. Her Dad owned a construction company, and spent all his time in an office, and her mom worked at the University as a secretary.

Mark's mom was a nurse. She saved lives for a living and managed to raise two kids on her own. When Emily asked Mark about his dad, he said his mom kicked him out of the house because he was a drunk and cheating on her. He spent all night at the bars with other women and never had a job. He had told her that one day, his dad came

home and found his clothes on the front lawn. As Mark and his brother watched from Mark's bedroom window, they saw their mother walk up to him, slap him in the face and point towards the street before she walked back into the house.

They knew something was going to happen that day. The night before their mother had to work a night shift and their dad hadn't come home. She had to take him and his brother to work and they slept on hospital gurneys in a janitor's room because there were no more beds. Now, from the window they watched their father stumble between his clothes, gathering them in his hands about the yard until their mother called Mark and his brother to lunch. At the table she told them that dad wasn't coming back anymore, that he had made a deal with the devil and was forced to drink from the lake of fire down in hell for the rest of his life.

For several years, Mark thought his dad had sold his soul to Satan, but after sharing this notion with his brother, Beans explained to him that his dad was simply a drunk, and that their mom had only said it like that because she didn't want them to know the truth.

The bus drove past Mark's stop without slowing down. Emily pulled her eyes from her book and turned to the window. She saw Mark run out of his back lane, waving his arms in an effort to get the driver's attention, and went up to the front to get him to stop.

"Excuse me. My friend's running after you. Is it all right if we stopped?" The driver pushed on the brakes and waited for Mark to catch up. On the steps, he grabbed onto the door rail and heaved himself into the vehicle. He whipped out his bus pass and forced out a thank you between gasps of air. Emily led the way back to their seat.

Mark sat next to her and stared down the aisle, taking off his toque and unzipping his black jacket. He was tense. Emily could feel it in his movements as he tried to position himself comfortably next to her, clearing his throat and tapping his fingers when he finally settled into a manageable position.

She stopped reading and turned to him, waiting for him ask the same question he had every morning for the last week, waiting until he noticed her expectant eyes. It took several instances for him to force it out.

“Did you get it yet?”

Emily was late. It had been two weeks. She didn't know why it hadn't come, but it just didn't. Mark was worried because he had learnt in life class that conception could occur without intercourse. When he told her his conviction, she had scoffed. “Another immaculate conception? Yeah right,” she had said.

Emily turned to the window as the bus rumbled on.

“No, not yet, but don't worry about it.”

Mark buried his face in her shoulder.

“What are we gonna do?” The words came muffled from her sleeve. She kissed his forehead and went back to her book.

With every passing day Mark became more convinced she was pregnant and there was nothing she could say that made him see otherwise. She had tried to explain that she wasn't, but Mark didn't seem to understand how she could know something “independent of fact and evidence.” She “wouldn't be able to tell if there was something the size of a quarter growing inside of her,” he had said. Emily had tried to tell him, but he didn't seem to understand what she was talking about, and she didn't know how else to explain

it to him. She said she would know if she was pregnant because there'd be signs. Mark had replied that not all women got the regular symptoms of pregnancy. Emily stopped arguing with him about it after that. Instead, she watched as the thought of becoming a dad made him imagine all the things that would change if it was true. She wished she could get her period and show him that she was right and he could stop worrying, but she couldn't control things like that.

Mark lifted his head and put his hand over Emily's book.

"I can't do it today. I'm not going to school."

Emily closed the novel and put it in her bag.

"You're going to skip school over this? This is ridiculous."

"I can't pay attention to anything anymore. I can't stop thinking about becoming a dad. I was late for the bus because I lost track of time standing in front of the mirror, trying to brush my teeth. All I could think about was having to brush some little kid's teeth, and making sure she got to bed and up for school in time, changing diapers in the middle of the night and having to sit in McDonald's making sure she didn't get hurt in the ball pit."

She grabbed his hand, leaned his head back onto her shoulder and watched the city outside the window pass by.

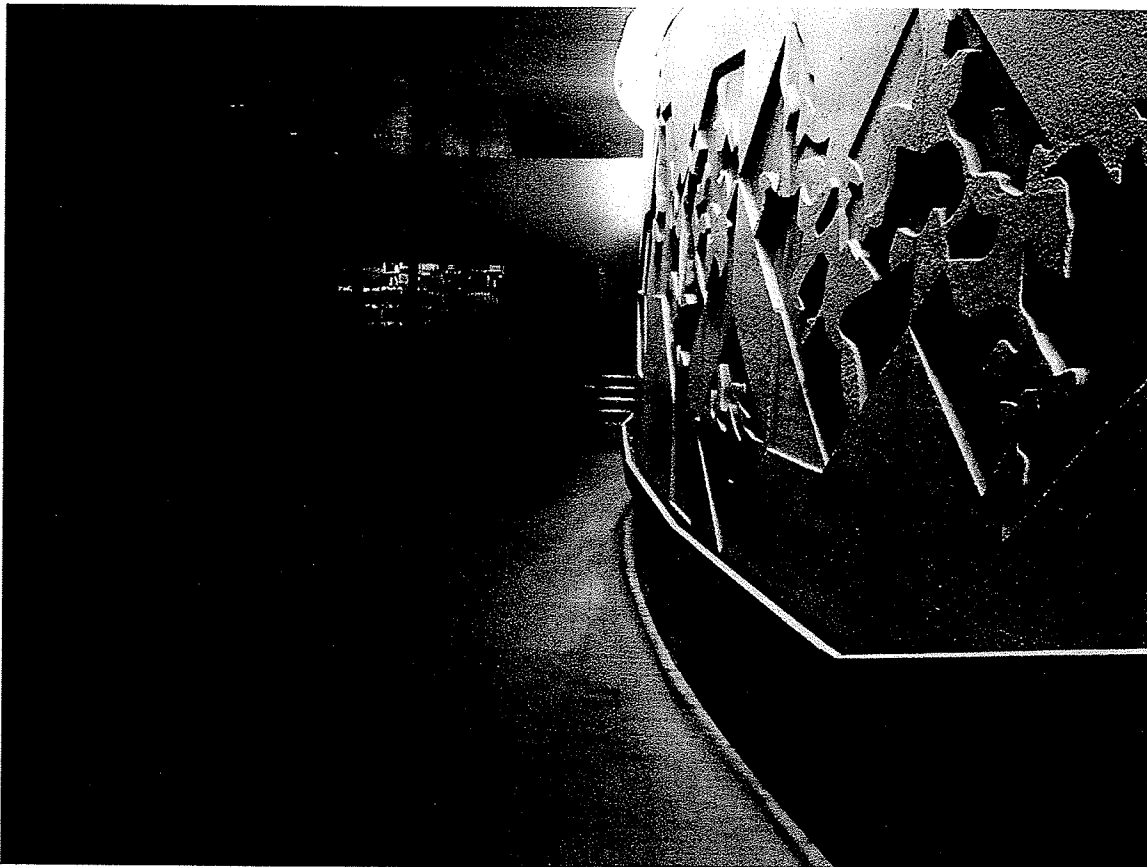
"It'll be okay. We'll figure it out." She didn't know what else to say. The chimeras that deluded his mind were beginning to consume him.

The bus drove past the stop for their junior high and took them into the city. Emily didn't like missing school, but Mark needed her. Her parents wouldn't be happy, but she really didn't care. It's not like they would punish her for doing it.

On Ellice Avenue, Mark pulled the string and heaved himself from the seat. The bus began to slow as he tumbled to the back door, grabbing onto a rail and straightening himself at the last moment. Emily had seen him stumble like this repeatedly, and was always amazed he never fell.

Outside tall buildings rose in the distance. It was a cold day, and large soft grey clouds plumed from every vent, chimney, and muffler. Emily watched them dissipate into the atmosphere. It was as if a fire had just raged over the city, and the smoking embers were all that remained. She looked to Mark and watched the wisps of warm air that he exhaled evaporate as well. She took his hand and led him through the streets.

Pale sun shone onto the faded beige, brick buildings and Emily thought they looked beautiful in the light. Walking past their display windows, she watched as people flitted between them, passing between shops and down the sidewalk. She had heard it was a bad neighbourhood north of Portage, but couldn't see what was so bad about it; the buildings were old, that was all. She wandered the streets, distracted by the sights, holding Mark's hand, but she started to get cold. At a doorway close to Portage and Main, they descended into the underground mall.



32. Below Portage Ave. and Main St.

Under the streets, the shops stretched down dingy hallways, the shade of fluorescent lights tinting everything a nauseating green. It reminded Emily of the subway stations she'd seen in Toronto, only there was no train leading anywhere, just the shops that lined the hallways. They walked passed the stores and Emily noticed they were attended by people in business apparel, a stark contrast to numerous people in ragged, second-hand winter coats and blue jeans walking between them. She'd never noticed the divisions of the city displayed as prominently as they were here. She imagined it as two universes superimposed on each other. She and Mark were an exception, a fragile worm hole ready to collapse under the slightest change in circumstances.

“I’ll have to get a job and drop out of school,” Mark said, stopping in the hall. “We’ll have to get an apartment and live in the North End. My mom can’t afford another mouth to feed. And I’ll only be able to get hired at a fast food restaurant or a gas station because I’ll only have ninth grade.”

Emily wrapped her arms around his waist.

“Mark, if I was really pregnant, you know your mom would help us out, and you could take night courses or something. And my parents wouldn’t disown me. They wouldn’t be happy about it, but what are they going to do? Give me another lecture about staying out late with boys? It would be hard, of course, but it happens all the time and people survive, they don’t all end up working at Rotten Ronnie’s.”

She saw a calm sorrow come over his face.

“...and we’d have to stay here too, wouldn’t we? Live in the good ol’ Peg for the rest of our lives.” His tone was bitter. He never wanted to stay. One night at a bush party, he had told her that he was secretly planning to leave as soon as they handed him his diploma. When everyone had left for the grad dinner, he was going to deliver letters to each of his friends’ houses, explaining his departure, and then he was going to catch the next bus to Vancouver.

When Emily asked him why he wanted to leave, he said it was because he didn’t want to spend the rest of his life in a miserable two-horse town where nothing ever happened. He hated the cold winters that made it impossible to do anything outside for six months of the year, thought that most people were just snobs or jerks in the place. He invited her to come, told her she was too good for a place like Winterpeg—it would crush her spirit, he had said. She liked how Mark included her in these dreams of his, but she

had no intention of leaving. She liked winter and didn't want to live in a big polluted city. The people weren't so bad as he thought either. They had their problems, but deep down, most of them were good people. Conversations such as these made her feel things would change between her and Mark one day. Their aspirations would simply take them in different directions.

"I suppose we couldn't leave, not for a long time anyway." She let Mark release himself from her embrace. They had been standing together in front of a pharmacy, a pylon in the undercurrents of the city. Emily led Mark through the halls, casually weaving between displays and shoppers, moving towards the stairs that led to street level.

On Garry Street, a woman with long straw-like hair asked them for change for the bus. Mark, in his own preoccupations, ignored her and continued down the street. Emily stopped and gave her two quarters. The woman thanked her with a smile and Emily saw that she was missing two of her front teeth. With the tip of her tongue, Emily started to feel the backs of her own, imagining them gone.

They walked down Portage Avenue and poured over the stock of CD stores and T-shirt shops. For lunch they ate at the food court in Eaton's Place, and afterwards wandered through the Bay and the Portage Place Mall, window shopping, crisscrossing the skywalks that hovered above the streets. In the crowds they pointed out seedy characters and pretentious businessmen, talking about everything except Emily being late. At 4:00 p.m., they went for coffee and Mark ordered a chocolate chip cookie for Emily. She offered to pay, but he refused.

"I can take care of it."

They took a table for two and sat by the window, sipping their mugs and watching the city outside. Emily began ripping off small pieces of the cookie and taking small bites, savouring the dark chocolate chips inside. Mark watched her as she ate.

“I love how you eat cookies.”

“Don’t watch.”

Mark smiled at her, but didn’t stop looking.

“I won’t eat until you look away.”

Reluctantly, Mark returned to his mug. He took a sip and placed the cup down on the table.

