

# Saskatchewan History

★ The Western  
Metis  
After the  
Insurrection

BY  
MARCEL GIRAUD

★ "Listening In"  
On the Prairies

BY  
MONTAGU CLEMENTS



# Saskatchewan History

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Volume I X

Winter 1956

Number 1

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Saskatchewan Archives Office, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Published three times a year under the auspices of the Saskatchewan Archives Board

The articles in this magazine are indexed in the CANADIAN INDEX

Yearly subscription, \$1.00; junior subscription (for students), 50c;  
sustaining subscription, \$5.00 per year

Plus education and hospitalization tax.

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## The Western Metis After the Insurrection

In Volume VII, No. 1 of *Saskatchewan History* (Winter, 1954), a chapter from Professor Marcel Giraud's book, *Le Métis Canadien*, was published in English translation under the title "Métis Settlement in the North-West Territories". In the following pages we present another chapter from this key work on the métis people. Like the preceding article, it was translated by Mr. C. M. Chesney, M.A., whose services were made available for this purpose by the Economic Advisory and Planning Board, Government of Saskatchewan. Permission to publish this chapter has been granted by the Institute of Ethnology, University of Paris, under the terms of their copyright.

*Le Métis Canadien* was first published in Paris in 1945.

The Editor

ON the morrow of the Insurrection of 1885, the métis had but a very poor future in prospect. The certainty of being miserable in a country whose economic transformations were making it foreign to them, and the discouragement which was brought about in them by the occupation of a territory over which they had for so long believed themselves masters, were now accompanied by an apprehension of new reprisals.<sup>1</sup>

Many fled to American territory, persuaded that they would soon be the object of persecutions as violent as in Manitoba. Some went to the State of Montana, and others to the southern edges of Turtle Mountain, [in Dakota Territory]. That area was familiar to them, for they had hunted buffalo herds there not very long before, and a certain number of their brothers had already established themselves there. From that time on the two groups were undistinguishable. Prodded by certain irreconcilable men like Gabriel Dumont, the newcomers were at first strongly hostile toward the Canadian government, which had been responsible for their deception and their exile. In Montana, meetings were held at which the possibility of an attack against the North-West Territories was considered.<sup>2</sup> A cold reception was accorded to Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney's encouragements to re-enter Canadian territory, sent to them through emissaries. The métis asked that complete amnesty be granted them, complaining that such a promise by no means figured in the guarantees of safe-conduct which were being offered.<sup>3</sup> While some of them, who had been won over by the good counsels of the missionaries, finally abandoned their place of exile, many other families renounced all idea of returning. The latter established themselves in the Milk River valley, and in the region of Turtle Mountain, where they can still be found today. Some of them have been assimilated into the society of the small settlements along the railways of North Dakota and Montana, while others, driven back to the periphery of those settlements, live miserably on the waste

<sup>1</sup> Mgr. Grandin à Sir John Macdonald, July 11, 1885 (Codex Historicus, St. Albert). Mgr. Grandin to Sir Hector Langevin, n.d. (Codex Historicus, St. Albert).

<sup>2</sup> Rapport de l'éclaireur métis Philip Whitford, transmis à Sir John Macdonald, McLeod, July 24, 1887 (Macdonald Papers, 1885, 7th Vol., p. 48). Dewdney to Sir John, June 10, 1886 (Macdonald Papers, 1885, 7th Vol. p. 69). Chapleau to Sir John, Ottawa, July 2, 1887 (Macdonald Papers, 1885, 7th Vol. pp. 2 *et seq.*) On the métis families who abandoned Batoche parish for the United States, see Macdonald Papers, Dewdney Letters, 1887-91. p. 245.

<sup>3</sup> Rapport de Moïse Vallée to E. Dewdney, March 31, 1886 (Macdonald Papers, 1885, 7th Vol., p. 58) and Napoléon Nault à Moïse Vallée (*Ibid.*, p. 60).

lands around them like so many nomadic groups without any definite occupation, and in poor looking huts which are often hidden amid rolling land. Still others have been converted to the idea of agriculture and are found living on the small fields they cultivate. Certain of the métis on their arrival on American territory had the limited ambition of doing odd jobs with mediocre remuneration, such as wood-cutting for the White settlers and ranchmen.<sup>4</sup> Their formula of life has not changed even today. In the Turtle Mountain area larger numbers of them devoted themselves to working the land,<sup>5</sup> and this made it possible for the missionaries to dissuade them, without too much difficulty, from becoming associated with the projects of Gabriel Dumont. Again, others were admitted to the Reserve which was established there, and, at the present time, these métis vary their modest agricultural occupation with activities such as deer hunting, which recall the nomadism of former days.

In the North-West Territories, the métis shared only in a very small way the benefits by which the Government finally gave satisfaction to claims of which it had so long remained unaware. The Commission that was established on March 31, 1885, applied there the same principles as in Manitoba. To métis children born before July 15, 1870, was given the choice between a "scrip" valued at \$240, which they could either negotiate or use for the purchase of federal lands, and a "land scrip" which authorized them to pick out a piece of property of 240 acres on unoccupied Dominion lands. The "heads of families"<sup>6</sup> could also choose between these two kinds of scrips, but their respective values were limited to \$160 or 160 acres.<sup>7</sup> In 1900, an Order-in-Council extended the same benefits to children born between July 15, 1870, and the year 1885.<sup>8</sup> In this way the Government settled, in the interests of the métis, the question of "the extinction of the Indian title". It admitted their indigenous status, and recognized for them a privileged treatment in the administration of federal lands. Those who were already in possession of a land plot were issued patents which guaranteed them outright ownership up to the amount of 240 acres for the children, and 160 acres for the heads of families.<sup>9</sup> The situation required long years of study. It led to investigations which were singularly complicated by the immenseness of the territories in question, by the difficulty of bringing the métis together in the centres where their cases were to be examined and at the precise time that the commissioners were there,<sup>10</sup> by the decision of the Minister of the Interior in

<sup>4</sup> Chapleau to Sir John, July 2, 1887 (Macdonald Papers, 1885, 7th Vol., pp. 2 *et seq.*).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> The term "half-breed head of family" applied to all persons married by July 15, 1870. The term "métis child" applied without distinction of age to all persons not married by the same date. (N.O. Coté, Department of the Interior, Ottawa, April 14, 1899, D.I.F.)

<sup>7</sup> N.O. Coté, Department of the Interior, Ottawa, April 14, 1899, (D.I.F.) and *ibid.*, April 28, 1913 (D.I.F.)

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, April 14, 1899 (D.I.F.). Report of the Committee of the Hon. the Privy Council, approved . . . , March 2, 1900 (D.I.F.). N.O. Coté, Ottawa, April 28, 1913 (D.I.F.). *Ibid.*, Department of the Interior, December 7, 1923 (D.I.F.). D. H. Macdowall to Sir John Macdonald, April 12, 1890 (Macdonald Papers, Misc., 1890-1, portfolios 7-8, pp. 179 *et seq.*)

<sup>9</sup> Report of a Committee of the Hon. the Privy Council, approved . . . , March 30, 1885 (D.I.F.).

<sup>10</sup> Rottwell (?), Memorandum to the Minister of the Interior, Ottawa, February 16, 1913 (D.I.F.).

1913 to proceed to the re-examination of a large number of previously resolved cases,<sup>11</sup> and finally, by the necessity of regulating the status of métis groups living outside of organized territories, as the land which they occupied was gradually repurchased from Indian tribes. Thus, in 1899, when Treaty No. 8 was concluded with the Indians of Athabasca and Peace River, the métis in these areas received benefits identical to those of their brothers in the Western provinces.<sup>12</sup> According to Treaty No. 11 of 1921, the métis of the Mackenzie River district obtained only payments of \$240, a measure which was in keeping with the small agricultural possibilities of that remote region.<sup>13</sup>

The granting of these various benefits was of little real advantage to the métis. In addition to the fact that the Government rejected the claims of all those (approximately 6,000) who had already obtained satisfaction in Manitoba, and had then carelessly given up their scrips or their lands,<sup>14</sup> the métis who did benefit from the new measures were soon the victims of speculators. Here, fraudulent plundering was facilitated by the more primitive character of the Western métis, by their ignorance of land values, and by the difficulty which they experienced in settling down to a sedentary existence.<sup>15</sup> Most of them were incapable of grasping the importance of the land scrip, and, beguiled by the hope of an immediate pecuniary profit, they actually chose the scrip which was negotiable in money. "Almost all of our people are taking money scrips", wrote the missionaries of St. Albert in June, 1885.<sup>16</sup> In the Fort Qu'Appelle area, their inclination first expressed, under the influence of the clergy, to refuse "money scrips" and instead to claim land concessions, was not long in being dissipated.<sup>17</sup>

Now, as soon as the scrip had been distributed, the métis lost no time in giving it up for a sum of money lower than its face value; a title worth \$240 was generally bought up at \$165, while one worth \$160 would go for only \$110.<sup>18</sup> At St. Albert, the métis were glad to receive fifty percent of the value of the scrip. They sold their titles hastily and then squandered the receipts to buy objects of no utility, soon reducing themselves to misery and becoming more discouraged and hostile toward White society.<sup>19</sup> Intervention by the clergy produced no

<sup>11</sup> N. O. Coté, Ottawa, February 6, 1913 (D.I.F.).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Department of the Interior, April 14, 1899 (D.I.F.). *Ibid.*, Ottawa, May 11, 1914 (D.I.F.). C. Mair, *Through the Mackenzie Basin* (Toronto, 1908), pp. 68 *et seq.*

<sup>13</sup> N. O. Coté, Ottawa, March 17, 1923 (D.I.F.) F. W. Cluming, Acting Director (Dominion Lands Administration) Department of the Interior, October 16, 1929. N. O. Coté, Ottawa, April 7, 1925 (D.I.F.).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, October 14, 1914 (D.I.F.).

<sup>15</sup> The Bishop of Saskatchewan to J. S. Dennis, January 18, 1879 (Macdonald Papers, prior to outbreak, 1885, 1st Vol. p. 219).

<sup>16</sup> St. Albert Mission, *Codex Historicus*, June 17-18, 1885. Report of a Committee of the Hon. the Privy Council approved . . . , April 13, 1886 (D.I.F.). N. O. Coté, Department of the Interior, Ottawa, April 14, 1899 (D.I.F.). *Ibid.*, November 26 and December 17, 1920 (D.I.F.). C. Mair, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>17</sup> Col. Street to the Minister of the Interior, April 1, 1885 (Lancton Papers, Vol. I). *Ibid.*, April 23 and May 2, 1885.

<sup>18</sup> N. O. Coté, Department of the Interior, Ottawa, April 14, 1899 (D.I.F.).

