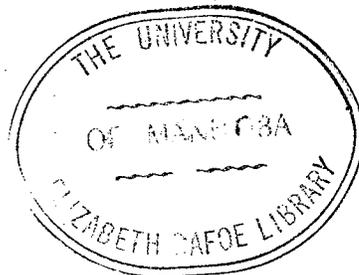


A HISTORY OF EDUCATION
IN THE
EVERGREEN SCHOOL DIVISION

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of Education
The University of Manitoba

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education

by
John C. Gottfried
October 1965



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N° 46



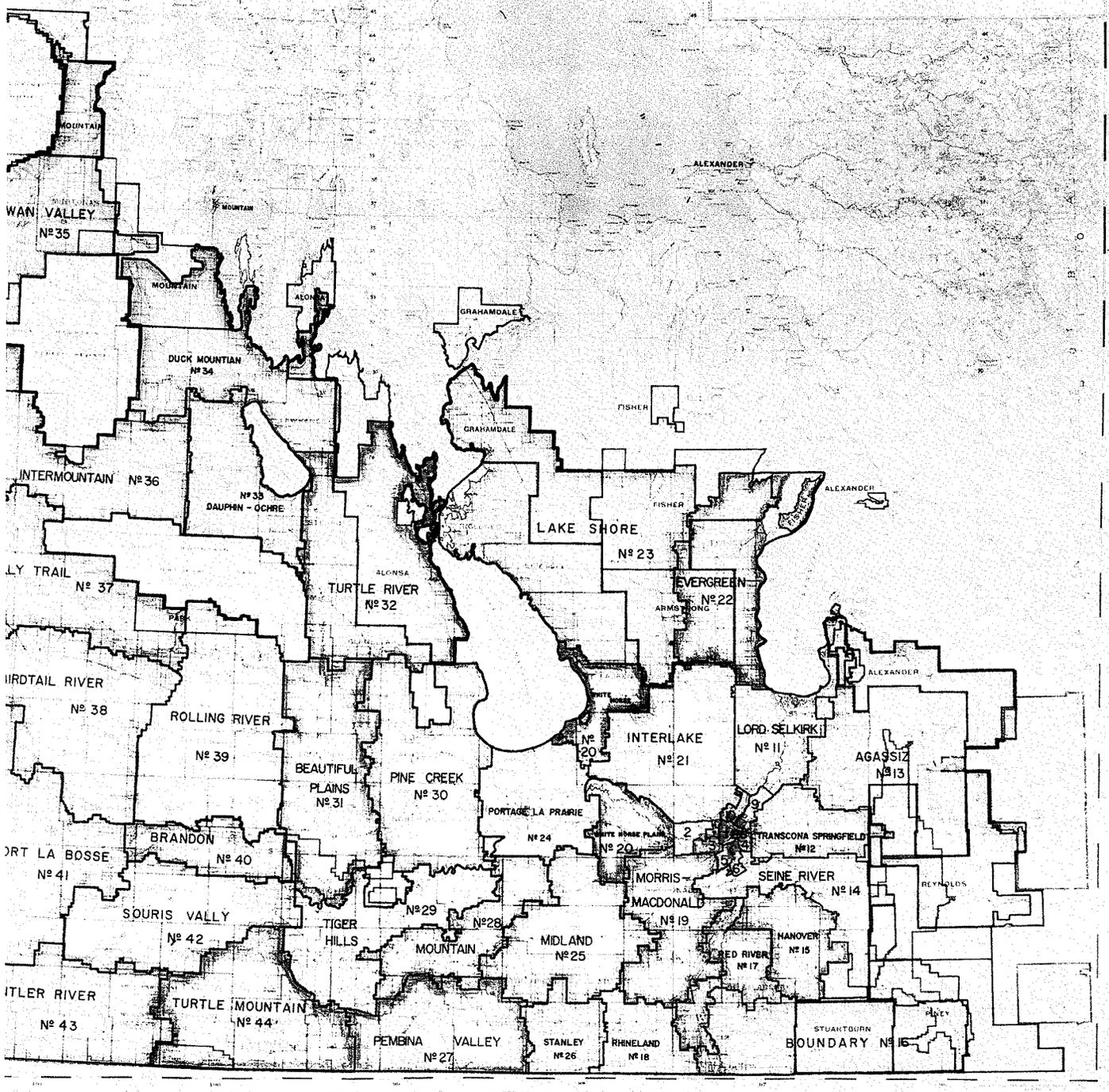
Department of Mines & Natural Resources Manitoba
Surveys Branch