“Em, I want to get a pregnancy test. We can get it on our way back home today. We’ll know for sure then.”

She had seen the commercials for tests that could tell you in an hour, but didn’t like the idea of peeing on a stick.

“...and you’ll believe what it says, you won’t second guess it?”

“I swear. Why wouldn’t I believe it?”

She studied his soft brown eyes. They had become so transparent, every quirk and mannerism so familiar. She gave her assent and watched him sink back into the seat, sipping his coffee and losing himself in his thoughts. She could tell that finding out for sure frightened him; with uncertainty, there was still a chance. He stared out the window, unable to move or look back at her and she returned to her cookie.

When the sun began to set, they left downtown and got off the bus at Fort Richmond Plaza. In the dimly lit hallway, Emily waited on a bench for Mark to return from Consumer’s, and noticed a woman leaving Safeway with a full shopping cart and a

small boy holding onto her hand. She had thick, heavy bones and a double chin. Her shoulders were broad and folds of skin hung beneath her arms. Every movement she made looked as if it came with tremendous effort, yet calculated and precise. If a cement block happened to get in her way, thought Emily, no doubt it would be smashed into powder.



33. Fort Richmond Plaza

She noticed the woman's little boy catch sight of a coin operated rocket ship ride and release his mother's arm to run towards it. He climbed into the contraption and grabbed the controls, pretending to steer from side to side as he made shooting noises with his mouth.

As if another load had been put on her back, his mother walked up to the ride and pulled him out. With one hand she swung him onto her shoulder with surprising ease.

He burst into tears but she continued pushing the cart full of bagged groceries to the door, unfazed by his tantrum.

As she watched them leave, Emily imagined herself changing diapers and waking up in the middle of the night for feedings, teaching someone how to hold a fork and behave themselves in front of public. She pictured what she would be like when she was eighteen: the mother of a toddler and living in Mark's mom's house, the girl at school with the kid. She wouldn't be able to go out anymore, not unless she got a babysitter, and she'd have to be with Mark for the rest of her life. She didn't want to stay with Mark and live in his basement. She wanted to go to university and get a job, live in a big house close to the river where she could raise her kids with love, unlike her parents, and money, unlike Mark's mom.

Emily stared off at the booster chairs outside the mall restaurant until Mark came up next to her and tapped her shoulder. His face was pale and a plastic bag swung from his right hand.

"The cashier told me, 'Good luck.'"

Emily took his hand and they went to the bus shack outside. She didn't know when the bus was supposed to be coming, but hoped it would be soon and huddled next to Mark on the frigid bench that ran across the back wall.

"Ems, if you're really pregnant, do you think you'd keep it?"

Emily looked off into the parking lot and the horizon behind.

"I don't know. It would be yours too you know."

Mark tapped his foot on the floor as he waited for the words to come.

“But it’s your body, in both cases, its something that’s going to happen to you. I just want you to know that I would be here for you either way. I wouldn’t run away and disappear. I’d stay with you, if you wanted, and get a job to help raise it. I wouldn’t goof around anymore, and I wouldn’t drink. I wouldn’t become a useless dad like mine did.”

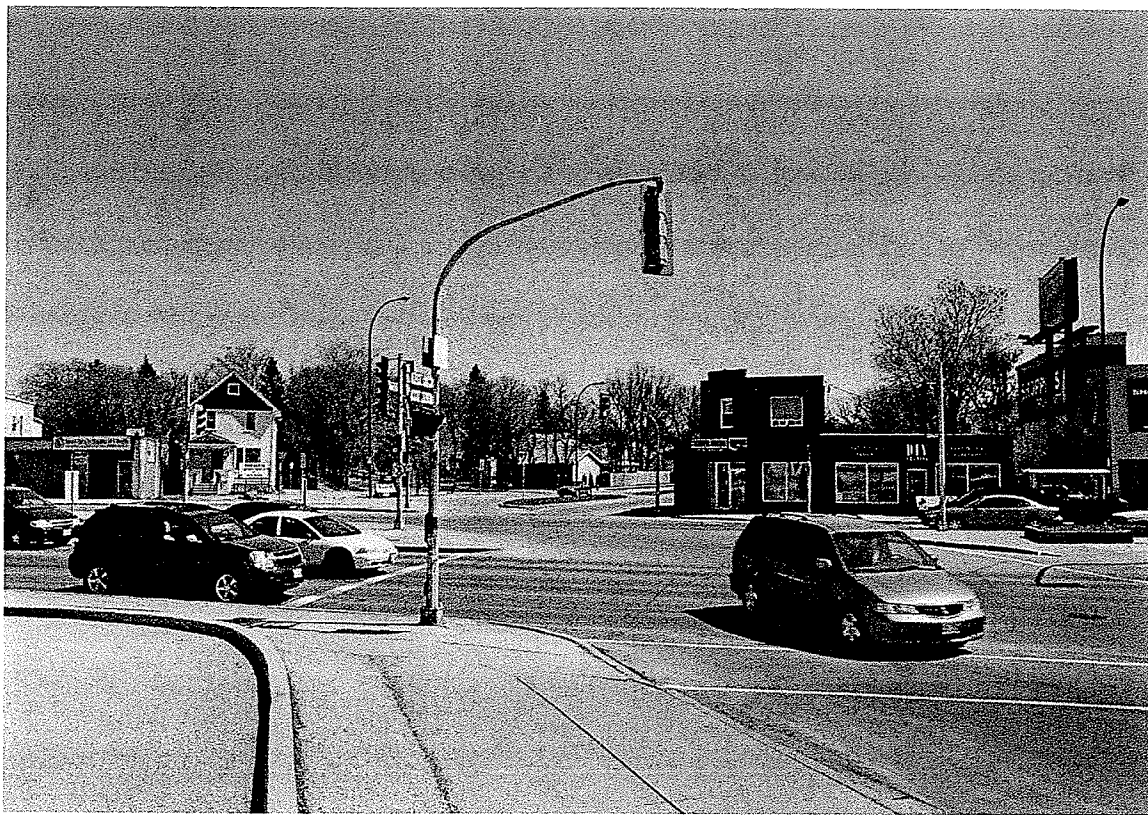
Mark looked at her intently and Emily could see the street lights shining in his eyes. As he shook from the cold, she kissed him on the cheek and held his chin. She could feel the fire that consumed him from the inside, the one that his father lit for him all those years ago. She admired his determination to not end up like his old man, but the torment he was going through was too much. She had to try and break it, for herself as much as for him.

“We don’t have to worry about this, Mark, that test is gonna say I’m not pregnant. You’re not gonna be a Joseph, because I’m not another Mary.” Her breath froze as it touched the cold air. Mark tried to look away, and she held his cheek to keep his attention, show him that she knew what she was saying, but he could only look back in confusion at her assuring eyes. In the grey silence, he looked as if she had burned him, and he stared at the floor with every muscle in his face defeated. She replayed his words in her mind, combing through them to see what she said wrong.

Eventually she realized it wasn’t just about having a kid together. Mark wanted to know if she would *want* to have a kid with him, if she would stay with him and make a home with him. She didn’t want to tell him the truth, but she had to say something. The roar of the bus engine approached.

“If we’re gonna have a girl, I want to name her Soleil.”

7. The Rural Municipality of Fort Garry



34. Point Road and Pembina Highway, Fort Garry

At the end of the nineteenth century, after Manitoba's entrance into confederation, the buffalo herds on which the Métis and First Nations depended became depleted from overhunting and Winnipeg was increasingly occupied by immigrants from Ontario, a large portion of whom despised anything related to French and Catholicism. Under the rule of Canadians, land outside the old Red River Settlement was sold off to private owners and converted to agricultural production. The Métis, not wanting to assimilate to the racist, agro-European culture that was inundating the area, and unable to sustain the way of life at Red River they had known for generations, either sold, or were kicked off

the land they had fought for in the Manitoba Act and resettled elsewhere.¹ The land at Red River, south of the Forks, that they had occupied as early as 1820, was largely anglicised as the English Canadian capital of Winnipeg continued to expand. As a part of this process, the Catholic French speaking parish of St. Vital Ouest turned into the Rural Municipality of Fort Garry in 1912.² Fort Garry demonstrates how Métis parishes were anglicized through suburban development.

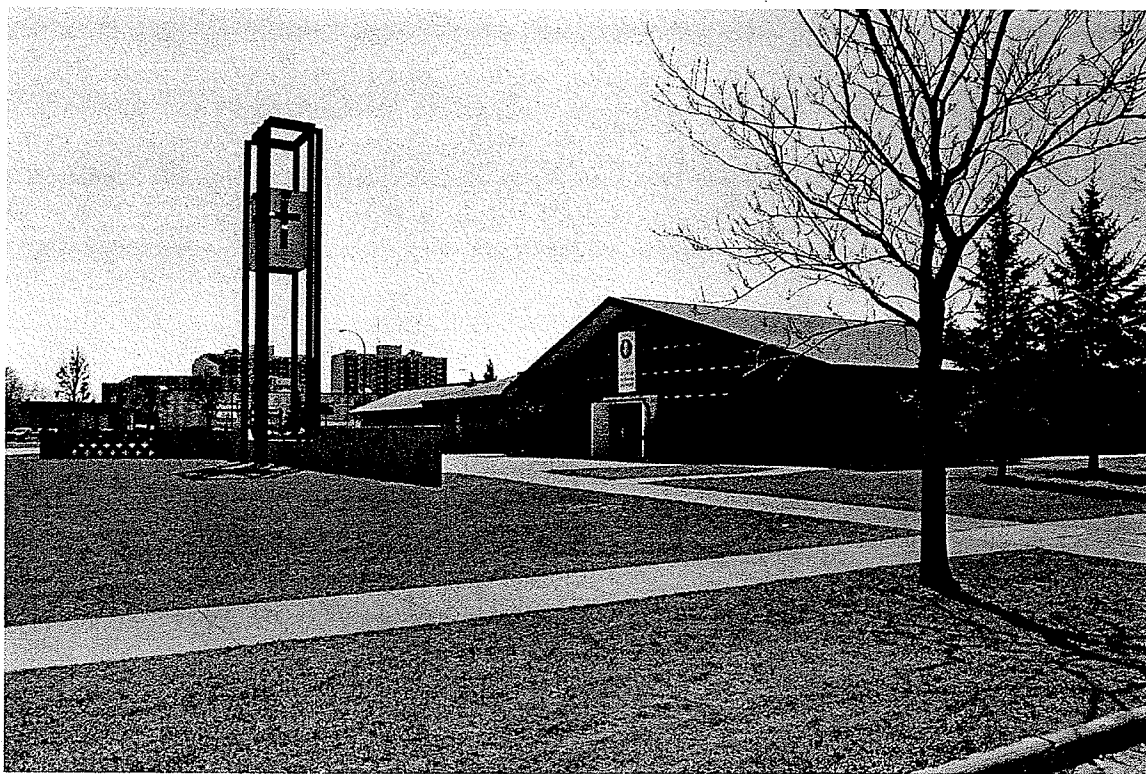
In the 1870s and 80s, seeing its flock dissolve, and in a bid to keep the area south of Winnipeg Catholic in faith, French in tongue, the Church implemented an active campaign in Europe and Quebec, recruiting French-speaking immigrants willing to farm the empty river lots. Several French, Québécois, and Belgian families moved to the area through the church's assistance, opening dairies and garden markets, or growing grains and keeping livestock. The program succeeded in attracting many new Catholics to the area, but by 1890, the transmission of the French culture was largely suppressed when the government passed the Manitoba Schools Act removing public funding for Catholic schools. French was also dropped as an official language of the province, and the French community that remained was increasingly faced with pressures to segregate from, or assimilate to, the dominant English Canadian culture.

As the city grew over the land, these farm lots were increasingly subdivided and sold off for urban development. Land adjacent to the city boundaries became suburbs. The city grew principally to the north and west of the original Winnipeg village because the rivers presented a natural barrier for urban growth, but even when infrastructure projects, such as bridges and public transportation, facilitated suburban development, the

¹ Descendants of Manitoba Métis can be found all over the world.

² The parish of St. Vital was established by Bishop Taché in 1860 south of the parish of St. Boniface.