<sup>19</sup> Burgess to the Hon. Clifford Sifton, January 29, 1897 (D.I.F.). *Codex Historicus of St. Albert*, June 11 and 15, 1885.

results.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, when it became a question of admitting children born between 1870 and 1885 to similar distributions of scrips, the missionaries were practically unanimous in advising against the application of a system which hastened the dispossession of the métis, and fortified their resentment without at the same time converting them to the concept of regular labours.<sup>21</sup>

The spoilation here took place on a broader scale and with more cynicism than in Manitoba, and under conditions identical with those characterizing the fraudulent dispossessions of the southern African métis group of Rehoboth Bastards, who were likewise a primitive group, and likewise ready to alienate, for small sums of money or for objects without value, the rich lands which had been set aside for them by the German Government.<sup>22</sup> In the Edmonton region, at Lac la Biche, at Lake St. Anne and at St. Albert, large numbers of métis in this way lost the titles which they had just received.<sup>23</sup> While many of them exchanged their titles for a reasonable sum of money, others gave them up for mere trifles, some for alcohol or horses.<sup>24</sup> Sometimes even before the distribution was effected, they had tied these titles up with businessmen in payment for food and clothing which they had received on credit.<sup>25</sup> Unwittingly some were even the victims of fraudulent manoeuvres by which clever speculators were able to have validated fictitious titles that they drew up with a view to acquiring large land tracts under the half-breed scrip system, and which became the basis for considerable fortunes.<sup>26</sup> Since illiteracy was widespread among the western métis, speculators could easily cheat them out of their titles, either by obtaining their agreement to a written contract whose clauses they would not understand, or by proposing to them a verbal agreement which they reserved the right not to execute as soon as the scrip had been ceded.<sup>27</sup> In spite of the dire consequences that were entailed, even some métis established on Indian Reserves were caught by the lure of profits to be realized from the sale of scrips. From 1885 to 1894 many renounced their status as government wards in order to be able to take part in the distribution of titles. But the immediate resale of the latter threw them into the ranks of that miserable group of humanity which is so numerous today in the Western prov-

<sup>20</sup> Codex Historicus of St. Albert, June 7, 1885.

<sup>21</sup> Burgess to Clifford Sifton, January 29, 1897 (D.I.F.).

<sup>22</sup> *Report of the Rehoboth Commission* (Cape Town, 1927), pp. 63 *et seq.*

<sup>23</sup> Rapport de Mgr. Grandin sur l'action des spéculateurs au Lac la Biche, October 22, 1896 (D.I.F.). Chronicle of Lake St. Anne, 1900. Codex Historicus of St. Albert, June 11-18, 1885.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, June 11-15, 1885. Chronicle of Lake St. Anne, 1900. W. Pearce, Superintendent of Mines, to H. H. Smith, Commissioner of Dominion Lands, October 23, 1896 (D.I.F.).

<sup>25</sup> Chronicle of St. Laurent de Grandin, 1886.

<sup>26</sup> J. C. Calhoun, Edmonton, July 12, 1922 (D.I.F.). (The letter is accompanied by newspaper articles relating to speculator's operations: *The Morning Leader*, Regina, August 23, 1921: and *Saturday Night*, Toronto, September 3, 1921.) More limited in its repercussions, the decision of 1905 to exempt the métis living in American territory from appearing in person before the Land Offices to determine sites and guarantee title to the lands which had been distributed, quickly became a means of abuse by land speculators. It was possible for speculators to take away from the interested parties the lands valued at \$1,000 or \$1,200 for average payments of from \$100 to \$200. (N. O. Coté to the Minister of the Interior, May 23, 25 and 26, 1905, and *The Winnipeg Tribune*, May 17, 1905 (D.I.F.).)

<sup>27</sup> Mgr. Grandin, Lac la Biche, October 22, 1896 (D.I.F.). Petition of the half-breed population of Fort Resolution, Fort Smith and Fort Chipewyan to the Prime Minister, November 11, 1920 (D.I.F.).

inces.<sup>28</sup> In the last analysis, the whole operation benefitted only a minority who made intelligent use of the capital assured by the negotiation of scrips in order to increase their livestock and agricultural equipment.<sup>29</sup> Instead, the operation was a principal factor in creating a class of rich speculators, "the half-breed scrip millionaires", whose fortunes were built upon the dispossession of a group of men who were victims of their own ignorance, their weakness and their ill-adaptation to the new economy. This spoilation extended even to métis who had already been in possession of land plots and had obtained regular titles to them. Actually, some of them still had too little appreciation of the value of their capital to resist the speculators' offers, and they therefore relinquished that capital in return for sums of money which they were utterly incapable of retaining.<sup>30</sup> Others, like their brothers of the Red River, lost no time in contracting debt in order to meet the taxes which encumbered their land plots, or to meet the operating costs of an enterprise which they simply could not manage.<sup>31</sup> In the Qu'Appelle River valley, the métis of St. Lazare, who had come originally from St. François Xavier area in the hope of occupying new lands, were thus dispossessed by the very mortgage companies which had been set up to ward off their short-sightedness.<sup>32</sup> After that, they were obliged to retreat to new locations, where today they live apart from the Whites who became the masters of their holdings.

Such were the painful effects of too close contact with a society against which the métis, incapable of adopting its methods or assimilating its outlook, were totally unprepared to fight on an equal footing. The predictions of Mgr. Grandin and the Bishop of Saskatchewan became realities to the letter. Events were demonstrating the error which had been committed in confounding the Whites and the métis within an identical legal and social framework, a structure which was the creator of obligations and responsibilities for the métis which their simple way of life inhibited them from assuming. Their social conceptions remained close enough to those of Indian society to keep them from becoming absorbed by White society, but, on the other hand, neither could they be properly incorporated into the Indian society.<sup>33</sup> "Many of the métis are not only poor, but they are not any more prudent than the savages . . .," wrote Mgr. Grandin.<sup>34</sup> And their weakness of will aggravated the situation still further because it discouraged all effort at adaptation to the new state of affairs. Certainly, it would have been difficult to apply to men who claimed to be equals of Whites, and who had

<sup>28</sup> Archdeacon G. Holmes to A. J. McKenna, December 20, 1903 (D.I.F.). A. J. McKenna to Hon. Clifford Sifton, March 16, 1901 (D.I.F.). N. O. Coté to J. D. MacLean (Department of Indian Affairs), October 14, 1914 (D.I.F.).

<sup>29</sup> Burgess to the Hon. Clifford Sifton, January 29, 1897 (D.I.F.).

<sup>30</sup> Notes historiques sur la mission de Saint-Laurent, Manitoba (Noviciate of the Oblate Fathers, St. Laurent, Manitoba).

<sup>31</sup> Mgr. Grandin to editor, *La Vérité* (Québec), February 2, 1902, (Arch. Arch. Edmonton).

<sup>32</sup> [For a fuller account of the activities of these mortgage companies, like the Crédit Foncier Franco-Canadien, the reader is referred to pp. 1129-30 of *Le Métis Canadien*.]

<sup>33</sup> The Bishop of Saskatchewan to J. S. Dennis, January 18, 1879 (Macdonald Papers, prior to outbreak, 1st Vol., p. 219).

<sup>34</sup> Mgr. Grandin au P. Leduc, 1895 (?) (Arch. Arch. Edmonton). J. S. Dennis, Remarks on the condition of the half-breeds of the North-West Territories, December 20, 1878 (Macdonald Papers, Misc. 1878, p. 314).

pretensions of benefiting from the same legal and social structure, a treatment similar to that applied to Indians. Already, many of them were answering to the definition of E. B. Reuter, who sees the métis as men of divided loyalties, eager to attain the level of the European, yet thrown in fact into the ranks of the Indian by their social education and customs.<sup>35</sup> But it was a grave error, then, to authorize a large number of métis to give up the Reserve system, which they had at first accepted, in order to move into a "civilized society" in which they must know only a life of poverty.<sup>36</sup> Mgr. Grandin could well accuse the Government of having "failed in its duty as guardian" by this excess of indulgence.<sup>37</sup> Some of the métis became conscious of their mistake very quickly, and in 1890, asked to "return to the treaty" in order to escape from the false position into which they had just placed themselves.<sup>38</sup> A much larger number, however, did not recognize the evidence until after long years of uncertainty and suffering, of which the relinquishment of the scrips was but a beginning.

Indeed, once the scrip was lost and the small capital which they had gained from it squandered, misery began for the nomads, who were henceforth deprived of the resources of buffalo hunting and freighting. In areas like Lac la Biche, Lake St. Anne and Lesser Slave Lake, where hunting and fishing were still the basis of their subsistence, the métis did not at first modify their form of life.<sup>39</sup> In the more distant regions of Peace River and Athabasca, and even more especially in the remote districts of the Mackenzie River and Great Slave lake, where game and furbearing animals assured the same possibility of life as in former days, conditions changed in no way at all<sup>40</sup>—nomadism remained the customary mode of existence. The métis at Lac la Biche and Lake St. Anne, consisting of the descendents of free men and trading post employees, maintained their primitive characteristics and archaic economy,<sup>41</sup> living in either abundance or poverty according to the vagaries of hunting and fishing,<sup>42</sup> motivated by a superstitious mind,<sup>43</sup> destitute of all ambition, and rebellious to the idea of giving schooling to their children.<sup>44</sup> But it was not too long before these activities were seriously circumscribed by the progress of settlement, by the establishment of

<sup>35</sup> E. B. Reuter, *Race Mixture* (New York, 1931), pp. 214-16. Memorandum of Inspector Conroy (Forwarded to the Minister of the Interior by J. McKenna,) February 17, 1903. "The missionaries . . . believe the vast majority of (the half-breeds) who are classed by virtue of an admixture of white blood as full fledged citizens would be better off if subjected to the laws affecting Indians". (D.I.F.)

<sup>36</sup> Mgr. Grandin to J. Royal (Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Territories), April 2, 1890 (Arch. Arch. Edmonton). A. A. Ruttan to the Department of the Interior (Report about the half-breed Reserve), January 19, 1899.

<sup>37</sup> Mgr. Grandin to Comte des Caze (Indian Agent), St. Albert, January 21, 1892 (Arch. Arch. Edmonton).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, St. Albert, June 11, 1890 (Arch. Arch. Edmonton).

<sup>39</sup> Smart, Deputy Minister, to the Minister of the Interior, Ottawa, July 30, 1900 (D.I.F.). Inspector Conroy to the Hon. Clifford Sifton, February 13, 1905 (D.I.F.).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, and Bishop to the Minister of the Interior, April 13, 1904, (D.I.F.).

<sup>41</sup> Codex of the Lake St. Anne Mission, 1886-7. Codex of the Lac la Biche mission, September, 1892.

<sup>42</sup> Mgr. Grandin, St. Albert, November 24, 1890 (Arch. Arch. Edmonton).

<sup>43</sup> Codex of the Lac la Biche mission, November, 1904.

<sup>44</sup> Mgr. Grandin, St. Albert, December 23, 1888 (Arch. Arch.).



provincial governments, and by the elaboration of laws which restricted the liberty of former days. These former free men, so long absolute masters of primitive nature whose resources they exploited, would soon be obliged to abdicate their sovereignty before that of the Whites. In 1890, a law forbade the springtime hunting of partridge and ducks, which was during that particular season of the year one of the essential elements of subsistence for the métis.<sup>45</sup> In 1893, the Department of Marine and Fisheries prohibited fishing from October 5th to December 15th, and authorized it during the other seasons only after the issuance of a fishing license, the price of which was fixed at \$2.00.<sup>46</sup> This measure took away from the population of Lake St. Anne and Lac la Biche its most important resource, since there were few families who were in a position to pay the price demanded.<sup>47</sup> Faced with the discontent and the protestations to which the measure gave rise,<sup>48</sup> the Government revised its decision to require a license, but stood firm with its prohibition of autumn fishing.<sup>49</sup> Life became particularly difficult for these groups who refused to work on the land.<sup>50</sup> More and more, and without much success, the missionaries had to solicit in their behalf a charitable intervention by the state.<sup>51</sup> Lac la Biche, whose shores had known a large population not long before, now entered a period of decline. Imperceptibly its inhabitants scattered, some with the intention of following a life of nomadism in regions further away where fur-bearing animals would still be abundant, and others to seek chance employment, even though opportunities for it were occurring less and less often.