THE SOUTHERN PORTION OF THE
PROVINCE OF MANITOBA

1956

Scale: 8 Miles to One Inch

SHEWING
SCHOOL DIVISIONS



THE EVERGREEN SCHOOL DIVISION N^o 22

WARD BOUNDARIES - - - - -

TOTAL TRUSTEES : 6

WARDS-1,2,3,5, — ONE TRUSTEE EACH

WARD-4, — TWO TRUSTEES

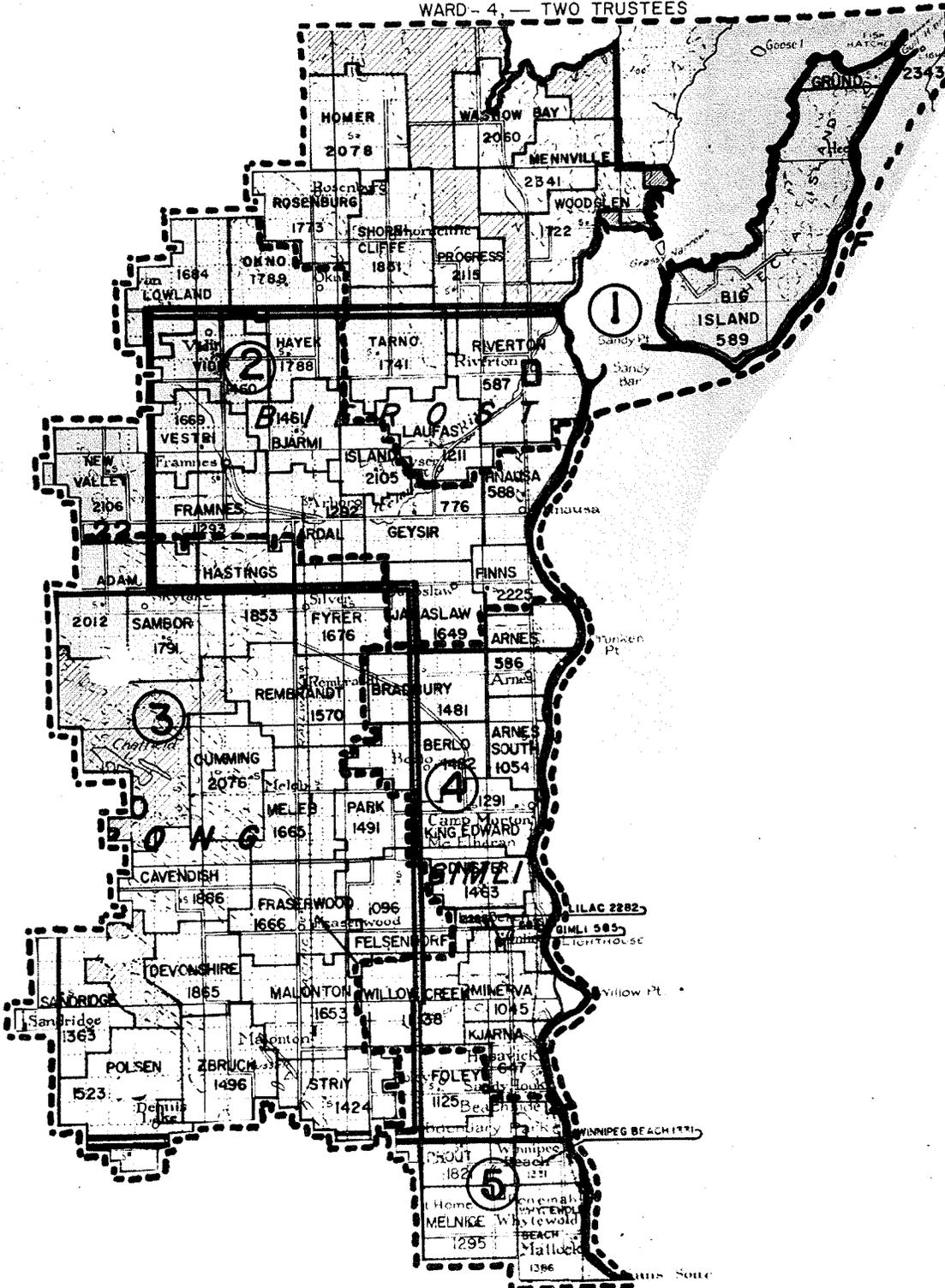


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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The primary aim of this study is to document the chief contributions made towards the growth and development of education by the many racial groups that emigrated into the area now within the boundaries of the Evergreen School Division. Chief amongst these groups are the settlers of Icelandic descent in their principal area of settlement outside of Iceland, and those who had emigrated from Eastern Europe. In recent years a Mennonite colony has been established in the north portion of the Division.

Equal in importance but secondary to the main purpose will be an attempt to indicate significant factors in the cultural and religious background of each ethnic group, and to relate these to their contributions toward the historic development and growth of education in the province.

Consideration will also be given to the school system as a force for the unification and assimilation of Canadians as exemplified by the forces at work in the Division.

I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The history of the settlement, and the history of the development of education in the Evergreen School Division both divide readily into two separate periods marked by the year 1897. In the history of settlement, the first settlers were almost exclusively Icelandic until

the original agreement for the establishment of New Iceland was rescinded on July 30, 1897.¹ Thereafter, the immigrants from Eastern Europe began to arrive.² These newcomers from the Austro-Hungarian Empire were primarily tillers of the soil, in contrast to the settlers from Iceland, who were mainly fishermen. The year 1897, therefore, marks the beginning of an effort to convert the frontier wilderness into an agricultural region with well-tended homesteads and thriving country villages.