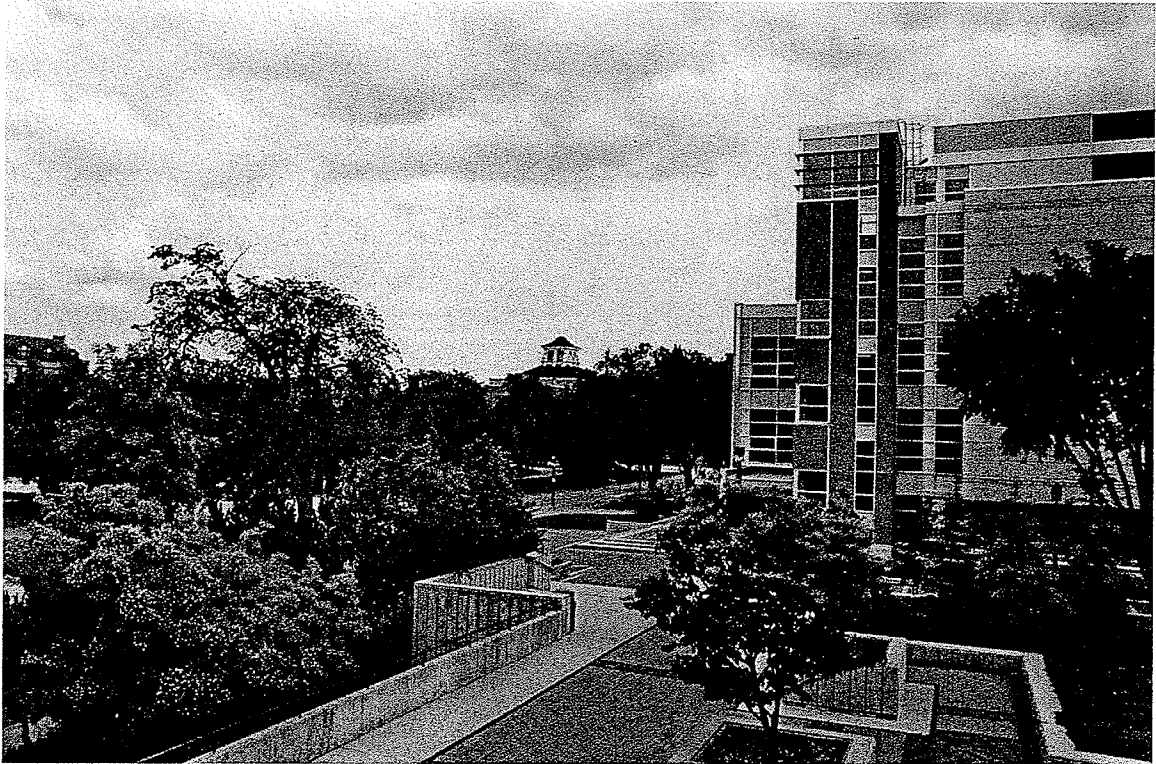
land south of the city borders remained mostly rural because of an abundance of marshland. These marshes varied in size from year to year, and were numerous and expensive to convert into residential developments. Farmers in the region learned to move back from the river and its marshes because of frequent flooding.



35. St. Vital Parish Church

After the turn of the twentieth century, what seems to have begun the transformation of St. Vital Ouest into the Rural Municipality of Fort Garry is the provincial conservative government's purchase of 543 acres of land on the southern fringe of St. Vital Ouest for the University of Manitoba's College of Agriculture. The college was outgrowing its original site in Tuxedo. As rumours spread that the area of St. Vital Ouest was going to be renamed South Winnipeg—to reflect the growth in commercial and residential development that would occur in the region—the choice of name sparked accusations that people in power were deliberately trying to inflate real-

estate prices in the district. Public indignation over the issue became so great that the name of the new rural municipality was changed to Fort Garry.



36. The University of Manitoba

At its conception, the R. M. of Fort Garry was a combination of farm operations, suburbs, cottages, and marshland. Its population was no more than 1500 souls. The sidewalks were made of wood, and the streets were mud tracks leading from the old river cart trail between Pembina and the Forks.³ Fort Garry was the largest Winnipeg suburb created at the time and covered an area of seventeen thousand acres bounded by the Red River on the east, the Jubilee underpass on the north, Fort Whyte on the west, and the La Salle River on the south.

³ This cart trail is known now as Pembina Highway. 'Nepeminan' means high bush cranberry in Cree. In Ojibwa, 'anepeminan' means the same thing. 'Pembina' was a Métis pronunciation,

The incorporation of the new municipality created legislation for the administration of the region by an elected Council headed by a Reeve who was chosen on an annual basis.⁴ Mr. R. A. C. Manning, a notable lawyer, was the first Reeve of Fort Garry. In a Royal Commission conducted by Alexander C. Galt, it was revealed that Manning had purchased significant amounts of land in the vicinity adjacent to the new college grounds in 1910, the same day the provincial government purchased the land for the new college site. The Commission concluded from its investigation that Manning made the purchase on behalf of Robert Rogers, using a false name on the legal documents of the sale. Robert Rogers was right-hand man to Premier Roblin and Minister of Public Works. The Royal Commission concluded that the land purchase was made by Rogers because expectations of significant urban development would cause real-estate prices to rise in St. Vital West, allowing several members of parliament to profit directly from the provincial government's own legislation.

The Roblin government, in fact, became known for its corruption and misappropriation of public funds in other projects, such as the Provincial Parliament Building and the Brandon Sanitorium, eventually leading to the downfall of the government. The Agricultural College site, which would become the University of Manitoba, would probably still be in Tuxedo were it not for the dubious acts of these politicians and their decision to make the marshlands of Fort Garry the most extensive college district in Winnipeg.

After the agricultural college was established in its new municipality, Fort Garry real-estate prices began to rise, benefiting not only those in the legislature but also farmers who owned large tracts of land in the area. One side of Pembina Highway was

⁴ A Reeve's role in a provincial municipal government was comparable to that of a Mayor in a city.

paved, and a street car line was extended from Jubilee Avenue down to the university campus as well as to the village of St. Norbert south of it. Land closer to the city on either side of the highway was incorporated into the street grid and developed into suburban housing. Those close enough to the city boundaries were even able to have running water and electricity. Several development plans on a grandiose scale were envisioned for Fort Garry, but most of them were unable to materialize because of wars and economic recessions.

In 1913, an officer of the military, Colonel Thompson, purchased a sizeable tract of land on the river and began constructing a mansion sized residence. He planned for the land around his house to become a wealthy suburb, filled with mansions similar to his own underneath the canopy of elm trees which characterized the area. But at the outbreak of World War One, Colonel Thomson was called to duty and died in the battle of the Somme. His house was left incomplete and abandoned amidst the forest, shrouded in rumours of the Colonel's ghost haunting the premises—you could see him standing over an uninstalled floor looking baffled as he glanced around the room—supposedly.



37. Colonel Thompson's House. (Photo courtesy of St. John's Ravenscourt School)

As the Great War escalated, economic growth came to a halt in Fort Garry and the district went into recession with the rest of the country. Many people enlisted and fought in the trenches, and many of them died. The names of the Agricultural College students who enlisted in the military are written on a marble wall in the University of Manitoba administration building.

Suburban expansion didn't begin again until after the war when soldiers returned home from Europe. As they were accompanied by flocks of migrants fleeing the war torn Austro-Hungarian Empire, there was a housing shortage in the city. Fort Garry doubled in population during the 1920s. Stores opened and two new schools, called General Byng and General Steele, were built for the growing community. The names of the schools

commemorate officers who led the Canadian military in battle and were honoured for their demonstration of valour.

The area also received a new level of economic stability when, in 1924, the University of Manitoba settled permanently at the Agricultural College Campus in order to solve over-crowding. With only two viable options for the institution to expand, the Fort Garry campus was chosen over the old Agricultural College site in Tuxedo by the United Farmers of Manitoba government, despite a lack of public support, because moving to the Fort Garry campus cost a third of the price.

Early descriptions of Fort Garry, the college district of Winnipeg, reveal a place where farmers and students rode the trolleys together. On one side of the tracks was open prairie with the occasional jack rabbit or coyote to add variation, and on the other side, farms were dotted with the modest wooden homes of the old parish. It was in this era that an extensive whiskey running operation was carried out through Fort Garry in Canada's dry years and then during the States' prohibition. A tunnel system between a large stone mansion and the Red River, where boats could ship the bottles during the night, operated under the awareness of the community, shipping liquor to the city and area and later to Minneapolis and Chicago. The stone mansion that was used as the warehouse was later sold off after years of being abandoned, and used as a protestant church before finally being demolished. The tunnel to the river was discovered by the real-estate agent responsible for the property.

Development was steady in Fort Garry until the mid 1920s when the Panama Canal allowed Vancouver to surpass Winnipeg as the third largest city in Canada. The naval passage between the Pacific and Atlantic was opened in 1914 and meant that

international cargo did not have to be shipped by train through Winnipeg anymore. With its dependence on the railroad freighting industry, the city entered a recession years before the stock market crash of 1929 and the beginning of the Great Depression. During this time, suburban development largely ceased, with only a handful of houses being constructed in any given year. These houses were built smaller than earlier residences in the area because of high prices on materials and they were primarily inhabited by lower income families. City services, such as sewage and water, were also not extended in the municipality because of the high cost of infrastructure development.

Many small businesses in the area had to close in the Depression, but there are two businesses which opened in the thirties which represent Fort Garry's oldest businesses, the Cottage Bakery and the Cambridge Hotel.

The Cottage Bakery was so named because it began in a small cottage with no basement on Merriam Street. It was known for its tarts and, around Easter, its hot cross buns. Many a trolley conductor would stop and take the walk down to the small cottage for a snack and many bakers waited at the end of the street for the trolley to take shipments to residents further down the line. Although the Bakery has moved several times, it is still a popular haunt for residents well established in the area.



38. Cambridge Hotel

The Cambridge Hotel was built at a time when any drinking establishment in the province had to be attached to a hotel under provincial law. Because the owners of the hotel were more interested in running a beverage room than an inn, the building is three quarters beer parlour and one quarter suites. With its rows of long tables and lack of any sound system, the Cambridge Hotel has maintained some of its historic qualities intact. It is a popular place for local beer leagues and attracts a steady clientele.

Another present-day industry that survives from this era is St. John's Ravenscourt School. In 1934, the municipality decided to demolish Colonel Thomson's abandoned house. When plans for the demolition were made public, a nephew of Colonel Thomson, Norman Young, the Headmaster of Ravenscourt School, asked the school's board of directors to purchase the house and its grounds in order to expand the school and its sports fields. The board accepted Young's proposal, and the Thomson property was

purchased for \$23,000 and converted into classrooms. As a prestigious private school, Ravenscourt was more than welcome in the underfunded municipality.

Most people who lived in Fort Garry during the thirties barely managed to scrape by from week to week, but despite these hardships, the era is remembered by those who lived it as the good old days and a happy time when adversities were overcome. When the first hockey rink was built for the pee-wee league, the community of Fort Garry rose to the occasion. Despite a lack of financial backing, the project was largely completed thanks to local donations and volunteer work. The first clubhouse was an abandoned train car brought to the rink from the C.N. rail yard situated in south Winnipeg. The lights for the rink were held up with cut-down poplar trees driven into the ground, and the boards were made from scraps of wood that were found abandoned around the district. The hockey league created friendships between many of the local residents and most of the players on the first pee-wee team later enlisted in the army at the outbreak of World War Two, a second generation to fight, die and overcome in Europe.

After the war, another housing shortage occurred as an influx of returning soldiers and refugees began to flood into the city, stimulating suburbanization in Fort Garry once more. The rural municipality was a prime location for expansion. Despite it being so close to the city, the Depression had left it largely undeveloped. Technological improvements in large scale land alteration and rising house prices also made it more economically feasible to convert marshes into houses and streets.



39. Wildwood Park, begun in 1948.

Seeing the real-estate profits that could be made in selling farms off for the creation of suburbs, many residents began parceling off acres of forested, swampy riverside property. Such post-WWII housing developments were confined to acreage close to the river and along Pembina Highway, but the 1950 Flood catalyzed Fort Garry's almost complete transformation into suburbs.