Around Edmonton and St. Albert, groups have been mentioned who wandered at random in quest of a chance hunt, the uncertainty of which often reduced their families to great misery.<sup>52</sup> In the Qu'Appelle River valley, deer became the means of subsistence of former buffalo hunters. Métis would come to take refuge with the missionaries, having been stripped of all that they had.<sup>53</sup> Here and there some would find a temporary way of earning bread in the declining freighting business. But the development of railways increasingly circumscribed the importance of that industry, leaving it only a role narrowly localized to regions of difficult access, and away from the main lines of communication.<sup>54</sup> At Swift Current and Maple Creek, one could notice the presence of families still in possession of horses and buggies, who waited in vain for a chance to make use of

<sup>45</sup> Mgr. Grandin's Journal, April 22, 1890 (Arch. Arch. Edmonton).

<sup>46</sup> Codex of the Lake St. Anne mission, June 4, 1892 and June 16, 1892 and 1893. Mgr. Grandin à Joseph Royal, August 25, 1891. (Arch. Arch. Edmonton).

<sup>47</sup> Codex of Lake St. Anne, June, 1892.

<sup>48</sup> Codex of the Lac la Biche mission, February, 1890 and October, 1894.

<sup>49</sup> Codex of the Lake St. Anne mission, 1893-4.

<sup>50</sup> Codex of the Lake St. Anne mission, June, 1892.

<sup>51</sup> Codex of the Lac la Biche mission, October, 1894. Mgr. Grandin to A. Forget, St. Albert, January 5, 1895 (Arch. Arch. Edmonton).

<sup>52</sup> Mgr. Grandin's Journal, January 20, 1895 (Arch. Arch. Edmonton).

<sup>53</sup> Hugonard to Col. Street, June 28, 1885 (Lancton Papers, Vol. 2).

<sup>54</sup> Mgr. Grandin au Ministre de l'Intérieur, October 27, 1889 (Arch. Arch. Edmonton). Chronicle of St. Laurent de Grandin, 1886. Mgr. Legal, *History of the Catholic Church in Central Alberta*, (n.p., n.d.), p. 70.

them, and who finally became resigned to selling their ponies in order to escape famine.<sup>55</sup> Some possibilities of employment, however, grew out of the extension of a rail network or in the building of coach routes. In 1890, for example, several métis from St. Laurent took employment among the workers of all nationalities who were attracted by the construction of the Prince Albert railway.<sup>56</sup> The progress of agricultural settlement, together with the appearance of large live-stock-raising lands, also made it possible for a certain number of them to contract with the Whites for temporary engagements which required no special qualifications, like cutting wood or harvesting hay.<sup>57</sup> Many were employed in gathering together buffalo bones which had accumulated on their former hunting lands over the prairies. Around the Cypress Hills and Turtle Mountain this practice became a large-scale activity; after the bones were piled up near the railway tracks, they were bought by companies which turned them into fertilizer.<sup>58</sup>

In parallel fashion, the new towns of the West attracted them in varying numbers.<sup>59</sup> There were also some who deserted the prairie provinces to try their luck on American territory.<sup>60</sup> Everywhere throughout these Western lands, the métis population became scattered into groups of unequal size and of widely different densities, yet forming a continuous network which covered the prairies and the park land.

The métis population accepted its fate passively. Around the towns and villages they waited for whatever chance occupations might come up, or else lived in apathy and misery<sup>61</sup> because the ordeal which they were undergoing did not evoke in them that energy which made the superiority of the Whites. Quite the contrary, one might have said that indolence was becoming even more dominant as a trait of their temperament. Instead of reacting, and finally heeding the admonitions of the missionaries who urged them to work harder, the métis gave in to discouragement and poverty, incapable of yielding to a culture whose traditions were foreign to them or of taking their part in the revolution which was profoundly altering their old conditions of life. There were even some of them who preferred the uncertainties of a day to day existence, and so would refuse

<sup>55</sup> Chapleau to Sir John Macdonald, June 13, 1887 (Macdonald Papers, 1885, 7th Vol. pp. 2 et seq.).

<sup>56</sup> Chronicle of St. Laurent, 1890. Codex of the Lake St. Anne Mission, 1893-4. Codex of the Lac la Biche mission, August, 1894.

<sup>57</sup> Pétition présentée par les habitants de Bresaylor, June 19, 1900 (D.I.F.).

<sup>58</sup> Chapleau to Sir John Macdonald, June 13, 1887 (Macdonald Papers, 1885, 7th Vol. pp. 2 et seq.). *Ibid.*, Ottawa, July 2, 1887. Thérien, *Histoire de la paroisse de Saint-Paul des Métis* (Library of the Oblates of Mary and Immaculate, Edmonton). Accumulations of buffalo bones and skeletons were often described by explorers who travelled over the Prairies: see M. S. Wade, *The Overlanders of '62* (Victoria, 1931), p. 62. G. M. Grant, *Ocean to Ocean*, (Toronto, 1877), p. 130. Fort Abercrombie (1857-1877): Narrative of Samuel R. Bond (1863), Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, Vol. II, Part II, p. 52, and J. P. Turner, "Buffalo Days of Red River", *Canadian Geographical Journal*, February, 1934.

<sup>59</sup> *Census of Assiniboia, Saskatchewan and Alberta*, (Ottawa, 1886). Hugonard, St. Florent, August 1, 1882 (Arch. Arch.). Codex Historicus of Calgary, 1899.

<sup>60</sup> Chapleau to Sir John Macdonald, June 13, 1887 (Macdonald Papers, 1885, 7th Vol., pp. 2 et seq.).

<sup>61</sup> Thérien to Clifford Sifton, Saint-Paul des Métis, February 1, 1901 (D.I.F.).

whatever chances for employment that might present themselves.<sup>62</sup> Their demoralization was still further increased by the spectacle of transformations taking place on the prairies, and the comfortable life of the newly arrived settlers.<sup>63</sup> Gradually, misery took them increasingly away from any ideal of honesty, led them to contract for ever-growing debts which they would simply neglect to repay, predisposed them to theft, and, in a word, precipitated in them that moral decadence which the weakness of their nature could not keep in check, and whose first symptoms had been manifested in Manitoba on the morrow of the annexation of the province.<sup>64</sup> Bad examples, together with the opportunities for disorder which they found in the neighbourhood of the settlements,<sup>65</sup> inevitably had pernicious effects on a people who lacked will power and were hesitating between two cultures, the moral dictates of which were not squarely imposed upon their society. Even more than among the métis of Manitoba, drunkenness and prostitution became rampant among the Western métis. Contact with immoral Whites was not alone responsible for this breakdown. The easy mores of Indians with whom they habitually associated and who showed them the spectacle of a culture well on the way toward degradation, together with the example of their own parents who, in many cases, yielded more freely than the métis of the Red River to the excesses of a primitive environment, both supplemented those ill-effects which worked against the métis because of their lack of will power, their demoralization and misery, and their association with a society having different moral standards.<sup>66</sup> Political life in turn provided a new factor of demoralization because of the commercialization of election days, and because of the custom which was becoming generalized of buying métis votes in return for liquor handouts.<sup>67</sup>

The missionaries' activities remained ineffective against this moral degradation that daily became increasingly apparent.<sup>68</sup> Among the groups which remained more primitive, like that of St. Anne, drunkenness would provoke serious disorders and scuffles, followed by mutilations and murders, and recalling the mind to excesses that are the custom among indigenous peoples.<sup>69</sup> At Calgary, in 1884, Father Lacombe sadly noted that many métis had "already inhabited the prison"; like Mgr. Grandin, he hoped that they would be removed from the baneful contact of the Whites,<sup>70</sup> the consequences of which were just as unfortun-

<sup>62</sup> Chronicle of St. Laurent de Grandin, 1890.

<sup>63</sup> Thérien to Clifford Sifton, Saint-Paul des Métis, February 1, 1901 (D.I.F.).

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, and Thérien, *Historie de la paroissé de Saint-Paul, des Métis*, and Chapeau to Sir John, June 13, 1887 (Macdonald Papers, 1885, 7th Vol., pp. 2 et seq.).

<sup>65</sup> Thérien to Clifford Sifton, Saint-Paul des Métis, February 1, 1901 (D.I.F.).

<sup>66</sup> Mgr. Grandin to editor, *Alberta Tribune* (Calgary), St. Albert, July 31, 1895 (Arch. Arch. Edmonton). Chronicle of the Lake St. Anne mission, 1886. Codex of the Lake St. Anne mission, 1892.

<sup>67</sup> Chronicle of the Lake St. Anne mission, November 7, 1891. Codex of Lac la Biche mission, November 1904. Chronicle of St. Laurent de Grandin, 1899. Mgr. Grandin's journal, June 23, 1896, and October 14, 1898 (Arch. Arch. Edmonton).

<sup>68</sup> Chronicle of St. Laurent de Grandin, 1889. Chronicle of Lake St. Anne mission, 1886.

<sup>69</sup> Codex of the Lake St. Anne mission, 1892, 1893 and 1896.

<sup>70</sup> Mgr. Grandin, November 2, 1891 (Arch. Arch. Edmonton). Lacombe, Calgary, July 25, 1884. (Arch. Arch.).

ate for them as for the Indians themselves. This breakdown that was occurring in their family life did not, however, degenerate into criminality; at times when they had by no means lost consciousness of their acts under the influence of alcohol, their will power was really too weak to lead them to pre-meditated crimes, committed in cold blood.<sup>71</sup>

Yet, despite the frequent ineffectiveness of their advice, the missionaries put forth efforts to remedy this demoralization. As in former years, they urged the métis toward a more industrious and worthy existence. As they had done in Manitoba, they undertook to orient the métis toward new lands and to convert them once again to the idea of agricultural life. On Battle River, they were able to bring together a settlement of 500 people (St. Thomas de Duhamel).<sup>72</sup> Here and there some initial attempts fulfilled expectations, and they were also able to spread their good counsels among the métis through education. In centres like St. Louis de Langevin, where the arrival of French-Canadian families introduced the healthy concepts of work and ambition, and where the schools were becoming more numerous, a certain number of métis rallied to the ideas of their pastors.<sup>73</sup> At the mission at Lake St. Anne, the clergy managed to retain the services of a teacher, and undertook to remove the children from the persistent action of an environment that was not very edifying. Unfortunately, these attempts encountered many difficulties, and often resulted in discouraging failures.<sup>74</sup>

In endeavouring to check this decadence of a group which had for so long figured in the advance guard of civilization, and which had, through its role as mediator, prepared for the coming of White society into the immense spaces of the West, the Church could count very little on the support of provincial governments. This situation became even more complicated, and the métis were even more exposed to the animosity or indifference of the government,<sup>75</sup> because of political bargaining and the necessity of linking the métis cause with that of election candidates if anything was to come of their demands for state assistance,<sup>76</sup> and because of their unfortunate manoeuvres in sometimes voting for the wrong candidate.

On the morrow of the Insurrection, the government enacted some charitable measures in the métis behalf,<sup>77</sup> but their extent was purely local, with no general repercussions. On the other hand, the métis were somewhat prone to rebel against the injustice of their fate. Such was the case in 1911, when the métis at Lesser Slave Lake unsuccessfully undertook to obtain governmental intervention against the frauds which trafficking in scrips had engendered.<sup>78</sup> It was again true during

<sup>71</sup> Souvenirs du P. Lacombe (St. Albert).

<sup>72</sup> Mgr. Grandin, St. Albert, March 12, 1890. Mgr. Grandin à M. Ouellette, May 20, 1901 (Arch. Arch. Edmonton). Mgr. Legal, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-71.

<sup>73</sup> Chronicle of St. Laurent de Grandin, 1886.