As for the history of development of education, of major significance was the fact that the Icelanders upheld the Protestant religion, while the immigrants from Eastern Europe were adherents of the Catholic Faith. The time of arrival of the latter coincided with the temporary settlement of the Manitoba School Question through the Laurier-Greenway Compromise of 1897. With the Protestants in the majority and not favourably disposed towards the Catholics,³ the Icelandic settlers were able to effect a more satisfactory transition from their church-related schools into the Manitoba Public School system. Professor W. L. Morton, of the University of Manitoba, comments in his history of this province that the Manitoba School Question was certainly concluded to the satisfaction of the Protestant majority. Thus, in any chronicle of the growth and development of education in the Evergreen School Division,

¹Canada Gazette, October 9, 1897. p. 652.

²W. L. Morton, Manitoba -- A History: University of Toronto Press, 1937. p. 254.

³Ibid. pp. 240-250.

1897 must be considered a crucial year marked by the occurrence of a number of historically significant events.

The original Icelandic settlement was a homogeneous unit. For the first twelve years the Icelanders lived under their own constitution, in theory, in the Republic of New Iceland. Consequently, the history of this Republic is a history of the beginning of the Icelandic settlement in Manitoba.⁴

After the arrival of the Eastern Europeans near the turn of the century, the nature of the settlement altered to become multi-racial in composition. These immigrants were descended from three main racial extractions, namely: (1) German, (2) Polish, and (3) Ukrainian.⁵ All were united in their common Austro-Hungarian background, but divided in their loyalties to their different cultural and racial traditions. The settlements they established reflected these varied loyalties and followed no one set pattern. Only in a few districts did racial loyalties result in completely homogeneous settlements. By far the majority of the districts now represent a commingling of the cultural and racial elements.