During the spring of that year, reports of mass scale flooding poured in from the Red River basin south of the city, and in early May the dikes that protected neighbourhoods like Wildwood Park, only recently developed and on low ground bordering the river, collapsed, causing the entire evacuation of Fort Garry. Water levels continued to rise as over 65,000 people left the city. The flood water crested at 30.3 feet above normal level on May 19th, inundating both sides of Pembina Highway for the majority of its route through Fort Garry. The cost of the flood damage was hundreds of

thousands of dollars for the University of Manitoba and Ravenscourt School, and over thirty million dollars in damage to the city of Winnipeg and its suburbs. The water wasn't as high as the 1826 Flood, but as farmers sought drier ground elsewhere, many of the animal farms and garden markets in Fort Garry did not reopen, facilitating the purchase of land for suburban development.

As wheat fields, vegetable gardens, animal barns, chicken coops and orchards began to be replaced with grass lawns and rows of houses curving along tree-lined boulevards, the population of Fort Garry ballooned until it reached 24,000, making it the fastest growing community in the country at the time. In this new era of suburban economic prosperity, the University of Manitoba underwent a massive expansion in building construction, tripling its enrolment and doubling its work force. An industrial sector west of Pembina highway brought more employment and financial stability to Fort Garry as businesses followed the increasing population to the suburb. After the flood, the neighbourhood also received a boost when Ravenscourt School amalgamated with St. John's School, established in 1820, making the Colonel's old house the oldest seat of education in western Canada.

The Fort Garry that the Roblin government started didn't actualize until fifty years after its conception. With its tree-shaded lawns giving way to distinguished residences, middle class bungalows and student housing, the Rural Municipality of Fort Garry finally became a neighbourhood of considerable size and economic success. Like St. Vital Ouest before it, however, the Rural Municipality of Fort Garry died when, on July 21st, 1971, the City of Winnipeg Act was incorporated and thirteen rural

municipalities, cities, and towns were united under one governing body at Winnipeg City Hall.



40. Dalhousie Forest, Fort Garry

8. John

(1998)



41. Television, VCR

John sat on a dark, imitation leather couch in his basement, watching television in red flannel pyjama pants and a grey U of M t-shirt. The screen's blue and purple lights flickered on his half-shut eyes as the phone rang. From upstairs, he heard his mother stomping through the kitchen into the living room, and after a moment, heard her yell his name.

John extended his arm towards the phone resting on the floor, its long wire curving through the carpet towards the jack on the back wall. Without turning the

television volume down, he brought the speaker to his ear, folding his elbow slowly and unwillingly.

“Hell-o.”

At the sound of his voice, his mother hung up the phone upstairs and clomped back to the kitchen.

“Johnny?” He heard his name pronounced on the receiver with a faux French accent and rolled his eyes.

“What’s goin’ on, Marky?” His words were moulded out of habit, a mechanical greeting process he had perfected and was now meaningless to him.

“I called Steph. We’re rounding up the crew and gonna smoke a joint by the river. You should come.”

John stared vacantly at the stucco ceiling and the minuscule shadows which danced across its uneven surface. He tried to find something to say that wasn’t the truth, something that didn’t sound like sitting around in a wet forest and doing nothing was incredibly uninteresting to him. He’d rather just stay home and watch the movie he rented. He was eighteen. He had better things to do. He could go to bars and stay out as late as he wanted now. His parents said he could. All he had to do was tell them where he was going in case anything should happen.

John glanced over at his childhood sports trophies arranged on the shelf above the computer in the corner and contracted his face into a sour grimace, his lips pinched in a small grin.

“Sorry, buddy. I already said I’d go to the bar with the boys from work tonight, do some scopin’. It’s ladies’ night at the Hoochie. You should come down afterwards or something. I’ll give you a call sometime, we can play some pool.”

John turned back to his movie, barely hearing Mark’s words.

“Yeah. Sounds good Johnny. Keep in touch, eh?”

John hung up the phone and sank deeper into his couch, pushing out the bottom cushions beneath him. He wasn’t going to Hoochie’s, and he probably wouldn’t call Mark to play pool either. It’s not that he didn’t like him anymore—he thought Mark was a good guy—it was just that they had nothing in common: John had grown up and Mark had not.

1. Mark still spent his time riding around on his bike or skateboarding in empty parking lots. He didn’t even have a job. He hung out at bush parties, or went to rock shows in dingy downtown bars where there were people who looked like bums sitting at the tables. He knew because he’d gone there once to see a band with Mark in junior high. It made John feel bad to say it, but Mark was going nowhere and becoming nobody fast. He was still in high school and doing nothing to change it.

When he was younger, people said that Mark was a bad influence on him. Even when they had just started hanging out together in grade five, his teachers, the principal, even his dad told him, “It would be in your best interest to distance yourself from Mark.”

Eventually, as Mark continued to stay a delinquent, and John found himself increasingly labelled as one through association, he started listening to those voices in his head and decided to stop calling Mark, not because they weren’t still friends or anything,

he just wanted more out of life than a high school diploma. He wanted to be something and understood that he had to do it himself.

2. John got a job at the movie theatre in St. Vital Mall when he was sixteen and worked his way up to Projectionist. With the money he saved, he bought an '89 Ford Taurus. He had graduated and was taking Business Administration in university. He'd even switched from French immersion to English in order to improve his grades in high school because he heard English was a joke next to French.

In John's new English classes, it was easy for him to make new friends. With his quick wit and sordid past, he was a class favourite: The Tough Cool Guy. He joined the school hockey team and started going to all the rich, popular kids' houses in Fort Garry. He tried to take Mark with him, even invited him to some of the parties, but found that the two were incompatible. His new friends lived in a different world and he wanted to join it. He was willing to move on and start acting mature, but Mark refused to change. He even told John that he would rather hang out with senile people in a home than go up to another one of those big houses where they just sat around listening to bad dance music making banal conversation instead of talking about anything substantial. John thought they were good people and didn't see what was so wrong about keeping things light. He liked the music, thought it was better than Mark's Dad's old records at least. He didn't understand how Mark couldn't enjoy himself and could only surmise in frustration what it was that Mark found so offensive about hanging out with the Fort Garry crowd, its big parties with tons of free food and music blaring through the house, people chilling out and sitting around making jokes or dancing together.

And then there was Stephanie. Unlike most girls, Stephanie still wore the same pair of patched up corduroy bell bottoms with shirts she found at second-hand clothing stores as she had worn in junior high. Over the shirts she wore a ratty old German military jacket; she never took it off. Stephanie even had dreadlocks and didn't wash her hair. John didn't know what to say to her anymore. He'd heard that she spent the summer in a tent along the river and volunteering at an art commune. Only the most uncomfortable of greetings could he offer to her when she walked by in the school hallway. If Mark hadn't changed, it was as if Stephanie went backwards. She was a contradiction, retreating into some strange world where being non-conformist and getting good grades were the same thing. She was still getting top marks, even in all of her classes.

Stephanie made no sense whatsoever to John. She was too weird, too different from that girl he used to know in elementary with the nice dresses and long golden curls. Her slow metamorphosis was confusing to him. He knew it started with her mother, but she never explained to him how her feelings had led to her choices. He used to see her in school every day and hang out with her in Mark's basement playing cards every weekend, but he was always just a spectator hanging around outside the walls of her world, unwelcome, but tolerated. If he ever asked her a question that was too personal, she'd simply change the subject.

From the folds of the couch John paid half his attention to the movie as guns fired and cars exploded on the screen, its light flashing across his face and casting long shadows across the room. In this cocooned, padded shelter, the creak of the basement

door traveled to his ears and he heard his mother's high heeled feet clacking down the stairs.

John turned up the volume hoping she'd leave him alone but it was too late, he could feel her footsteps coming over the carpet towards the couch. She stood at its edge and watched him in silence patiently, an expectant look on her face. He knew because she did it every time she wanted his attention. She'd stand next to him and wait for him to reply, watch every flicker of his eyelids and every breath of air that passed through his nose with an unbearable attention that John could not stand. Unable to take it any longer, he grabbed the remote and pressed mute.

"What?"

"You're out going tonight, right?"

"No. Why?"

"There's a documentary on at nine I want to watch. Aren't you going out with your friends? It's Friday night."

"Actually, I was planning on staying in and watching this movie. Do you mind?" He didn't know where the anger came from, but it was all he could feel as he brought the sound back on the TV.

John's mother folded her arms, snapping them together involuntarily.

"Well, yeah, Johnathan, I do. You're telling me you've got nothing better to do than watch a movie. Do you not see enough of them at work, you've got to come here and watch them too? You should be out living life, not watching it on some screen."

John had heard the speech a million times before. Soon she would say he was wrecking his eyes and that he was too lethargic for his own good. He wasn't about to

hear it again and pressed stop on the VCR. He stood up and shoved the remote into her hand. She fumbled with the black controller until it fell on the floor, landing with a dull click on the carpet as he made his way upstairs, each foot a heavy thud.

He wished he had a television in his room. Then he could watch movies whenever he wanted. He'd even asked for one for Christmas once, but his mother had told him a bedroom was no place for TV. Instead she gave him books. She didn't seem to understand that books were something you were forced to read in school, not something you did for fun. He found reading unbearable. It was like his mother was from a different era, a dinosaur in the age of mammals, watching documentaries on prairie public television when the rest of the world was turned to the Simpsons. Because of her, John needed to find something else to do tonight.

On his way upstairs, John passed the dinner table and saw his father pulled up on a chair behind it. He was hunched over a pile of papers, punching on the key pad of a calculator with his boney index finger and mumbling numbers under his breath. He ran a furnace company and was still in the navy blue business suit he wore to work.

"Still at it? It's Friday night." His bad mood disappeared as he looked at his dad engrossed in his work. The wisps of grey that were beginning to gather along his brow and the wrinkles that quivered under his eyes were a familiar sight for John at the dinner table. He watched his father's eyes lighten up as he focused on his son and dropped the pencil in his hand, making a light click as it landed. He folded his arms over the papers spread out in front of him and leaned on his elbows so heavily that they began to slide and push the documents underneath him towards the centre of the table, coming to a rest only when his chin rested on the wooden surface.

“Ah—don’t worry about it. I’ll grab a beer and join your mother downstairs soon enough.” His father winked as he spoke and smiled, with the rings under his eyes catching the overhead light in a way that almost made them disappear, making him look younger and more mischievous.

John contemplated the gesture—he’d winked like that before. It occurred to him that his parents weren’t going to watch a documentary at all, even if that’s what channel was on and the volume was turned up. They just wanted him out of the house; they thought he would’ve left already. He tried to suppress the graphic images that floated into his mind.

His father continued: “I’m meeting with the bank tomorrow and need some figures worked out from this season. What about you? Going out tonight?”