<sup>74</sup> Chronicle of the Lake St. Anne mission, November-December, 1886. Codex of the Lake St. Anne mission, 1893-5. Mgr. Grandin, St. Albert, December 23, 1888 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>75</sup> Chronicle of St. Laurent de Grandin, 1888.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 1887.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 1886.

<sup>78</sup> Petition of the half-breeds of Lesser Slave Lake to the Department of the Interior, July 4, 1911 (D.I.F.).

the years following the [First] Great War. At that time, a movement was started, supported by the Great War Veterans' Association, in which there figured a certain number of métis who took advantage of the special rights they had earned on the battlefields in order to draw the government's attention to the fraudulent activities which had victimized them, and to ask for strict application of the penalties provided by law against their despoilers.<sup>79</sup> This calls to mind the attitude of the American negroes during the latter years of the war, who, by reason of the services they had rendered, protested against the discriminatory legal framework of which they were the object in the Southern States.<sup>80</sup> But the initiative was taken by the métis at a date too distant from the events, encountered too powerful interests, and, moreover, lacked that general import which would have been necessary to its success.

It was indeed the missionaries alone who made any serious attempt at coming to the assistance of the métis group, or at rescuing them from their steady downfall. Unfortunately this attempt too ended in a failure, the exact responsibility for which it is difficult to establish. The project was only the follow-up to a plan already suggested by Mgr. Taché for the establishment of a Reserve on behalf of the métis. D. H. Macdowall, M.P. [for Saskatchewan], had taken up the idea again in 1890 when the métis expressed a desire to have those children born before 1885 participate in the distribution of scrips.<sup>81</sup> When the question had been submitted to the métis at St. Laurent it had not obtained their support. Despite the distinction pointed out by the Member of Parliament between the métis who were capable of making a place for themselves in White society, and those who were too primitive to do without official assistance,<sup>82</sup> the assembly which met to consider his proposals had accused him of wanting to "confound the métis with the Reserve Indians", and rejected the solution that he advanced.<sup>83</sup>

Several years later, however, the spectacle of the métis' growing misery and the prospect of an imminent interruption of their recent activities led Father Thérien and Father Lacombe to bring the proposal up again in an attempt to interest the Government.<sup>84</sup> The missionaries by no means proposed applying to the métis the same legal and social framework as to the Indians, but rather preparing them gradually for the sedentary life of a farmer by providing them with the necessary agricultural equipment and the practical advice which would be indispensable to their education. Once the adaptation had been achieved, the métis would then have only to work their lands, of which they themselves would be holders with the same status as the White settlers.<sup>85</sup> Father Thérien wrote to

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<sup>79</sup> Calhoun, Edmonton, July 12, 1922 (D.I.F.). *The Morning Leader*, (Regina), August 23, 1921. *Saturday Night*, (Toronto), September 3, 1921 (see above, p. 1215, n. 76.).

<sup>80</sup> A. Siegfried, *Les Etats-Unis d'aujourd'hui*. 1931, pp. 126 *et seq.*

<sup>81</sup> D. H. Macdowall to Sir John Macdonald, April 12, 1890 (Macdonald Papers, Misc., 1890-1, portfolios 7-8, pp. 179 *et seq.*)

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, Ottawa, April 12, 1890.

<sup>83</sup> *Chronicle of St. Laurent de Grandin*, 1890.

<sup>84</sup> Thérien, *Histoire de la paroisse de Saint-Paul des Métis*.

<sup>85</sup> Thérien to the Hon. Clifford Sifton, February, 1, 1901 (D.I.F.). S. Maber's report about his visit to Saint-Paul des Métis, Ottawa, January 22, 1909 (D.I.F.).

the Hon. Clifford Sifton that this would be the only means of removing them from the uncertain existence they were leading, and away from the infectious influences of vice and demoralization which, were there no prompt remedy, would very soon become a danger of extreme gravity to public order.<sup>86</sup>

The whole scheme was placed under the patronage of the prelates of St. Boniface, St. Albert and Prince Albert, as well as Father Lacombe and Father Thérien, and two laymen, the Hon. Aldric Ouimet and the Hon. Raoul Dandurand. The Government agreed to lease to the "syndicate" so constituted a land tract of four townships near the Saddle Lake Indian Reserve for a period of 99 years.<sup>87</sup> The new Reserve was given the name of St. Paul des Métis, after the mission of St. Paul des Cree, which had formerly been founded by Father Lacombe with a view to introducing the Indians to agricultural work. In July 1896, a proclamation that was prepared under the care of Father Lacombe announced its offering to the métis of Manitoba and the North-West Territories. It promised the construction of a church and a technical school and the allocation of a certain number of livestock and an 80-acre piece of land to each family.<sup>88</sup>

The enterprise presupposed amounts of capital which its promoters did not possess. The Liberal Government of Sir Wilfrid Laurier had little confidence in the "redemption of the métis", and agreed to subscribe an initial deposit of only \$2,000. It refused to become associated with the expenditures that would be required to fulfil the somewhat imprudent promises of Father Lacombe, or to grant the annual subsidy asked by the missionaries for the establishment of a technical and a boarding school charged with the education, maintenance and feeding of the children.<sup>89</sup> Thus, the first years were difficult. From August onward, some 30 families came in answer to the call of Father Lacombe from diverse points: Battleford, St. Albert, Maple Creek, Swift Current, and elsewhere. They received the 80-acre land plots provided for in the missionaries' proclamation, but no livestock or agricultural equipment. Father Thérien, who was in charge of the Reserve, increased his efforts to prevent immediate desertion by the newcomers and the consequent breakdown of his enterprise. The presence of a few animals which métis in better circumstances had brought with them and the possibility of extracting some food resources from hunting and fishing, permitted the small colony to get by the first year successfully, and to await the return of spring to begin the first work of clearing.<sup>90</sup> In 1897, the Reserve counted some fifty families. Thus, the missionaries could carry out satisfactory seeding on the land they had reserved, following it up with more developed undertakings which made possible the creation of a farm of some significance.<sup>91</sup> The métis began

<sup>86</sup> Thérien to the Hon. Clifford Sifton, February 1, 1901 (D.I.F.).

<sup>87</sup> Order-in-Council, December 25, 1895, amended by Orders-in-Council July 4 and August 11, 1896 (D.I.F.). Lacombe to the Department of the Interior, January 2, 1897 (D.I.F.). Thérien, *Histoire de la paroisse de Saint-Paul des Métis*.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Order-in-Council, December 25, 1895 etc., Thérien to the Hon. Clifford Sifton, February 1, 1901 (D.I.F.).

<sup>90</sup> Thérien, *Histoire de la paroisse de Saint-Paul des Métis*.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

cultivating their fields and raising livestock in spite of the small number of agricultural implements at their disposal.<sup>92</sup> At the same time, a school was established in order to give the children the education which their new existence demanded. But the first experiment was a failure because of the distance between families, the poverty of many of them, the impossibility of clothing the children decently where they were, and the small importance which families attached to education of the children. Because of lack of money, the missionaries had to limit themselves to opening an elementary school and a day school. Under the direction of the Grey Nuns, a boarding school modeled after the Indian Schools was established in 1899 to undertake the entire maintenance of the children.<sup>93</sup> In order to carry out this heavy task, with which the Government refused to associate itself financially, the missionaries found it necessary to call upon the generosity of the Catholic population, organize collections both on the Reserve and in the Province of Quebec, ask for free labour from the métis, and make levies on the profits of the farm which they had organized.<sup>94</sup> On several occasions, their project appeared to be on the verge of cessation because of the insufficiency of their resources.<sup>95</sup> If absolutely necessary, the farm could supply enough food for the children. It was more difficult to procure clothing for them, and the problem was increasingly complex as the pupils became more numerous.<sup>96</sup> The never-ending necessity of making appeals to private charity—as much for the acquisition of agricultural supplies as for the education of the children—was one of the principal obstacles to the realization of the programme which Father Lacombe had conceived.

It might have been possible to remedy the situation by making comprehensive improvements on the Reserve and by intelligent use of the profits which that would have assured. Unfortunately, the métis did not put enough effort into their work to show even a shade of intensified productivity. On the lands which had been allotted to them they devoted themselves honestly to cultivation and stock-raising, but without surpassing the level of the first years except on rare occasions. Above all, their numbers did not increase.<sup>97</sup> Many refused to penetrate further into the Reserve, out of spite for being granted only the use, and not the property rights, of land which would still belong to the Federal Government.<sup>98</sup> Many also succumbed to the discouragement brought about by the absence of promises which had at first been made, and cringed before the prospect of clearing a piece of land without animals or agricultural implements.<sup>99</sup>

Under such conditions, it would have been delusive to expect that the people would place the entire area of the Reserve in operation, that they would cover it

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<sup>92</sup> Ruttan to the Department of the Interior, January 19, 1899 (D.I.F.).

<sup>93</sup> Thérien to Clifford Sifton, February 1, 1901 (D.I.F.).

<sup>94</sup> Thérien, *Histoire de la paroissé de Saint-Paul des Métis*.

<sup>95</sup> Thérien to Clifford Sifton, February 1, 1901. Mgr. Grandin's Journal, July 11, 1898. (Arch. Arch. Edmonton.).

<sup>96</sup> Thérien, *Histoire de la paroissé de Saint-Paul des Métis*.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.* and Order-in-Council, December 25, 1895, amended by Orders-in-Council, July 4 and August 11, 1896.

<sup>99</sup> Thérien, *Histoire de la paroissé de Saint-Paul des Métis*.

with prosperous and well-kept farms, and that they would accomplish a feat of colonization comparable to that which the Whites were pursuing on the Western plains. Such transformations would have presupposed an influx of families that did not occur, an enthusiasm for agricultural labour that would not come about, material means that the promoters of the enterprise were not in a position to furnish, and finally, a state of mind that could not be born except in the children, and on condition that they be taken away from the influence of their families and educated from a very early age in the "school" of White society. The farms which the métis had organized assured a comfortable life to their occupants which contrasted sharply with the general poverty of their brothers. Some of them even had a sizable herd of livestock. For all that, the Reserve still contained vast uncultivated spaces which it could not be hoped would soon be exploited by new settlers, and the farmers themselves were too unambitious and too badly equipped to give their operations the scope that was indispensable to any rectification of the situation. Even while recognizing that the families with land plots had erected "solid, attractive houses", Inspectors Maber and Bannerman concluded in 1909 that Father Lacombe's settlement project had remained "stationary", and that a métis population could not be counted upon to assure its realization.<sup>100</sup>

Then, in order to escape from the financial difficulties which were paralyzing their endeavours and condemning them to failure, the missionaries thought of introducing within the confines of the Reserve a more energetic group of French-Canadians, to whom would fall the task of settlement which the métis had not been able to carry out. In 1905, a fire which destroyed the school that had been built so laboriously added much to their difficulties and sealed their decision.<sup>101</sup> In 1910, after having skilfully gotten around the métis and won the approval of the Government, the missionaries opened the Reserve to a significant contingent of French-Canadians.<sup>102</sup>

In itself, this event did not constitute a new spoliation of the métis families. The latter, in fact, received full property rights on the plots they were cultivating, since the lands of the Reserve were henceforth placed under the homestead legislation. Besides, they were permitted to acquire an additional homestead outside of the settlement on condition that they satisfied the obligations which occupation carried with it.<sup>103</sup> But they could also sell the plot they were occupying on the Reserve.<sup>104</sup> The confusion which followed the arrival of the French-Canadians, the little sympathy which the latter gave them, and the feeling of isolation which they felt, quickly discouraged them and induced them to abandon their lands. Everywhere, as soon as sedentary settlement had taken root, it pushed back the métis, and, to the advantage of the Whites, shut out the coloured race and the somewhat archaic economy which it still largely symbolized. Father

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<sup>100</sup> Report, January 22, 1909 (D.I.F.).