The methods employed by the Federal and Provincial authorities in the settlement of each racial group has had a profound effect on its assimilation and resulting contribution toward a common Canadian culture. The settlers from Iceland were granted an exclusive area for settlement,

⁴W. L. Morton, op. cit., pp. 162-163.

⁵Edward M. Hubicz, Polish Churches in Manitoba. Veritas: 1960 pp. 23-33.

in which they were permitted the use of their language, customs, and traditions without restriction. This freedom gave them the opportunity to adjust to the new environment and consolidate their position as a distinctly different group. On the other hand, the settlers from Eastern Europe were subjected to external pressures for their assimilation almost from the time of their arrival in a strange and new land. The dual Catholic and Protestant school system had been replaced by a non-sectarian public school system which severely restricted the exercise of their duties as Catholic parents towards their children.⁶ When English was made the sole language of instruction in the Public Schools as a result of anti-German agitation during World War I, it placed an additional burden upon Canadian settlers who had transferred their allegiance from the land of their birth to that of their choice. As a result of these restrictions, many settlers from Eastern Europe made no attempt to preserve the heritage or retain the customs of a land they had forsaken, but began working towards a new identity as Canadians. While some began to harbour deep feelings of resentment towards those who would infringe upon what they considered to be their basic civil rights, others sought to merge their identity with the Canadian scene through the adoption of English customs, language, and surnames. Most tried not to consider themselves as hyphenated Canadians, but were required to retain this form of identification until 1947 when the passage of

⁶Brief, (Presented to the Manitoba Legislature by the Manitoba Association for Equality in Education, November 10, 1964). pp. 5-11.

the Citizenship Act by the Federal Government removed this last obstacle to a more complete participation in Canadian citizenship.

II. A GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION OF EVERGREEN DIVISION

The Evergreen School Division is located on the west shore of Lake Winnipeg, and extends fifty-four miles in length from its most southerly point at Sans Souci to its northern extremity at Washow Bay. Its eastern boundary follows the shoreline and includes Hecla Island. The other three sides are shaped by the contours of the many school districts which are located along its perimeter. It has an average width of about twenty miles.

Forming part of the Interlake area, this mixed-farming and summer resort region holds many attractions for both permanent settlers and holiday seekers. As part of the Parkland Belt north of the Prairie region, it offers a varied and colourful landscape to the enjoyment of hunter, camper, or picnicker. While soil conditions are generally more suited for hayland and pasture, a considerable amount of grain farming is carried on. Dairying and the raising of beef cattle provide the main source of income. The Lake, which abounds with fish, provides a source of livelihood for the commercial fishermen as well as many hours of pleasure for the anglers.

The area is serviced by three paved highways and two railway lines. Although the railway service has been curtailed considerably in the past ten years, it fills a vital role in supplying fuel oils and heavy equipment for the Royal Canadian Air Force Station near Gimli and

for the surrounding district. Highways 7, 8, and 9, lead northward from Winnipeg to all the main centres and summer resorts.

The four major centres are: Gimli, Winnipeg Beach, Arborg, and Riverton. Of these, Gimli is the largest with a population of one thousand, nine hundred and sixty permanent residents as revealed in the 1964 census. To this figure may be added the many summer resort residents and the R.C.A.F. personnel who use the shopping and recreational facilities of the town. The beaches at Gimli, Winnipeg Beach, Hecla, Camp Morton, and the numerous Fresh Air Camps located along the lakeshore attract thousands of visitors during the holiday season.

III. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Any detailed history of education must entail more than the mere compilation of facts gleaned from the records contained in the provincial archives, school registers, and the minutes of school board meetings. A living history must include something of the setting and the background of the people by whom the schools were established and developed. The history would then be incomplete if it did not contain an account of major legislative enactments governing this growth and relating it to the provincial school system. These, then are the factors limiting the scope of this thesis.

Since the emphasis is to be placed on the historical rather than the pedagogical aspects of educational development, such factors as changes in the course of study, and teaching methods employed will be dealt with only as they relate to the growth and development of the

educational system as a whole.