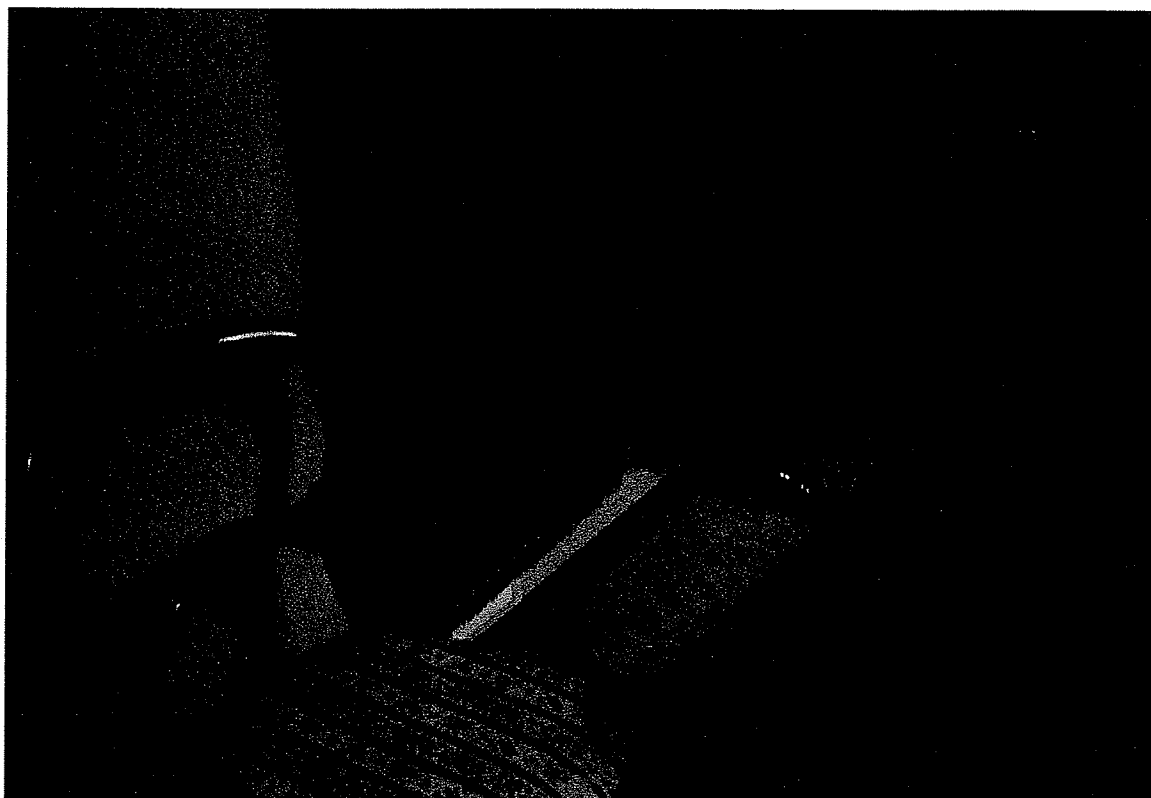
“No, or...yeah, I’ll probably go to a bar or something, maybe hang out with some guys from work.”

“Good. These are the best years of your life you know. You don’t want to waste them alone.” His father straightened his body and picked up the pencil, tapping it a few times on the table with the eraser and began searching the pages in front of him. John stuttered in a daze into the front foyer, mumbling as he left.

“Yeah. Sure, Dad.”

John climbed upstairs, hand along the rail, dragging his body behind and pushing it forward solely by the force of his arm. He tried to take the image out of his mind, but couldn’t. As he winced from the picture in his imagination, the resentment he had fostered for his mother in the basement turned to appreciation when he compared her subtle methods to his father’s shameless style of disclosure. He thought it was great his

parents still loved each other with such passion, but that didn't mean he wanted to know about it. He had to leave.



42. Empty Chair

Walking further down the hallway, he hoped his father was wrong. He hoped these years in school ripping theatre tickets for thirty hours a week, all while living in the middle of nowhere where nothing ever happened, was not the highlight of his life. Surely he'd move out some day and his life would get better.

John tried to muse about the future as he walked into his room. Various articles of clothing were scattered across the floor and conglomerated into a few larger piles next to his bed. His walls were bare, but on his desk a *mélange* of school papers, ticket stubs, interac receipts, and video tapes collected dust in an amorphous pile of chaos. John refused to confront the mess. Instead, he contributed to it slowly with every passing week and social outing. He'd come home from the bar, throw his clothes on the floor,

empty his pockets onto his desk, and stumble over to his unmade bed, ignoring the disaster.

He picked up his address book from the night stand and began flipping through its ink-marked pages. Tonight, most of his regular friends were working, and having planned to stay in, he had no idea what other people were up to. The clock on the night stand read 9:08. It was late and most people would be out already.

John turned the pages and came to the Ks. The last name on the page caught his eye: Kevin. John had been in Mr. Grant's Chemistry class in first semester with him and they had been lab partners together. Last week John ran into him on a bowling excursion with some guys and bought him a drink. He remembered that some of the girls hanging out with Kevin were attractive, and decided it would be a good idea to try Kevin's number. Jumping off his bed, he grabbed the cordless phone from the master bedroom, dialling the number as he walked back. In his room, he closed the door and paced the carpet, the phone ringing in his ear.

"Hello?"

"Hey, am I speaking to Kevin?"

"This is him."

"Hey. It's John from chemistry class. What are you doin', buddy?"

Over the feedback of a poor connection and the sound of an engine, Kevin's voice crackled over the phone in broken spurts that were barely discernible to John.

"Not much, man. Just on my way to The Randy. Three dollar triples tonight."

John pressed the receiver closer to his ear and spoke with the right side of his face raised in a smile.

"The Randy, eh? You going with a crew or what?"

"Yeah, should be a big crowd."

"Same as your birthday? Will those girls be there?"

"Xandrea and Lisa? Yeah they'll be there. Why, you got a crush?"

John flushed at the forthrightness of Kevin's question and back pedaled.

"No, man. I just want to know what type a crowd it will be tonight. That's all."

"So Johnny's got the hots for Lisa. Well, come on down man, and soon before the line-up starts. I hear The Randy gets pretty wild on triples night."

With his free hand, John opened his drawer and began searching for a clean shirt. He knew the Randy well.

"Yeah it gets crazy there on Fridays." He picked up a few collared shirts and spread them on his bed. "I'll see you there, Kev. Take it easy."

John took off his pyjamas and changed into beige khakis with tapered legs. He grabbed the nice belt he usually wore with suits, slid it through the loopholes around his waist, and grabbed a horizontally striped orange and blue collared shirt with a button up neck. From the closet he took out the black leather dress shoes he wore to weddings and funerals and laced them onto his feet. In the bathroom he put on cologne and deodorant, trimmed his side burns, brushed his teeth, and spiked his hair up with gel. On the stairs down into the hallway, he grabbed his leather jacket and bolted out the door.

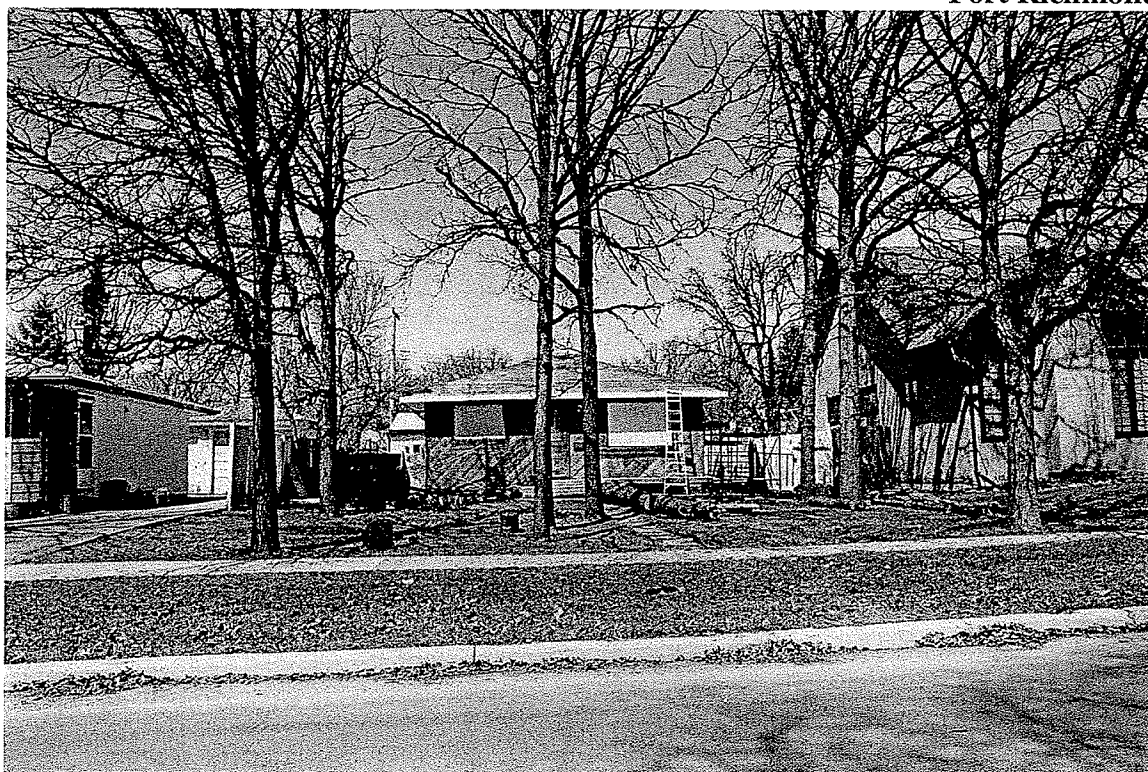
Outside, John pulled the jacket closer to his skin and jumped into the car. The snow banks that lined the streets had shrunken to minuscule icebergs floating on the brown grass and the puddles they left on the sidewalks froze over in the cold nights only to melt again the next day. John turned the key and the engine started with a roar,

moving further from his house through the curving streets until he turned onto the highway. He lit a cigarette when he reached cruising speed. The radio was set to the dance station and the music intermingled with the roar of the engine. John rolled down the window and the smell of tobacco and exhaust combined in his mind with the glowing signs on the road he passed by, creating a sense of contentment that enveloped the entire car. As he bobbed his head to the rhythm of his own motion, he looked down the road in anticipation of the night to come, the unexpected friends he'd see at the bar, and the pretty girls with blond curls he hoped to meet.



43. Pembina Highway

9.

Fort Richmond

44. Bungalow under Renovation

In the entire history of the Red River Settlement, there was never a Fort Richmond. Consequently, the name of this Fort Garry subdivision has led to much erroneous speculation about its link to the neighbourhood. In Fort Richmond, connections to the past are precarious, convoluted, and rarely acknowledged, even though they are numerous when one is looking for them.

In the eighteenth century, Fort Richmond was a whaling post operated by the Hudson's Bay Company. It was situated on the Arctic coast in what is today part of Québec at the mouth of the Grande Rivière de la Baleine. It was highly profitable until the decline of whales in the bay but the fort also conducted trade with the Inuit and Cree communities living in the region. Fort Richmond did not close until 1927.

In World War Two the American Army built a base at the old fort's location, hiring local residents to build and maintain the buildings. After the war, a radio tower was built by the Canadian government and permanent settlement became firmly entrenched in the area, resulting in the towns of Kuujuarapik and Whapmagoostui being established on either side of the river. Despite the historical association between these two Fort Richmonds through the HBC, the suburban development in Fort Garry was not named after this arctic post.

The name, Richmond, itself comes from the town of Richmond in Normandy, France and means "strong hill." The name was anglicized into 'Richmond' in England when a large land title in North Yorkshire was renamed by William the First and given to Alan Rufus in 1071 during the conquest of the Saxons. Rufus, the first Earl of Richmond, built a castle and founded the town which bears his title. Many places across the world are named after this Richmond.

One version of how Fort Richmond got its name, despite the notable lack of any hill in the vicinity, is that 'Richmond' was used on a real estate brochure published by early developers to sell the community after the Agriculture College moved. The name fell into disuse by the mid-thirties, but when the post-WWII economic boom led to massive suburban expansion, and a name was needed for the new suburban development

south of the University, it was decided to add 'fort' in front of 'Richmond' to honour the area's historical significance. Which history the suffix of 'fort' is supposed to reference, that of Fort Garry, or that of St. Norbert, remains ambiguous.

Fort Richmond stands close to confluence of the La Salle and Red Rivers, which represented the southern fringe of the Red River Settlement. The La Salle River was once part of the Assiniboine River, and its fork with the Red River was where the Forks was 6000 years ago. Before the 1950 flood, it was the location of the oldest house in Manitoba. The Selkirk settlers stopped at Baptiste Charrette's house on their first journey to Pembina in 1812. As the Métis population increased along the La Salle, the area was elevated to mission by the Catholic Church by 1844 and acquired the status of parish in 1857. The name, St. Norbert, was chosen for the new parish to honour the first bishop of St. Boniface, Joseph-Norbert Provencher.

When the bison were disappearing from the plains, many St. Norbert residents turned to agriculture to supplement the increasingly sparse hunting. By 1868, two thirds of the community was farming and keeping livestock. As the HBC prepared to sell Rupert's Land to Canada, St. Norbert was on a far better footing than most Red River communities thanks to the carting business along the Pembina Trail and the keeping of stoppinghouses and inns. The crossing of the La Salle River was the last stop on the trail before Fort Garry and Winnipeg.