<sup>101</sup> Thérien, *Histoire de la paroissé de Saint-Paul des Métis*.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*



Lacombe's experiment left the métis a prey to suspicion and resentment against the missionaries; they are accused even today of having duped the métis in order to serve the interests of the French-Canadians. From that time forward, the decadence of the group continued without interruption, being slowed up only momentarily and locally by the experiment which had just been carried out. It was affecting even those métis who had acquired a certain honest affluence on the Reserve, and who, lost among the Whites and too much exposed to temptations, would waste the fruits of their labours in vain expenditures, or else yield to their predilections for liquor that were so deadly for the métis, and which no amount of supervision could henceforth moderate. Painfully affected by the loss of pastures where their animals moved around freely, and deprived of those possibilities of rather primitive stock-raising which they preferred to land cultivation, they soon had to submit to the limitations of their exchequer. Financial difficulties were as burdensome in Alberta as in Manitoba, and in many cases they were sufficient to reduce the métis to destitution.

A few families, however, escaped the general decadence of the Western group. Either because they had come more directly under the influence of the missionaries, or because they had rapidly become assimilated to the concepts and methods of the Whites through a natural propensity within themselves, they were soon able to create for themselves a place in White society which corresponded to their capacity for adaptation. Certain métis distinguished themselves by their aptitude for agricultural work, and others by their commercial abilities, which they often exercised to the disadvantage of their own brothers.<sup>105</sup> Contact with the Whites, by bringing to the fore personalities susceptible of conforming to White concepts of life, carried out the work of natural selection in the West similar to that which had occurred in the Red River colony. But this selection acted on but a small proportion of individuals in the North-West Territories who appear in present day society as so many isolated islands lost among a métis majority which is incapable of resisting general decadence. This was not so true in Manitoba where this selection applied on a broader scale because of the circumstances which had dominated the long period of maturity. This fundamental opposition, which reflects the past of the two groups we have pointed out, is still found today engraved in the economic and social framework of the métis societies of the Red River and the former North-West Territories.

MARCEL GIRAUD

<sup>105</sup> Thérien, *Histoire de la paroissé de Saint-Paul des Métis*. Codex of the Lake St. Anne Mission, 1896.

## “Listening In” on the Prairies

QUITE early in the twenties reports and rumours were floating around Regina. There was something in the air—or should we say the “ether”? It was reported, for instance, that a young man named Shaddick had “got” Denver on a telephone receiver attached to a contraption called a radio—something composed of coils, condensers, a vacuum tube, and what-have-you.

What was a radio? How had he got Denver and why?

Apparently it had been going on in the States for some time. The Marconi transmitters were not only sending their dot-dash signals to ship captains, business men, and other official and private persons, but they were sending actual voices over the air for anybody and everybody to listen to. Broadcasting stations were already projected for Winnipeg and Calgary: Burford Hooke was going to put one in at the *Morning Leader*.

With Calgary and Winnipeg on the air we decided that reception was going to be quite a simple matter: Winnipeg was not much more than half as far as Denver. But it didn’t work out that way. After we had bought an antenna kit and put up a long high aerial, we secured a plan for building an Armstrong regenerative set (or some other kind) along with the necessary parts, wires, and “A” and “B” batteries. We borrowed the odd soldering iron and other tools; or, maybe, we just invested in one of the factory made sets which were, by now, pouring off the assembly lines. Then we tuned in at the scheduled time for Winnipeg broadcasts and always, as far as I can remember, failed to get Winnipeg. We got, instead, stations in the south and west; directly eastward the line was apparently blocked.

To the south, the south-east, and the south-west, sounds came easily from a thousand miles or more. A prime favourite was the “Kansas City Night Hawks.” They were just a bunch of amateurs, I believe, but they soon decided that broadcasting was an expensive sport and it wouldn’t hurt to raise some revenue. So they invited their listeners to join the Night Hawks Club and, incidentally, to pay the entrance fee of one dollar. This insignificant sum would ensure the unsurpassable delight of hearing one’s name over the air. The clang of a cowbell followed the announcement and indicated that the initiation ceremony was completed—you had become a duly elected member of the club and had paid your entrance fee.

A thrill, popular with many of the early listeners, came from tuning in on many stations and boasting about it. “Radio Golf” was a contest to secure the longest aggregate distance in one night. One listened with tense anxiety for the call letters of the station then “swish” went the radio dials in search of a kind of bird whistle telling that the carrier wave of another station was on your hook. The stations must all be listed, the distances calculated and added, and the competitor showing the highest total would be declared the “winnah.”

The opening of CKCK Regina on July 29, 1922, ushered in a large-scale distribution of the crystal set. With a few feet of wire, a cardboard cylinder, a galena

crystal, a switch, some solder, terminal studs, etc., a workable crystal set could be produced by the amateur for about 67 cents; but the headphones, to listen in with, cost several times this amount. The powerful local station also multiplied the use of loud speakers so that the whole family could hear and, as the means of amplification were extended, the neighbours were also brought into the concert zone, whether they liked it or not. (Usually—if not, indeed, always—they did *not*.)

The introduction of local talent (real and alleged) added a new interest. One knew the artists; also some of their favourite stories—especially the one about the country curate with a weakness for his tea, and other recitations of the "penny reading" type. The local vocalists and other musicians were often really good. The Ding Dong Bell Orchestra came back again and again. We had the more serious side too: religious services were on the air soon after the start of broadcasting.

Phonograph records, made by a now obsolete system of recording, filled the vacant interludes. The announcer often found it necessary to improve the entertainment content of these records by his commentary. Some of these comments were evidently intended to be serious but sometimes they proved to be much more amusing than the witty sallies placed by their authors in the humorous category. One Regina announcer, evidently unversed in the accents of the French tongue, would, nevertheless, insist on reading the titles written in that language. One of his favourite records was called "Les cloches de St. Malo." This title came over the air to you as "Less clothes dee Saint May low."

Progress was rapid and constant. The Armstrong regenerative circuit gave place to the neutrodyne, superhetrodyne and others. Stations became more powerful and reception by headphones was generally discontinued, except in sanatoria and other places where some persons in the room might want to hear and others did not. Improvements in receiving sets was so rapid that sets which sold like hot-cakes at prices around a hundred dollars might not bring ten dollars a year later. Radio Golf disappeared; radio parties with entertainment in mind were coming into favour.

With the installation of chain hook-ups the programmes became more stabilized; the variety of the evening's entertainment could also be increased as new and powerful stations went on the air. A recording made at this time, purporting to be impressions gained during a quiet evening over the radio, paints a rather extravagant and colourful illustration of what might be expected during the quiet evening in question. The disc pictures a radio giving utterance to the closing lines of a hymn tune as the set warms up. Continuing his search with better entertainment in view, the dial twister takes you to the climax of a prize fight . . . "Apparently Loop McLoop had the better of the last round. His opponent's face now resembles a raw beef steak well saturated with ripe tomatoes. His other tooth is out; both his eyes are closed and he is now hitting his opponent from memory." After listening for a few moments to the voice of the champeen himself, the twisting of the dials brought in the recipe for a cake and a host of other items in

rapid succession. The accent of the evening's entertainment was definitely on variety.

The remarks of your fellow-listeners often became quite caustic. After the dramatic soprano from San Francisco had shrilled forth her operatic aria with deafening effect, somebody might remark that he had heard there had been quite a lot of murders in California lately; then the gentleman across the room, as he leaned forward to flick the ash from his cigarette, would interject, "I don't think there have been quite enough though!"

The work of experienced script writers, of trained radio actors, and of other orators versed in the techniques leading to effective results, have added considerably to the quality of radio programmes of today: the extensive use of tape recording has also made it possible to revise and improve a broadcast and to choose the psychological moment for putting it on the air. But some of us who listen in today can often find in current programmes the atmosphere of the middle twenties. Now, as then, there still seems to be a plot to cut up our day into quarter-hour cubes and this principle is even extended to the chopping up of some of the cubes so that they can be flavoured with a choice sprinkling of "commercial"; these commercials are sometimes clever, but more often incongruous.

The generally accepted dogma that tastes differ and there is no accounting for them, presents a perpetual problem to the C.B.C. Although the majority vote of its audiences seems to favour the so-little-for-the-mind type of programme, the minorities are by no means neglected and, as the equipment used for sound recording and transmission today is many jumps ahead of that of twenty years ago, we can enjoy more than ever our radio visits to Carnegie Hall, to the Metropolitan Opera and to other palaces of aesthetic delights, and bring away memories more vivid and inspiring than those available to the radio fan of days gone by.

MONTAGU CLEMENTS

DATES OF ESTABLISHMENT OF RADIO STATIONS IN SASKATCHEWAN

CKCK (Regina).....	1922
CFQC (Saskatoon).....	1923
CHAB (Moose Jaw).....	1923 (as 10AB)
CKRM (Regina).....	1926
CJGX (Yorkton).....	1927
CKBI (Prince Albert).....	1933
CBK (Watrous).....	1939
CJNB (North Battleford).....	1946
CKOM (Saskatoon).....	1951
CFRG (Gravelbourg).....	1952
CFNS (Saskatoon).....	1952

## Place Names in Spy Hill Municipality

Mr. Gilbert Johnson of Marchwell, a frequent contributor of valuable historical articles to the weekly press of his district and to *Saskatchewan History*, has compiled the following information on place names in the Rural Municipality of Spy Hill, No. 152. Mr. Johnson has attempted, wherever possible, to identify the person responsible for suggesting the name, to describe its significance or meaning (i.e., what its originator had in mind in suggesting it), and to provide the date of its adoption. Place name research along these lines is a most significant contribution to social history. We invite any reader of this magazine to submit material of this type for publication. The dates appearing in the list are the dates of establishment of the school district (S.D.), or post office (P.O.).

*The Editor*

SPY HILL (P.O., 1888; S.D. No. 170, 1890).

Named from Spy Hill, a prominent hill a mile east of the present village. Before the survey, this hill is said to have been called Wolverine Hill or Butte à Carcajar, by the Indians and half breeds. (See article by Bruce Peel in *Saskatchewan History*, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 5).

LITTLE CUT ARM (S.D. No. 203, 1891).

Named by James Brown and Peter Bruce, members of the first school board because the Little Cut Arm Creek runs through the district. Cut Arm Creek is said to have been known to the Indians as Broken Arm Creek, because there an Indian is said to have broken an arm in a fall from his pony. (Bruce Peel, *Saskatchewan History*, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 5).

HAZELCLIFFE (P.O., 1892; S.D. No. 285, 1893).

Name suggested by Mr. Wm. Delmage, the first post master, because of the abundance of hazel nuts growing on the banks of the Little Cut Arm Creek near which his farm was situated.

HAMONA (S.D. No. 451, 1897; P.O., 1904).

Named after the Harmony Industrial Association, a co-operative colony in which the original school was situated. (See article by Gilbert Johnson in *Saskatchewan History*, Vol. IV., No. 2, p. 11).

DONGOLA (P.O., 1888; S.D. No. 603, 1901).

Named by Thomas Douglas, the first and only postmaster. It seems highly probable that the Post Office was named after Dongola in the Sudan. Dongola figured prominently in news of British military operations in Egypt in 1884-85, being used as the base of the British troops in their advance on Khartoum.

TANTALLON (P.O., 1897; S.D. No. 949, 1904).

Named after Tantallon Castle in Scotland, the ancestral seat of the Angus branch of the Douglas family. The first post office was kept on the farm of Senator James M. Douglas, some three miles east of the present village of Tantallon. A son of the Senator, Robert M. Douglas, was the first postmaster.