A true comparison of the educational opportunities provided in each of the elementary schools within the Division is difficult to make because of the great disparity in taxation powers existing amongst the many administrative units. Uniformity exists in the secondary schools under the administration of the Evergreen School Division, however, at the elementary level the situation is quite different. When the Division was formed there were sixty-two elementary school districts in operation. In 1960, three school districts: (1) Striy S. D. 1424, (2) Zbruch S. D. 1496, and (3) Polsen S. D. 1523, withdrew and united with Interlake School Division No. 21. Eight school districts are administered by Mr. J. A. Cameron, the Official Trustee for the Department of Education. Administration is further complicated by the fact that within the boundaries of the Division lie the Rural Municipalities of Gimli and Bifrost; part of the Rural Municipality of St. Andrews; and the Local Government Districts of Armstrong and Fisher, each with a different taxation base and consequently varying ability to support a uniform educational system. This study will make no attempt to relate the educational opportunities provided in each elementary school district to its ability to support.

Recent changes proposed by the Department of Education and contained in the Michener Report to the Manitoba Legislature encourage consolidation of the elementary schools in the Division and the assumption of responsibility for raising taxes and administrative

control by the Division Board.⁷

IV. SOURCES OF DATA

Primary sources of information have been resorted to wherever possible throughout the compilation of the historical events contained in this thesis. The writer has frequently relied on his personal knowledge of the district; since it is the area in which his forefathers settled and in which he has resided for almost thirty years. The results of a questionnaire circulated in November, 1964, and numerous personal visits to the elementary schools throughout the Division to view the old school registers have proved an invaluable source of information.

Secondary sources of information have been relied upon for an account of the early development of the schools. While a number of works dealing with the area have been published, these refer, in the main, to the first settlers from Iceland. One of the more detailed accounts is to be found in Volume III of the series entitled Saga Islendinga i Vesturheimi written by Thorsteinn Th. Thorsteinsson, and published in the Icelandic language by the Columbia Press in Winnipeg. Translations from this source have provided a detailed background for that portion of the thesis which deals specifically with contributions made by the settlers of Icelandic descent. The historical collections of Miss Margaret Sveinson, who has devoted much time and effort to the

⁷Lake Centre News, Vol. 5, No. 15, April 9, 1965. p. 1.

compilation of historical facts about the Gimli district, have also been used.

There is almost a complete lack of publications or manuscripts dealing with the settlements begun by the settlers from Eastern Europe, and what can be found deals briefly with the area under consideration. Until recently, a number of the original settlers who arrived at the turn of the century were still living; however, this source of reliable first-hand information is now fast diminishing.

Generally, the writer's background as a long-time resident and teacher in the area under consideration; a study of the early Icelandic works on the subject; the further study of recently published works such as: Ukrainians in Manitoba, by Paul Yuzik; and Manitoba--A History, by W. L. Morton; augmented by recent scholarly works and briefs on educational thought and trends, have combined to present a fairly accurate picture of the History of Education in the Evergreen School Division.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SETTLEMENT

The school may be considered as an institution created by Society to assist the child and adolescent to assume an acceptable adult role. The school is, therefore, an integral part of the society that has created it, and is profoundly affected by the cultural heritage and the natural and acquired aptitudes of the members within it. The type of schooling offered, and the teaching methods employed are a reflection of the cultural elements at work in the district.

In any history of the growth and development of education in a specific area, consideration should be given to the various cultural forces and their influence on the two main functions of education. These functions are: (1) the perpetuating function, and (2) the change-promoting function. The former is intimately interwoven with the cultural heritage of the society and resists change. The latter is used as the medium for facilitating and accelerating social change. When the cultural heritage and social stratification of a society are rigidly adhered to, the perpetuating function is emphasized to promote social stability. This may act to restrict educational growth and development in a period of rapid social change.

In this chapter an attempt will be made to acquaint the reader with the background of the main cultures that have combined to contribute towards the development of education in the Evergreen School Division.