45. Fort Richmond from the Parish of St. Norbert map, 1874. (H9 614.11 #7, Manitoba Archives)

St. Norbert was where the Comité National des Métis de la Rivière Rouge, led by Louis Riel and John Bruce, was formed in 1869 in response to Canadian land speculators surveying Red River farms in St. Norbert and St. Vital without the owners' permission. To make their voices heard, the Comité decided to prevent the newly appointed Lieutenant Governor of Rupert's Land's entrance into Red River to stop Canada from taking control of the territory. As a defensive measure, a barrier of trees and brush was erected at the crossing of the La Salle River along the Pembina Trail known as "La Barrière" and a militia of one hundred Métis men was posted in St. Norbert to guard the passage into the settlement.

During these days of political turmoil, the St. Norbert church was a site of many political meetings and served as a base for the Métis interests in the colony. With the support of a majority of the Métis community, as well as that of the Catholic Church, Riel and his men marched from St. Norbert to Upper Fort Garry to establish the provisional government of 1869 and decide the terms of Manitoba's entry into Canadian Confederation. When a delegation of Red River residents was sent to Ottawa to negotiate on behalf of the province, the French Métis community was represented by the parish priest of St. Norbert, Father Noel-Joseph Ritchot. The only French delegate, Father Ritchot is accredited with ensuring the Manitoba Act's bilingualism laws.

After the creation of Manitoba, many residents of St. Norbert prospered through increased trade with the growing capital of Winnipeg. Business and agriculture in St. Norbert and a village subdivision plan was drafted for the area adjacent to the parish church in 1905. Unlike most city avenues, which follow the original river lot lines, St. Norbert's were laid directly east-west.

The new St. Norbert village received its first real estate boom in 1910 after the Roblin government announced plans to relocate the Agricultural College to the vicinity. Rising land values benefited many individual residents but proved detrimental to the community itself. Large tracts of land fell into the hands of English speculators, preventing Francophone ownership and development in the community. Inflated real estate prices also created large property tax hikes which forced several long time residents out of the area.

With the fate of the area tied into that of the University of Manitoba, twentieth-century St. Norbert has been characterized by suburbanization. It was as part of this process that Fort Richmond was created in 1964 on the northern edge of what was once the parish of St. Norbert.



46. Maison Turenne, built 1874, St. Norbert Heritage Park.

Long before the grassy lawns and double garages, what characterized the Fort Richmond area apart from farms was a one-room school built in 1896 to service the northern residents of St. Norbert. The school stood on land next to the Pembina Trail and was known as St. Avila, a name chosen by Father Ritchot's eventual replacement, Reverend Cloutier. He chose the title to honour a contemporary of the church, Father Alphonse-Avila Chevrier.

Father Chevrier was an educator ordained in 1874 in Montreal. He headed west to St. Boniface in 1879 as one of Bishop Taché's recruits and became an instructor at St. Boniface College. In his later career, Father Chevrier became Dean of the Board of Education's Catholic department and a vice-chancellor at the University of Manitoba.

At the time of its creation, St. Avila School was attended by the francophone children of such inhabitants as the Champagnes, the Bohémiers, the Bonins and the Perraults. Although school instruction in French had been banned in the province before the school's conception, classes were taught secretly in French to accommodate the entirely Francophone students. In 1906, a new building was required for the school and another one room school was built at 1359 Pembina Highway. This new school was moved in 1950 after it was ruined from the flood and used as a library/book mobile until 1966.

When the population began to increase in what would become Fort Richmond, a new two-room, St. Avila School East opened in 1944 to accommodate the new residents. Eventually the population outgrew this school as well, and a third St. Avila was built on the St. Avila School East grounds in 1967. This St. Avila was an English school for several years, but after the French immersion program was introduced to the city of

Winnipeg, École St. Avila became once again a school where all classes are taught in French.

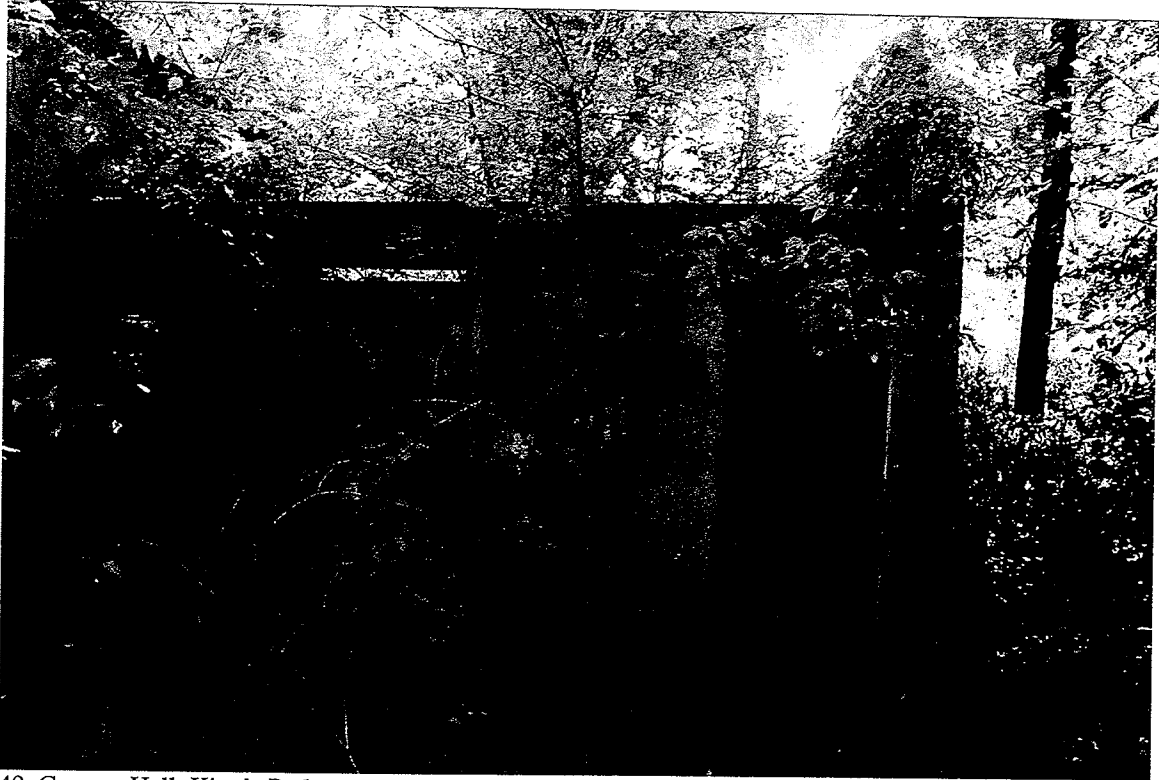


48.

St. Avila, 1944.

St. Avila, 1967.

When St. Avila East was built the Fort Richmond area was a residential/farming district called King's Park. It was characterized by a handful of houses amidst swaths of forest, field and swamp developed principally in the thirties close to the banks of the Red River. The only other structure which seems to have characterized the community was a two-room German hall, built of mortar and stone on a street simply known as 'The Drive' which was situated between King's Drive and the river. The hall was opened by an immigrant after WWI to provide a meeting place for the influx of German immigrants to the region. The hall often held dances to promote communal kinship. It closed down some time in WWII as a consequence of treason charges against its owner.



49. German Hall, King's Park

The main street of King's Park was King's Drive and there were no urban amenities such as electricity or phone service. Water was obtained from a faucet at the university's pump station and had to be carried by bucket home. The neighbourhood attracted entrepreneurial farmers and a few professors looking to live a rustic life free from the shackles of modernity. In its confines at one point were a chicken farm, a mink farm, an apple orchard, a market garden, and a cattle farm. It was also home to the Arctic Ice Company, which cut large blocks of ice from the river in winter to store in cooling houses until summer. After WWII, as the economy grew, the mud roads of King's Park were paved and farm lots were subdivided for houses. War bungalows appeared en masse on the grid street plan surveyed for the area in 1904 for the booming population. Water and electricity were introduced to private homes at this time as well, and the area was ushered into the modern era—fifty years after the beginning of the twentieth century.

When the subdivision of Fort Richmond was unveiled in the sixties, suburbanization in the region began to increase exponentially until all evidence of nineteenth-century francophone farming origins were either erased or removed elsewhere. The plan included the construction of two new elementary schools, a junior high and a high school, all of which were completed by the early seventies, and a street plan that departed from the city grid, incorporating winding streets that curved through the suburb to connect bay after bay of housing. To make way for a park, part of the original King's Park neighbourhood was bought by the city and the private houses on the grounds were demolished. A significant amount of green space along the riverfront on low lying ground, known as the Kilkenny Common, was also incorporated into the suburb's design.



50. King's Park

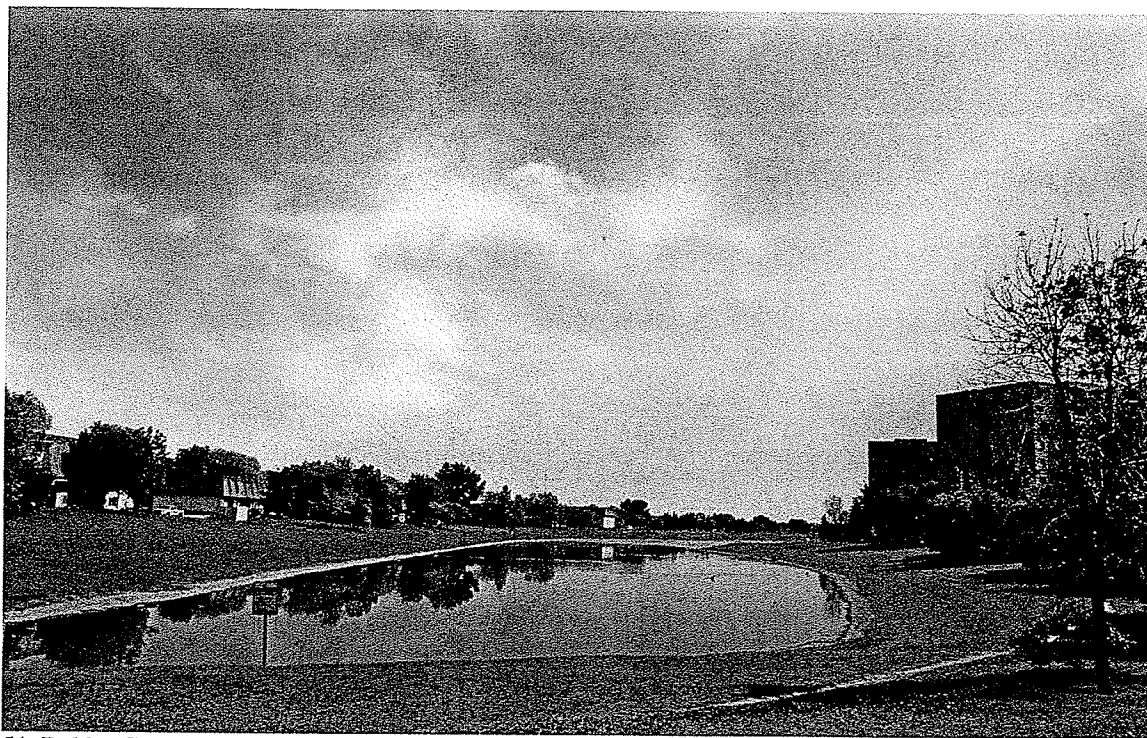
As the neighbourhood changed, the older, smaller houses that remained in Fort Richmond became affordable student housing along with the many apartments and townhouses built in the area. More professors and university employees moved into the neighbourhood to supply the work force for the growing University as well, giving Fort Richmond a large academic population. Growth continued in Fort Richmond in the seventies and eighties despite the Opec oil crisis and economic decline. As real estate prices dropped in the city, housing became more affordable. Even as the general population of Winnipeg began to stabilize, Fort Richmond continued to grow.