KINGSLYN (S.D. No. 1851, 1907).

The name Lynn was suggested by Thomas Common after his mother's birth-place at the foot of the Cheviot Hills in Northumberland. As there was another

Lynn in the province, the name Kingslyn was suggested by the Department of Education, and was accepted. Mr. Common was a member of the first school board.

BAVELAW (S.D. No. 747, 1902, P.O., 1904).

Named by a Mr. Betts who was a pioneer of the district and had previously lived in New Zealand. Said to have been named after a place in New Zealand. If so, that name must have been taken from Bavelaw Castle or Bavelaw Burn south of Edinburgh, Scotland.

VALLAR (S.D. No. 1020, 1904).

From the Icelandic word "Vollur," a level green sward. The original school board were all Icelandic.

DEER HORN (S.D. No. 3807, 1916).

Name suggested by R. J. Neubauer, one of the original trustees, because the school is situated near the Deer Horn Creek.

WELBY (S.D. No. 1710, 1907; P.O., 1909).

School District was established under the name Pleasant Plains. Name changed to Welby in 1909. Station said to have been named after a Lord Welby, said to have been a director of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway.

WILLOW VALE (S.D. No. 4165, 1919).

Name suggested by George F. Ballard, one of the original school board, because the school is situated between two hills and is surrounded with willows.

GILBERT JOHNSON

RECOLLECTIONS AND REMINISCENCES—By Mrs. D. D. Irwin

## Behind the Footlights

WHEN people go to the movies in Indian Head and remark on the fine building they are in, they are usually not aware of the history leading up to its present use.

The Opera House Block, of which the theatre is a part, was designed and built by the writer's father, Arthur James Osment, a contractor who was one of the first group of settlers in Indian Head. Mr. Osment was a Londoner who had migrated to Canada in the early seventies; in 1882 he left Ontario for the West, where he had undertaken to construct the buildings for the famous Bell Farm at Indian Head. A well trained builder himself, he always insisted that those working for him should not skimp on the materials used in any project.



[Osment Block, Indian Head, showing Opera House.

The Opera House Block was one of father's later construction efforts, being built in 1904. The brick for this building was made in the Qu'Appelle Valley at the foot of Lake Katepwa. Mr. Osment, who made the first brick used in Indian Head, had sold the machinery for brick making to Mr. Clem Peltier, and the bricks for this block were hauled in wagons by teams of horses 12 miles to its destination. It must have been a tremendous undertaking when one considers that the entire building (theatre 50 feet by 125 feet, and three stores each 25 feet by 50 feet) has a thickness of four bricks on all walls, including the walls between each of the stores and suites above. The road up out of the valley was not the gradual slope it is today. Even a horse pulling a buggy had to keep to a walk and stop and rest half way up the hill. And what a job it must have been when wet weather made the hill a quagmire!

The large stones for the foundation were gathered from the prairie south and west of town, and the sand for the cement was procured from a farm to the south-east. Some of the lime was made in the locality (on the hill going to Lebret and also from down the Valley), and the remainder was brought in by rail. Water was procured from a well, equipped with a windmill, which had been dug for Mr. Osment near the Opera House.

The lobby of the Opera House was in the centre front and on each side was a small store which extended as far as the lobby. Once inside you went through swinging doors to the right and left and then down a gentle slope to a beautifully polished dance floor 48 feet by 48 feet, with the stage beyond. When an opera was being presented the floor would be covered with chairs for the occasion.

This was truly an opera house, with travelling opera companies stopping here sometimes for three nights, with a different opera each night. The Harold Nelson Opera Company, in which Harold Nelson played the leading roles, performed on the opening night. Mr. Nelson along with Mr. Osment's eldest son, Walter, painted the scenery.

The two main sets included a garden scene and an interior house scene. The backdrop in the garden scene was in pastel shades with a fountain in the centre. The wings, three on each side, depicted large trees which gave the effect of forests beyond. The front curtain was a drop with a scene painted on it. These curtains were not on rollers but were pulled straight up or down by means of rope. To accommodate these drops the roof over the stage was much higher than the rest of the building. The flies concealed the upper reaches of this part of the stage. (Flies are strips of scenery about three feet wide which are across the top of the stage opening—one at the front and about three at intervals back from the front.) In order to manage the scenery there were two tiers of narrow galleries running around the back and each side of the stage. The front curtain was managed by someone standing on the stage just out of sight of the audience. A heavy weight on the end of a rope was all that was required to raise or lower the drop curtain. A child could manage it.

At times props were required for a play that were not in the Opera House and these items would be borrowed from our home. A seating plan was kept in a drug store where people could reserve seats when a play was advertised. When the Opera House was built there was no electricity and the lighting system for the stage consisted of lamps placed in a shallow trough along the front of the stage with shields to direct the light.

Some of the troupes carried a great deal of equipment and a large company would have many trunks of costumes as well as a lot of their own scenery and "props." In order to unload these easily, a platform was built at the back of the theatre with a door leading directly from the stage onto it. A door below at ground level made it easy to move the trunks into the dressing rooms which were under the stage. When extra dressing room space was needed for a company with very large choruses, wings not in use were set up in other parts of the large basement.

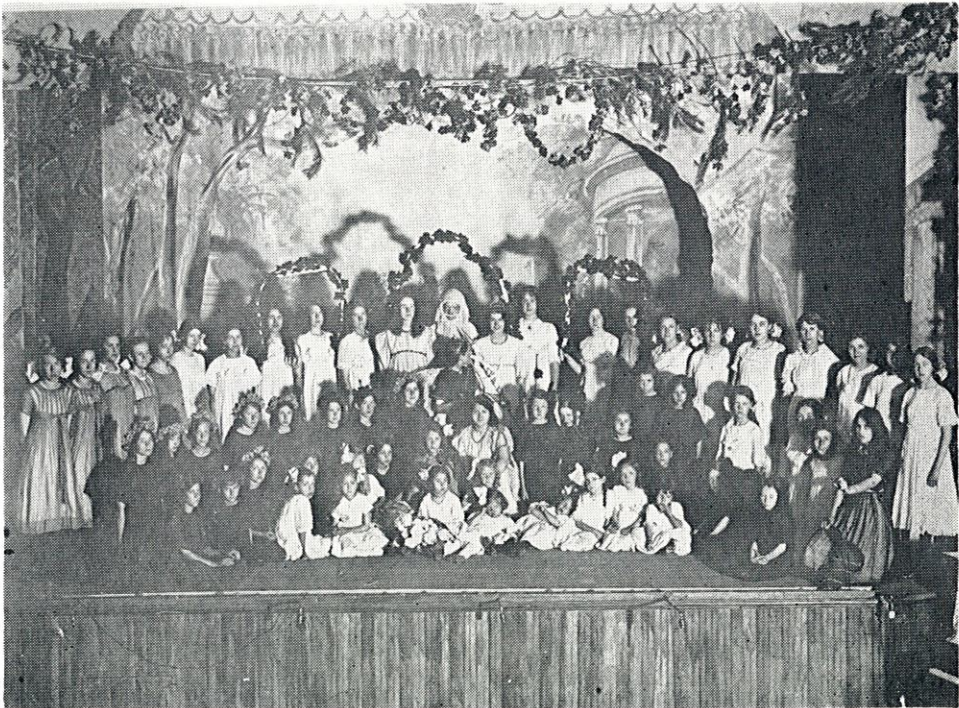
Harold Nelson's opening play, *Faust*, required a square section cut out of the centre of the stage floor, which could be moved up and down so that Mr. Nelson,



as the devil, could rise from and descend to hell. Mr. Osment had this arranged and the machinery was installed under the stage so that this square of floor could move up and down. This part of the play was certainly impressive—the stage in darkness, fire shooting up through the opening and the devil rising up and down behind a rock. This opera was staged several times in later years by Harold Nelson and Company. The machinery was removed only recently and the square is still there.

Travelling companies liked to stop over in Indian Head because of the conveniences in the opera house—wash tubs were supplied so members could wash their clothes. During the afternoons they rehearsed other plays. As a child I would sit on a front seat watching these rehearsals. Occasionally some of the chorus girls would have heated words, and I was amazed to see them smiling so brilliantly at each other at the evening performance. At one rehearsal the director asked an actress to repeat an entrance scene over and over. She must have been feeling irritated, for at last she glared at me and barked—“What are you doing here?”

Among other troupes were The Swiss Bell Ringers. For this performance the bells were arranged on a long table across the stage; at one end the white-haired father rang the two largest bells and the sons the others, which graduated in size down to a very tiny bell. The music from these bells was very sweet and soft-toned. This Swiss family also played other unusual instruments. Harry Lauder, with his crooked cane and the brr in his r's also visited us; also the Tom Marks Company which performed a play in which he was a comedian; the finest magi-



Amateur Operetta, Indian Head Opera House, 1913.

cians often performed here. There were also the Bostonians, a travelling troupe of children which gave a fine performance of singing and dancing in various operettas. Later there were the Winnipeg Kiddies (I played with them, and after a Saturday night stand some of them would come to Sunday School with me the next day). Then there were the Welsh Singers; they broke up after the sinking of the *Lusitania*, as they never felt the same after losing so many of their members.

Two of the plays I remember were *The Doll's House* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*. The latter presented an opportunity to use the jail scene. The scene depicting the escape from prison was very realistic, with the hero swimming across the water. The audience could see the waves rising and falling in the gloom of a night scene—what it couldn't see were the men in the wings holding the edge of a big carpet at each end. The way they worked this carpet it rose and fell, giving the realistic appearance of waves in a storm.

In the early days there were notices on the walls—"No Smoking or Spitting on the Floor"—and anyone inclined to be rowdy was put out. The road shows were warned not to make slighting remarks about individuals in the town nor to make coarse jokes.

The Dumbells were a popular travelling troupe after World War I, and an Operetta Company came through for a few years. About this time travelling expenses curtailed the activities of many troupes, till there were none except at exhibitions in large centres. The old-time troupes were practically a memory by the time of the first World War.

Besides operas and plays the building was equipped for other purposes. The main floor was of hardwood designed for dancing. This had a spring to it which people found easy and tireless to dance on. The folding seats were moved for the dances, one row being placed along the sides of the wall and a few rows on the slope at the entrance. The rest were stacked. The slope was entirely under a balcony, which ran along both sides and across the back. One row of seats was placed close to the railing in the side gallery and several rows in the back gallery. (At that time we spoke of gallery rather than balcony). In this gallery there were two boxes on each side of the stage.

Large balls and dances were held in the Opera House; these were splendid affairs where the men wore white gloves or carried a handkerchief so as not to soil the ladies' evening gowns. The ladies wore long white kid gloves which came past their elbows. A spectator could sit in the gallery and watch groups here and there filling out their dance programmes or a lady holding her partner's arm while crossing the highly polished floor.

Before a big ball or dance the floor was scrubbed to remove the chewing gum and dirt which accumulated at the shows. Wax was then sprinkled on until the floor was almost too slippery to stand on. Near the entrances, stairs led down to the supper room, where sumptuous lunches were supplied by the organization holding the dance.

Some of the best remembered annual dances were the Masons' (this was very exclusive and was not held every year); the hospital ball; the farmers' reunion

(later called Agriculture Dance), Masquerade Dance, and the 1st of July Dance (which was given by the management).

The first movies were brought to town occasionally and shown in the Opera House. As there was no projection room, Mr. Osment built a box-like affair in front of the gallery which was supported by it in mid-air. A gate was made through the gallery railing through which the operator stepped into the box. It was not enclosed on top and did not interfere with the view of the gallery spectators. This was used very little as there was only an occasional travelling movie show.

Later Mr. Osment turned the third store from the Opera House into a movie theatre, and this was the first one in Indian Head to be rented to a movie operator. After father's death in January, 1911, my mother and brother Howard ran the Opera House. A few years later the name was changed to "Auditorium." During World War I the Auditorium was rented to Mr. Mock, who ran the movie theatre and so it became a movie house. It was still used for operettas, shows, speeches, dances, etc. By this time the operas had become a thing of the past, and the road shows were rapidly falling off. A permanent movie machine meant the building of an operating room and Mr. Mock built one at the back of the gallery.

About this time the box social became popular. At these functions a lady's admission was a lunch box, which was decorated by the owner and sent to the platform upon arrival. At the lunch hour these boxes were auctioned to the highest bidder, who then shared the contents with the lady who had brought it. Sometimes the bidding became quite keen, particularly if it became known that a certain young man wanted a certain box. The average price was three to five dollars, but prices soared all the way to as high as thirty-five dollars for a box.

The auditorium was rented to a succession of movie operators and finally in 1938 it was sold to Mr. Baldwin, who replaced the old machines with the new type talkies. He also moved the projection room back through the wall into a room of the suite over the lobby. A law was passed that the seats in a theatre must be fastened to the floor, and so the dances were at an end, but most of the old-time annual dances had become but memories.

Mr. Williams later bought the building and changed the name to "Gary Theatre." He remodelled the interior, taking out all of the gallery and rounding the corners of the walls on each side of the stage. The good old drop front curtain, riddled with many peek holes, had been discarded some years before for curtains which drew to each side. These were noisy and sometimes didn't pull apart as they were supposed to. Mr. Williams put in new soft curtains of a silky texture.

Sometimes of an evening a group of old timers who remember "the good old days" will enthrall the newcomers with reminiscences in which the Opera House plays a very large part.

## DOCUMENTS OF WESTERN HISTORY

## Father Bruno's Narrative, "Across the Boundary": Part I.

In this issue we present the first installment of the narrative of Father Bruno Doerfler, O.S.B., describing the expedition organized in Minnesota in 1902 to investigate the possibility of establishing a Catholic colony in Western Canada. Catholic settlers from that state, many of them of German origin, had previously migrated to this country; like the majority of prairie pioneers, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, they had strong religious loyalties, and were anxious to secure an early restoration of the bonds of church connection which had been severed by settlement in the wilderness. These circumstances led a number of clergy and Catholic laymen in Minnesota to think of promoting an organized, church-centered settlement project. The agency which responded to this appeal was the Benedictine Order, represented by St. John's Abbey of Collegeville, Minnesota.

The Abbot of St. John's, the Rt. Rev. Peter Engel, O.S.B., selected as his investigating agent for this project one of his most capable monks, Father Bruno Doerfler. Father Bruno had been brought up on a farm at Richfield, Minnesota, and at this time (1902) was rector of St. John's University at Collegeville. A man of fine physical appearance, of manly and kindly mien, he was to confirm in abundant measure his superior's estimate of his ability and qualities of leadership.

The investigating party consisted of three Minnesota men in addition to Father Bruno: H. J. Haskamp of St. Cloud, Maurice Hoeschen of Freeport, and Henry Hoeschen of Melrose. From August 12th to September 4th, 1902, they travelled by train and buck-board across the prairies, and within that period succeeded in finding an area which promised success for a Catholic immigration venture. This was followed by the organization of the German American Land Co., organized by Messrs. Haskamp and Hoeschen, which acquired a large amount of land and promoted settlement in association with the Catholic Settlement Society. The area in which this project operated was called the St. Peter's Colony, comprising some fifty townships and including such centers as Cudworth, Bruno, Humboldt, Muenster, Englefeld, Annaheim, Lake Lenore, and St. Benedict. To provide the services of the Church, the members of a small priory near Wetaug, Illinois, moved as a body to Muenster, where in 1903 they established the first Benedictine monastery in Canada under the name of St. Peter's Priory.

Father Bruno's connection with this large scheme of immigration and settlement did not cease with his explorations of 1902. In 1905 he returned to the Canadian West to edit the *St. Peter's Bote*, now published in Muenster and the only Catholic newspaper in the German language in Canada. In 1906 he was selected as prior of St. Peter's Priory, and in 1911 when the priory was raised to the rank of an abbey he became the first abbot, holding office until his death in 1919.

Father Bruno's narrative of the momentous expedition of 1902 appeared in serial form in *The Record*, official publication of St. John's University, from January 1903 to December 1904 (Vol. XVI, No. 1 to Vol. XVII, No. 10). Entitled "Across the Boundary", it recounts in vivid form and interesting detail the incidents of the journey. For readers of *Saskatchewan History* we have extracted those portions which relate to the travellers' experiences in Saskatchewan. Further detail of the history of St. Peter's Colony may be found in *Fifty Golden Years, 1903-1953*, by the Very Rev. Peter Windschiegel, O.S.B. (Muenster, 1953).

*The Editor*

### TO WINNIPEG

FOR some time a movement had been on foot to send a delegation of Stearns County people to Western Canada for the purpose of selecting a suitable location for a Catholic colony. As the projectors of the undertaking were well aware of the fact that a Catholic colony without priests was doomed to be a failure, they had applied to the superiors of St. John's for assurance that the Order of St. Benedict would undertake the pastoration of the proposed new settlements. Hence the writer was selected as a representative of the Order to accompany the delegation and report after his return upon the prospects for success of the venture.

The party was to consist of Messrs. H. J. Haskamp of St. Cloud, Maurice Hoeschen of Freeport, Minn., Henry Hoeschen of Melrose, Minn., and myself,

all alumni of St. John's. Mr. F. J. Lange, president of the Catholic Settlement Society of St. Paul, had desired to be with the party, but was prevented by urgent business. The date of departure had been fixed for August 12, 1902. By leaving on the westbound evening train of the Great Northern R.R., we would be enabled to arrive at Winnipeg the following afternoon. My companions had signified their intention of leaving by the west-bound flyer about noon of the 12th and waiting for me at Grand Forks the following morning in order to enjoy a good night's rest in a hotel before launching out into the wilds of the Canadian West.

...

Shortly before 2 P.M. [August 13th] we finally landed at the Canadian Pacific station in Winnipeg. Provided with a letter of introduction to Mr. Thomas Gelley, one of the officials in the Government Immigration Office, we repaired at once to the latter institution. We found in Mr. Gelley a very pleasant gentleman, who did all in his power to assist us in realizing our object. Having been informed that we intended to visit the northern Alberta District, as we had heard much about the fertility of the soil and the favorable climate of that region, Mr. Gelley advised us to visit that district by all means in order to disillusion ourselves. He knew that we should be disappointed in our expectations regarding that district and told us that the country east of Rosthern in Saskatchewan was precisely what would suit for our purpose. One of the other gentlemen in the office advised us to inspect the country south of Whitewood in the district of Assiniboia which, as he told us, offered unusual facilities for colonization purposes.

Finally it was decided that we should take the Canadian Pacific to Whitewood, drive into the recommended district and, after inspecting it, continue our trip via the Canadian Pacific to Calgary in southern Alberta, thence take the Calgary and Edmonton Branch for various points in northern Alberta, return as far as Regina and then travel northward via the Prince Albert Branch to Rosthern. Mr. Gelley promised to furnish us one of the best guides at the disposal of the office free of charge and, if his own duties permitted, to meet us at Regina in order to accompany us to the Rosthern District.

We were then ushered into the private office of the Commissioner of Immigration and introduced to Mr. J. Obed Smith, the Commissioner. Mr. Smith, in whom we found a very pleasant gentleman, heartily approved of our plans and expressed best wishes for our success.

These matters being arranged, we took a walk into the city to procure various articles of equipment for our long journey. As our team was to leave at 6.05 P.M. that evening, and as we intended to dine before our departure, we found that but little time could be spared for sight-seeing.

At half-past five o'clock we returned to the Immigration Office where Mr. Gelley introduced us to Mr. Leon Roy, our guide, and to Mr. Leon Pitet, a gentleman from French Switzerland, who had come to Canada with a view of selecting a suitable location for a colony of his countrymen who desired to devote themselves to the production of Swiss cheese. We found our new companions to be very pleasant gentlemen with whom it was a real pleasure to travel. It was,

however, a matter of regret that Mr. Pitet was unable to handle the English language. We were, therefore, very fortunate to have in Mr. Roy an able interpreter.

Through the kind offer of Mr. Gelley we had obtained special favors in the matter of transportation from the railway officials. At 6.05 P.M. we bid that gentleman good bye with sincere thanks for the kindness he had shown us. A moment later we found ourselves speeding on towards the setting sun.

#### FROM WINNIPEG TO WHITEWOOD

As the train receded from Winnipeg on the evening of August 13, we had a fine view of the beautiful city lying in the plain south-east of us. Towards the south could be seen the fringe of woods along the Assiniboine river which empties its muddy waters into the Red river within the limits of the city. We were surrounded by splendid fields of golden grain, interspersed by neat farm-houses set within groves of shade trees or surrounded by orchards of hardy fruit trees. Soon, however, these pleasant visions again faded away. Once more the eye met only a low, flat, monotonous plain interrupted rarely by a shack or a herd of grazing cattle.

Since the outside view was not very interesting we began to survey the car and its occupants. Here it may be of interest to note that every passenger train, at least in Western Canada, carries passengers of two classes namely "First Class" passengers and "Tourists". The first class cars are furnished similarly to the ordinary day coaches in the United States. At one end of the car a small but comfortable room is set apart as a smoking room where the votary of the poisonous weed may quietly enjoy the consolation of his pipe. Cigars are much less used in Canada than in the States. The English custom of smoking a pipe in public is indulged in even by the higher circles. First class passengers have the privilege of making use of the sleeping car by paying \$3.00 extra per night for a berth and of taking meals in the dining car at 75 cts. each.

The tourist cars are comfortably arranged though much less elegant than first class cars. At one end of the car a small room contains a stove where passengers may prepare tea and warm such victuals as they have brought with them. At night they may occupy a berth in the tourist sleeping car by paying \$1.50 extra, but they are expected to furnish their own bedding. Of course, they are not permitted to enter the first class cars.

After a tour of inspection through the tourist cars we returned to our seats and bestowed some of our attention upon our fellow passengers. The majority of first class passengers were ladies and children. Apparently the men were too busy to travel during the harvest season, or they preferred to avail themselves of the cheaper tourist rates unless accompanied by ladies or children. Nearly all the passengers observed a dignified silence, quite a contrast to what one notices on trains in the States. Even friends, when conversing, talked in a low tone of voice. Two groups alone formed an exception. One was composed of a couple of elderly ladies and a younger one, probably a niece of theirs, who were constantly talking and giggling so that they soon attracted the attention of all their neigh-

bors, who seemed little edified by such undignified conduct. The party in question had undoubtedly just come from the States and was not yet accustomed to Canadian railway etiquette. The other group mentioned consisted of four Canadian volunteers who were just returning from South Africa. It was but natural that their joy at nearing home should make them more lively than their fellow passengers. The only other passenger who attracted special attention was a young priest who sat on the reversed seat at the front end of the car, busily engaged in saying his office. He was clad in the long *soutane*, or cassock, which is worn everywhere by the Catholic clergy of Western Canada.