Fort Richmond also began to diversify culturally during these decades. Today many ethnic groups from across the world can be found in the suburb's vicinity. A student housing program for exchange students has led to over thirty percent of the population being Asian, earning Fort Richmond the nickname of "Little China Town." There are also significant minority groups from Africa, South America, Indonesia and South America living in the neighbourhood. Its quiet streets, respected schools, scenic parks and active community centres, make it one of the most sought after places to live in Winnipeg.

It was not always like this though. Fort Richmond was a place where new houses would be vandalized during construction and town house developments plagued with arson. It was a place where rotten tomatoes, eggs and zucchinis were thrown at passing cars, pedestrians, and cyclists, and a few houses predictably be covered in toilet paper. In the elementary schools, assemblies would be called specifically to tell the older kids to stop breaking each others bones at recess. The playgrounds were already covered in

broken glass and evaporated beer stains from all the teenagers who hung out there at night. Bonfires were rekindled every weekend.

Fort Richmond was a place where you'd get on the bus and someone would ask you for a cigarette and if you didn't have one, he'd ask you for money, where you'd leave your bike outside a store for five minutes and it'd be gone. This place disappeared though. The giant wall of tires that kids would get pushed off of was taken down and, one by one it slowly dispersed. Now, all the swamps in Fort Richmond are filled in. The older houses replaced with two stories of stucco exterior and attached double garages in the front yard. The graffiti on back lane fences painted over and the paths that used to wind through the forests overgrown or fallen into the river.



51. Baldry Creek, Fort Richmond. Turned into a man-made lake.

10.

Mark

(2006)

Mark woke up in a sleeping bag on the floor. He was using his arm as a pillow. The room was dark but a strip of blue light cut into the room and bounced off the opposite wall. He took a breath and inhaled the stale cigarette smoke that hung in the air as it mixed with the stench of open beer bottles, empty or half full; they were scattered on the floor and resting on the furniture. He pulled the sleeping bag over his head to quell the revulsion and hide from the smell. He was at Nick's place, had been staying there the past two weeks.

Nick had an old house with a cellar for a basement accessed through a panel in the kitchen floor. The ceilings were low and the windows had small square panes of glass held in place by wooden frames. One day, after studying the exterior of the house in great detail, Mark concluded the bathroom was an addition to the original structure, sticking out awkwardly as it did from the main building, its wooden siding flaking with white paint after years of neglect. On the front lawn two tall, thick oak trees prevented anything from growing beneath their shade. Its neighbourhood and street had been changing for decades. The house alone remained the same.

He'd found the place after a punk show, wandering home down his back lane. It was summer and he noticed a few people gathered around a bonfire in a backyard. They were barbecuing meat and pulling ice cold beers from a cooler on the lawn. Mark swaggered up to the first person he saw and asked for a beer.

They were a few years younger than him, Nick and his friends, and had all gone to the same private school in some little town south of the city. Their parents were all rich, and paid for their rent, even bought them groceries. All Nick and his roommates had to worry about was spending money.

There was Magdalene, five foot two with a wardrobe from pre-teen clothing stores and Sean, six foot six and three hundred pounds. Magdalene was always serious and composed. She was taking microbiology and wanted to study viruses for a living. Her sardonic outlook on the world tinted all that she saw and she revelled in what seemed to be its dying embers. "The world could end tomorrow," she would say. "So you might as well take those pills and drink those beers."

Sean shopped at Mr. Big and Tall for shirts and wore pants he bought from maternity stores because they were more comfortable than regular pants. He smoked more pot than anyone Mark had ever seen, took computer science, and stayed mainly in his room playing World of War Craft, avoiding most social activities out of a fear of crowds. "I'm playing with eight other people right now," he'd explain. "If I left right now, we'd lose the battle and I can't abandon my fellow soldiers."

Nick was in the middle. At five eleven, his square jaw and broad shoulders made him look older than he was. He took Geography and spent most of his free time listening to Heavy Metal CDs, working out on the bench press he managed to fit into his room. With his good looks, it was easy for Nick to attract girls and friends, but other than Sean and Magdalene, everyone he met seemed to be using him for something, his money, his car, no one really wanted to know the real Nick and he looked upon most people with

distrust and suspicion. “Here today, gone tomorrow,” he’d always say. “Fuck you till they hate you.”

Mark stumbled into their world a welcome change of company and, as he got to know this curious trio, he always marvelled at how he found his way into it so easily. He listened to the stories of their discontented lives with generosity. As he unfolded his own life, a unique bond formed them. It wasn’t long before Mark was spending most of his time at Nick’s, playing cards, listening to mp3s—hiding from the cruel world that seeped into the poorly insulated windows. Sean would download entire seasons of television and they’d watch episodes for hours sitting in the kitchen, a laptop on the counter next to the sink. When Mark’s mom kicked him out of the house, Nick’s couch had been the logical place to stay. Mark had been doing ecstasy and hadn’t come home for three days. When he finally did, his suitcase was at the back door waiting for him.

Mark rolled over in his sleeping bag and its flannel lining slid across his knuckle, tearing the fresh scab open. The blood surfaced on his skin a minuscule red bubble and he brought the raw flesh to his mouth, its taste recalling the night before when he clocked a guy in the bathroom at Emily’s wedding social.

He’d heard of the social through Steph, who had told him Emily was hoping he would come. He hadn’t planned on going, but things were getting tense at Nick’s place. They were starting to want their living room back and he thought it was a good idea to give them a bit of a break.

At the social he’d started on the rye, and it wasn’t long before he was slurring his speech and spilling drinks from careless swings of his arms. Cleaning up in the bathroom, he had decided to light a smoke when some guy got in his face for it. Two

centimetres from Mark's face he yelled, "Put it out!" and Mark grabbed his shoulder saying, "take it easy, big guy."

The whole time Mark kept smoking and the guy threw Mark's arm off his shoulder and continued to yell, "Put it out! Put it out!"

Unable to take it any longer, Mark stepped back, tossed his smoke into the sink and sailed his left hand so hard into the guy's nose that he busted open his own knuckle, took the guy out so hard he fell and crashed his face into the urinal on the back wall.

After the guy fell and the fire in his eyes had cleared, he stood frozen, staring dumbfounded at the crumpled body on the floor. He thought of running and leaving the scene before anyone saw, but as blood from the man's nose oozed across the floor, he knew the man would die from choking on his own blood and he started grabbing wads of toilet paper, knowing what to do from the many bar fights he'd been in.

He was holding the guy, trying to staunch the blood and keep the airways open before the crowd even formed, waiting for the paramedics to arrive. He said that the guy was so drunk he tripped on his own two feet, dove head first right into the porcelain god. After the ambulance drove away, with his clothes stained from the confrontation and not wanting to tell his friends the same story, Mark left. The guy he decked was probably some relative of Emily, some cousin who didn't know how to hold his booze.

Mark sat up from the floor. The room spun around him out of control. Last night was the first time they had been together in over a decade. Johnny in his custom-tailored suit and designer-frame glasses, looking more like his old man every time, smiling away, arm around his wife, Natasha, and living in a condo out in Tuxedo. Nice dog, fancy sports car. John did pretty good for himself, followed his old man's footsteps into the

furnace business and opened his own store out in St. James. "It's long hours, but it's good to be your own boss," he had said, as if Mark with his job at the lumber yard could relate.

Stephanie was there too. She spent the summer working on an organic farm in Australia and was on her way to a Buddhist monastery out in Thailand. She was vegan, practiced yoga, and talked about things that left Mark feeling ignorant. "You should take a cleansing," she had said. "Your nadis are blocking your chakras and preventing the harmonious flow of energy through your body."

"As long as the alcohol is flowing from my stomach to my brain, I'm doing fine," he had replied. After high school, Stephanie straightened out, started traveling. He rarely saw her these days, but she still kept in touch.

They all sat at the same table in the community centre bingo hall, drinking beers and catching up on each others' lives. Between the snippets of conversation, Mark watched Emily welcome everybody to the social with her fiancé, some guy named Mat she met through her job at Child and Family Services. During lulls at the door he caught them sneaking kisses and whispering to themselves, giddy smiles on their faces as they tried to inconspicuously maintain physical contact through the adjustment of a crooked collar or the hiding of an exposed strap.

Mark hadn't talked to her in years, not really since she dumped him. These days Mark didn't even really think about her unless someone mentioned her name. Apparently she was still in the neighbourhood, shopping at the grocery store, stopping at sev for slurpees. Somehow, even illogically, he'd never bumped into her after high school, and earlier that night, as he stood in front of her, face to face for the first time in years, Mark

couldn't think of a single thing to say to her. He just shook her and Mat's hand saying, "Congratulations," before going to get drink tickets.

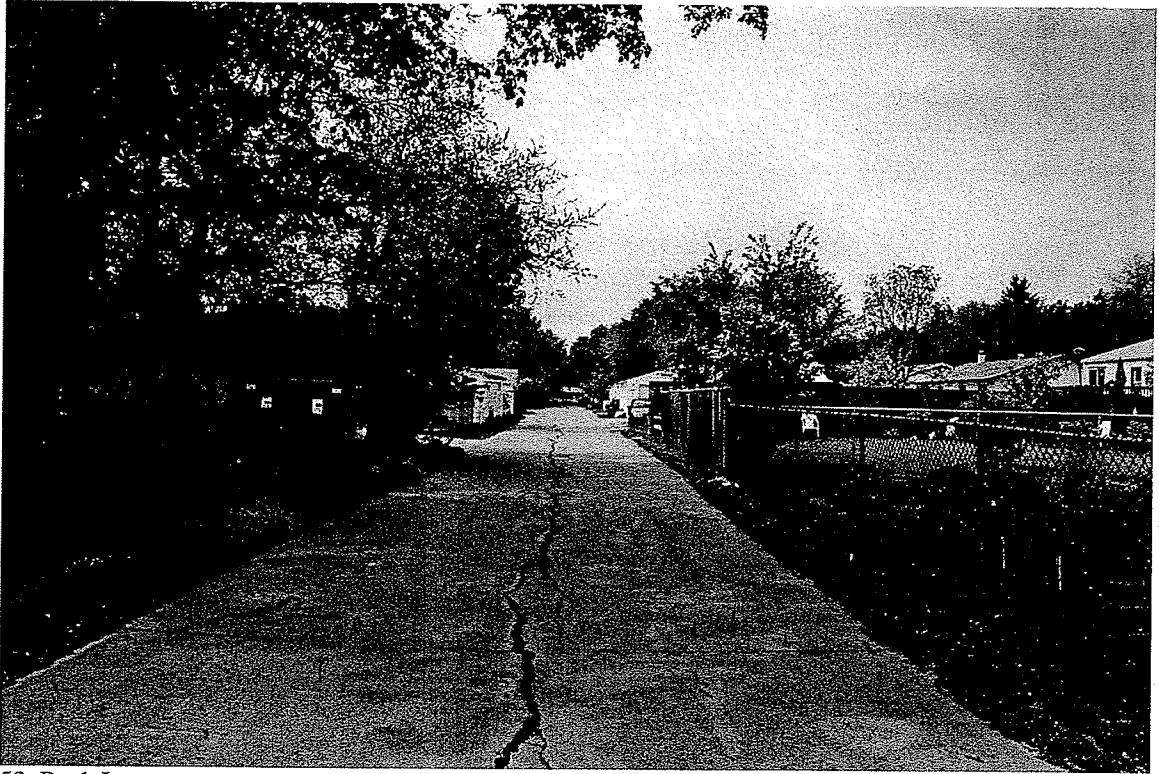
She had changed. They had all changed. Only he had stayed the same. He sat there with them, wearing the same pair of baggy jeans he'd had for the past five years and a skateboarding shirt he bought in High School. He hadn't bothered to comb his hair or shave but wished he had, sitting in the shadow of his oldest friends' successes, feeling like a real loser for the first time in his life.

Mark got up from Nick's floor and fumbled in the darkness towards the exit. He needed to get out. Clouds, dark and grey, hung low over the sky and cast the backyard in a damp gloom. He went up to the space between the garage and the shed and unzipped his pants to urinate. He thought of leaving, getting up and taking off, as he'd always dreamed. It was too easy here to continue down the same road of self-destruction, too easy to be a slacker and stay up every night bingeing, coming to work hungover and strung out the next day. There was nothing left for him here but a long suicide of intoxication. Mark did up his pants and walked into the back lane behind the yard. He imagined himself on a platform, a train coming to a halt in front of him. The passenger car opening as whistles blow and people carry big cases of luggage onto the cars.

Mark contemplated the heavy clouds above his head. He could work on the oil rigs out west. Even Tim Horton's paid you eighteen dollars an hour to work in Alberta.

He passed by garages and fences with trees hanging over them, their trunks visible through the spaces between the boards. He could probably get a good job right away in a place like Red Deer. On his own, and no one to influence him, he could straighten out, stay out of trouble. His brother was even in Alberta. He could stay with

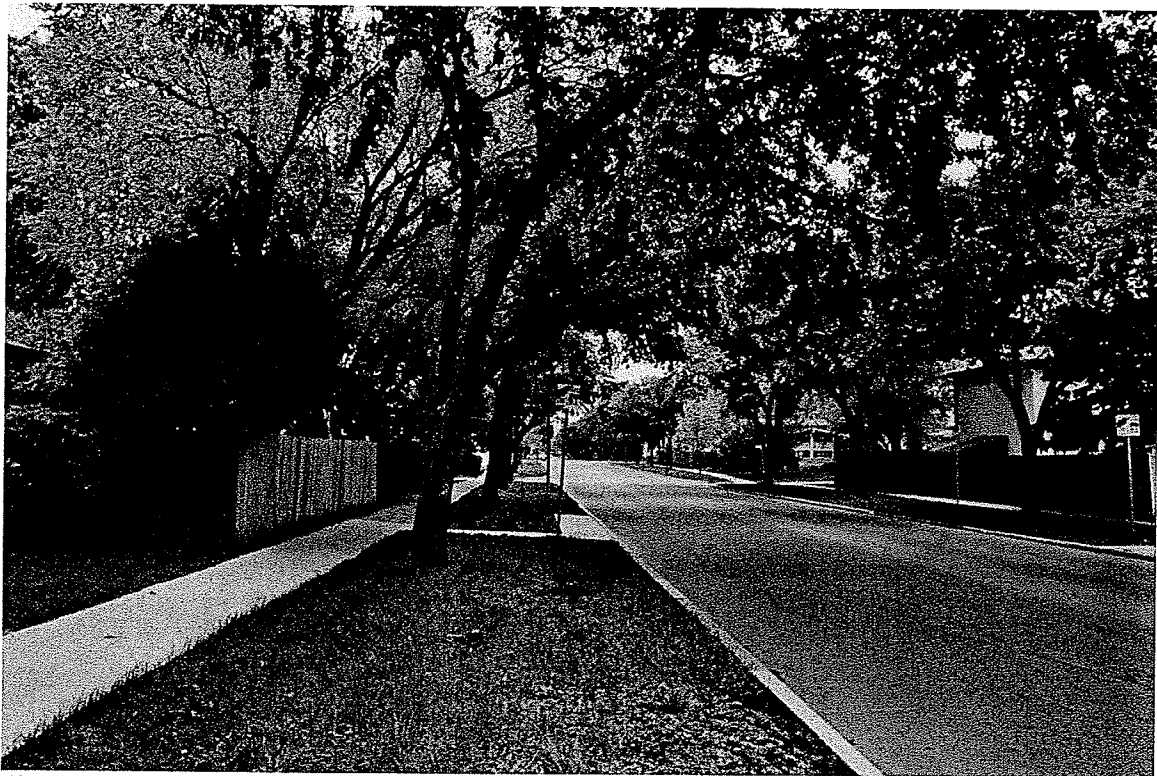
him for a few days if he had to. Beans cleared eighty grand a year on the rigs and lived in a big house outside Fort McMurray. He said they were screaming for people up there to fill all the jobs. It wasn't like Winnipeg at all.



52. Back Lane

Mark left the back lane and got onto a side street where large stucco houses with double garages and empty lawns were juxtaposed with little vinyl-sided bungalows. Instead of lawns, the little houses were surrounded by trees with gravel driveways winding to their small detached garages. As he looked at the contrast in housing he marvelled at the nonsensical planning of the place, the rich living next to the poor, shopping at the same stores and going to the same schools. It was absurd, a breeding ground for vapid opportunists and corrupt businessmen; an inhospitable city where its hatred would eventually consume him.

At the end of the street he came to Silverstone Avenue and went to the bus stop. He looked at the tall elm trees that shaded the sidewalk and followed the branches as they grew smaller towards the sky, becoming more numerous with every fork of the tree. He tried to follow their paths, but lost the branches as they criss-crossed each other in their ascent. It was good he was leaving. He was overstaying his welcome at Nick's and didn't want to be a burden anymore. He had to move. In Alberta, at first he'd have to find some cheap hotel and start applying for jobs. He could get his own place once he got hired. It all seemed so simple.



53. Bus Stop

The air was humid, and a stale wind blew in feeble breezes down the street. His shirt began to stick to his back. Mark looked up at the clouds and felt a drop hit his shoulder as the bus doors swung open to let him in.

He paid the fare from the change in his pockets, went to the back of the bus and sat down on the second last seat. The rain began to come down outside and he opened the window to let in the smell. At the mall, people dashed to their cars or stood under the ledge looking tentatively out at the growing downfall. People entering the bus were unavoidably drenched, their hair weighed down flat across their skulls and their clothes clinging to their skin. Amongst them, Mark sat dry as a bone smelling the rain, and couldn't help but feel a small sense of satisfaction as he looked about him immune to their discomfort, measuring them and their sullen expressions as if they were the entire city.

Hunched over, reluctant to shift and let someone sit in the next seat, drudging through a meaningless existence, day in, day out, through the scorching summers and freezing winters. He was glad to be rid of it and its insignificance. If he stayed he would become part of it, fall deeper into its hole with every passing year. He couldn't allow it to continue. He wouldn't let himself become one of the two sorts of people that dominated the city: (1) become some guy who drove from the suburbs to an office downtown everyday, one of those chumps, power walking through the skywalks and parkades with his briefcase, looking with derision at the bums he refused to give change to. (2) Either that or it would be him with the open hand, trying to scrape together enough money to pay for a king can of Molson Dry and a room at one of the hotels on Main Street. There was no middle ground. In Winnipeg you were either a king or a pauper and Mark wanted neither.

The bus entered the narrow streets of downtown and he pulled the string for Portage Avenue. The rain had let up, but the clouds still hung low, dark and ready to

burst. He walked down the sidewalk and studied the tall, characterless sky rises of steel and glass alternating randomly with rundown storefronts of cement and brick. In the dark light and boarded up entrances, they were more tombstones to Mark than anything else, memorials to a time when Winnipeg was thought to be important.



54. Portage Avenue

Mark cracked a smile as he realized how wrong they had been. Winnipeg was nothing more than a truck stop between Toronto and Calgary, perhaps the biggest truck stop of them all, but as it sat in the centre of the continent close the southern borders of the country, it really was the asshole of Canada, spewing forth the refuse of society.

Mark crossed Colony Street and entered the Greyhound Station. Stoically, even mindlessly, he stood at the end of the ticket line. The room smelt of diesel and body odour. People with suitcases passed behind him, migrating to and from the city through the light blue hall lined with plastic chairs. He inched closer to the till, detached from

himself, watching from a distance the line shrink before him. When his number was called, he went up to the clerk and asked for a seat on the next bus to Calgary, pulled out his bank card and waited for the little keypad screen to say 'approved.'

Ticket in his hand, Mark sauntered away from the cashier digging its sharp edges into his fingers, unable to convince himself that it was real. He'd dreamed of this day so often that nothing could prove to him for certain that he wasn't imagining the whole thing.

He knew the dream by heart: After buying the ticket, he has nothing to do but wait, so he steps outside and lights a cigarette, standing under the overhang where there's a bench. A guy in a dirty baseball hat and greasy denim jacket is sitting next to the ashtray, resting his elbows on his knees. At the flick of Mark's lighter, he looks up.

"Hey, you wouldn't happen to have one of those for me now, would ya?"

Mark plunges his hand into his pocket and pulls out his pack of smokes, holds out a cigarette and the man gives a smile, accepting the gift. From his denim jacket, the man pulls out a creased pack of matches, pulls one off and strikes it across the back. The match ignites with a burst and lights up the dark bench. Holding it out, he leans down and inhales the flame through the paper tube.

"So, where ya goin'?" The man pushes out the question between tufts of smoke.

"Cowtown," Mark replies.

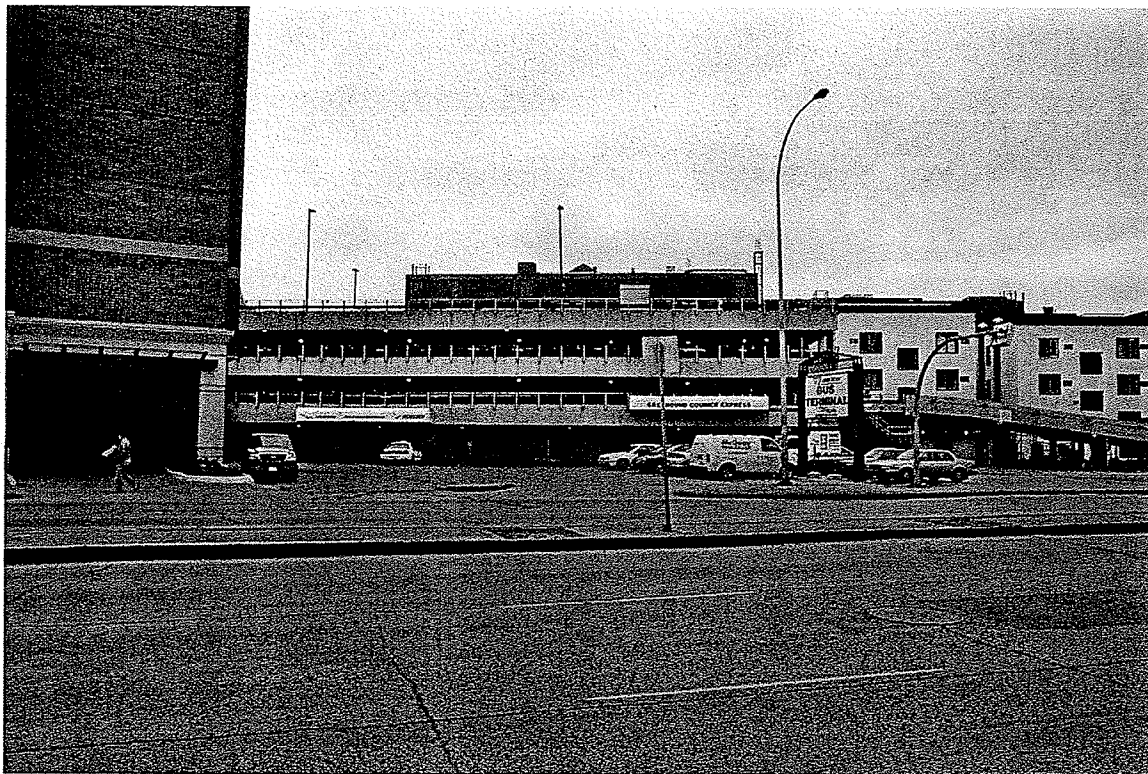
"Got family out there?"

"Nah, just goin'."

At his reply, the man looks off pensively into the street and Mark turns to follow his gaze. Cars pull up in the lot or up to the doors and people flit between them, coming

and going. Mark watches and loses himself in the distraction, not knowing what else to say to the man as they sit uncomfortably in the silence for a few minutes. Then the man rises, passes behind him and disappears into the building. When he's gone, Mark takes his place on the bench and continues to stare out vacantly onto the street, knowing it's the last time he'll ever be in Winnipeg. Under the clouds everything becomes faded and grey as if it's a black-and-white movie, one that he's seen a thousand times before where every sound and image is anticipated before it happens.

He sits under the ledge next to the bus terminal until he hears the boarding call for Calgary over the loudspeaker. Then he makes his way to the gate and climbs onto the bus, no one to say goodbye to, and no reason to look back.



55. Bus Terminal

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