During our inspection the train had made considerable headway and our guide, Mr. Roy, now drew our attention to the fact that we were passing through a better agricultural country. It was, as he explained, the beginning of the famous Portage la Prairie district which is said to contain the choicest lands in all Manitoba. The nearer we came to Portage la Prairie, a town of 4000 inhabitants, which we reached as the sombre shades of night began to fall upon the scene, the more evident the fertility of the soil became. Mr. Roy told us that this neighborhood had been settled for forty years or more, and that these were, even now, considered the richest in the province being valued as high as \$40 or \$50 per acre. The Portage Plains are a level prairie lying along the Assiniboine river south of Lake Manitoba, about seventy feet above the Red river at Winnipeg and are, therefore, much better drained than the country along the latter river, though, in exceptionally wet years they undoubtedly suffer from over-abundance of moisture as the lay of the land prevents a rapid draining away of the surface water. Besides raising immense crops of grain, especially wheat, the farmers of this district have large stock and dairy interests supplying most of the stock to the new settlers now pouring into the territories of the West.

West of Portage darkness prevented us from viewing the continuation of the Portage Plains. The ancient bed of Lake Agassiz now ascends more steeply with an average slope of about 4 ft. per mile till Brandon is reached, which lies on the western shore of the ancient lake, 134 miles by rail west of Winnipeg and 1176 ft. above sea level.

As the priest whom I had previously noticed had now finished the recitation of his office, I introduced myself to him and found him to be a most amiable gentleman. He had come from France but three weeks before and was now on his way to St. Albert, the episcopal see of Alberta, whither he had been called as professor in the diocesan high school. As his knowledge of English was even more limited than my knowledge of French, we carried on conversation with some difficulty, but, with the help of Latin which he spoke with a very marked French accent, we managed to get along very nicely. He confessed that he was not very favorably impressed by the forwardness exhibited by the American ladies in the car and expressed his hope that these were an exception rather than a rule.

At 11 P.M. our train reached Brandon, a town of over 5000 inhabitants and division point of the C. P. Ry. Here a stop of 10 minutes was made to give passengers an opportunity for taking a lunch at the railway eating house. At

10.10 P.M. our train again sped westward. No, this is not a mistake. We actually left the town 50 minutes by the clock before our arrival, for the reason that time is here changed. From Brandon westward Mountain Time is used which is one hour slower than Central Time. In the neighborhood of Kirkella we crossed the western boundary of Manitoba at a point 192 miles due west of Winnipeg, and now found ourselves in the District of Assiniboia of the North-west Territories.

Several of my companions had retired to the sleeper and I now tried to get what little sleep could be had in the crowded coach. At 3.00 A.M. we left the train after making a distance of 250 miles in ten hours, which is considered fast speed on the C.P. Ry.

Whitewood, Assiniboia, is a village of about 400 inhabitants and boasts of two hotels. We called at the one nearest the station but although the door was unlocked all our knocking failed to bring mine host to the scene. Hence we decided to call at the other hotel which bears the poetical name "Woodbine". As we intended to begin a wagon tour of several days from this point in the morning to explore the Golden Plain to the south and southwest for colonization purposes, we thought it prudent to retire to a room as soon as possible. Soon I fell into a refreshing sleep which lasted until a loud knock at the door aroused me from dream-land. It was Mr. Haskamp, who reminded me that it was time to be "up and doing".

#### THE GOLDEN PLAIN

The fourteenth of August promised to be a magnificent day. The sky was clear and "Old Sol" was pouring his golden splendor upon the scene as I emerged from my room. Our friend, Mr. Roy, had already made arrangements with a liveryman to secure teams for the trip and we were to start at 9.00 A.M. Soon the breakfast bell rang and we repaired to the dining room of the "Woodbine" to refresh the inner man. The breakfast was a typical one for Western Canada. The waitress first enquired whether we desired "porridge", which is a generic name for oatmeal, cornmeal, and crushed wheat or barley, boiled in water and eaten with milk. Hence the guest is never certain which of these preparations will be brought when he "signifies his assent by saying 'aye' ". Next we were given our choice between ham and eggs, beefsteak, and one or two other kinds of meat with potatoes. This with tea or coffee and toast formed a very respectable breakfast for 25 cents. It may be mentioned here that most Canadians, like their English brethren are great tea drinkers, so that, in many localities, coffee is quite unknown and cannot be obtained even in hotels.

At the appointed time our liveryman appeared with a single and a double rig. Our friends Maurice and Henry, who are mighty Nimrods, and who had taken care to bring their shotguns along, took charge of the smaller rig, whilst the rest of the party ascended the double rig with the driver, who was to act as a guide. Soon we left the neat town of Whitewood behind us, driving in a S.S.W. direction towards the Pipestone creek. The first part of the journey was quite uninteresting. The soil is rather poor and somewhat broken. Swamps, sandy knolls, poplar groves and cultivated farms which seemed none too fertile were passed by until



we came to the Pipestone, about eight miles from Whitewood. The Pipestone valley is an immense gulch, nearly a mile wide and over 100 feet deep, washed out by the waters of some mighty river which swept down between these banks in bygone ages.

On the north bank of the valley a deserted Catholic chapel built of stone and surrounded by a small cemetery can be seen for miles. Our driver told us that it had been erected by some French counts who had acquired large estates in the vicinity and sent their sons here to keep them away from the temptations of life in their native country and to imbue them with a taste for farm life. The experiment failed, however. The young noblemen continued their extravagant way of living and, as a result, they soon found themselves bankrupt. Some of the French peasants who had accompanied them remained, and by dint of hard work and great economy they have prospered so that now they are proprietors of the farms which their former masters were obliged to abandon. As the chapel was poorly built, the priest who occasionally visits the mission is obliged to hold divine service in a private house.

Having crossed the creek, which was a stream of but little importance at the time of our visit, though it is said to grow into a large river during the spring freshets, we ascended its southern bank and found ourselves on the edge of the Golden Plain. Near the banks of the Pipestone this plain is, to a considerable extent, covered with wood. Soon, however, the country became more open and a gently rolling prairie spread out before us.

The soil of the Golden Plain is a black sandy loam, mixed with small limestone pebbles, which makes it especially adapted to wheat raising. Here and there, especially near the tops of knolls and ridges, numbers of boulders were exposed to the view, but not in such numbers as to cause a serious drawback to the tilling of the soil. Apparently the subsoil everywhere consisted of yellow clay, which is very advantageous as it holds the moisture within reach of the roots of the growing crops, whilst it is not sufficiently impervious to prevent percolation entirely, thus causing surface water to stagnate. In natural depressions of the soil, of course, water had gathered and formed so-called "potholes"—circular basins of a swampy nature, generally rather shallow. The "potholes" usually have a heavy growth of wild hay, though occasionally one was met in which the vegetation was stunted, because of the presence of some alkali.

With the progress of cultivation "potholes" disappear as the surface moisture readily sinks into the soil which has become porous by tillage, instead of running over the hardened surface of the uncultivated land until it is arrested in some natural depression. Hence it is quite probable that, within a short space of time, all land in the Golden Plain will become fit for cultivation, except the natural meadows in the bottom lands along the water courses.

*(to be continued)*

## Jubilee Local Histories

This list of local histories is a continuation of the one which appeared in the last issue of *Saskatchewan History* (Vol. VIII, pp. 113-16), prepared by Miss Christine Macdonald of the Legislative Library. Further items will be reported in this magazine as they come to the attention of the compiler.

*The Editor*

### BEECHY

[History of Beechy and Demaine]. By Jonesville Homemakers Club, 1955. Pp. 66, illus. \$1.75. Available from Jonesville Homemakers Club, Beechy.

### COLONSAY

Colonsay Memoirs, 1905-1955. By Colonsay High School, 1955. Pp. [56], illus., mimeo. \$1.50. Available from H. H. R. McNaught, Colonsay.

### CRAIK

Craik's Golden Jubilee Story. By C. E. Kennedy. Craik, Craik Agricultural Society, 1955. Pp. 28, illus. \$1.00.

### DEMAINE

See Beechy.

### GREEN HILL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Green Hill; the Story of a Prairie Community. By Lloyd L. Vallée and Grace E. Eaton. Carlyle, The authors, 1955. Pp. [125], illus. \$6.00. Available from Mrs. Grace Eaton, Carlyle.

### INSTOW

Pioneer Days in the Instow Community. By Instow School, 1955. Pp. 33, ditto. 50c. Available from Mrs. Alfred Thompson, Shaunavon.

### LOREBURN

History of Loreburn, 1905-1955. By Loreburn School, 1955. Pp. 21, illus., mimeo. 75c. Available from E. N. Harris, Principal, Loreburn School, Loreburn.

### NOKOMIS

Nokomis, the Junction Town. By Edythe Humphrey. Nokomis, Wreford Homemakers Club, 1955. Pp. 45, illus. 85c. Available from Mrs. Jack Humphrey, Wreford Homemakers Club, Nokomis.

### NORTH BATTLEFORD

Skyline; the Panoramic Pattern of a City; North Battleford's Jubilee Story. By C. Irwin McIntosh. North Battleford, Golden Jubilee Committee, 1955. Pp. 84, illus. \$1.00. Available from News Optimist, 1219 Main St., North Battleford.

## PILLER SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 391

The First Sixty Years of Piller School District No. 391, 1895-1955. By Piller School, 1955. Pp. [8], illus. 50c. Available from F. J. Stein, Piller S.D. No. 391, Neudorf.

## PRINCE ALBERT

A Record of the Early Education in Prince Albert. By W. J. S. Hooper and L. J. Fournier. Prince Albert, Golden Jubilee Committee and the Prince Albert Co-operative Association Limited, 1955. Pp. 48, illus. \$1.00. Available from W. J. S. Hooper, Prince Albert Collegiate, Prince Albert.

Cover-title: The Development of Educational Institutions in Prince Albert.

## QUILL LAKE

Quill Lake History; a Tribute to the Community and Its Builders. By Quill Lake School, 1955. Pp. 47, illus. Available from Vern Gabriel, Quill Lake, Sask.

## RENOWN

Renown; Our Story. By Renown High School, 1955. Pp. 96, illus. \$2.00. Available from Miss Shirley Munroe, Renown High School Club, Renown.

## REVENUE

Revenue Remembers, 1905-1955. By Revenue School, 1955. Pp. [47], illus., ditto. \$1.25. Available from Miss Jeanette Mitzel, Revenue High School, Revenue.

## ST. JOSEPH'S COLONY

Ripening Harvest; the Story of St. Joseph's Colony, 1905-1955. By Joseph Schneider, 1955. Pp. 44, illus. Free. Available from Catholic Rectory, Denzil.

## Book Reviews

REGINA, THE QUEEN CITY. By *Earl Drake*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1955. Pp. ix, 260, illus. \$5.00.

WHEN Sinclair Lewis, Babbitt's creator, visited Regina some years ago, he was taken for a drive through the beautiful valley of the Qu'Appelle; its beauty so impressed him that he inquired bluntly why the capital had not been placed there, as he compared it with the bleakness of the Regina plains. "Political skullduggery, likely." We thought of this as we read the authentic history of these transactions for the first time revealed in Earl Drake's history of Regina, and especially as we studied the devastating cartoon from Toronto *Grip* of September, 1882, ridiculing the newly selected townsite.

To those of us who have heard this question discussed since childhood, and who indeed have memories of unwillingly returning from picnics and camping expeditions in the lovely Valley, to the flat, waterless prairie that was Regina, these historical facts are the most significant part of the book. To the Provincial Archivist, Dr. Lewis Thomas, must go the credit for obtaining from Ottawa the valuable documents which gave the author the opportunity of correctly interpreting Regina's early history. To the Regina City Council who sponsored its publication as a Golden Jubilee project, and to the Regina Public Library Board, the originator of the idea, goes the gratitude of all pioneers and of all those interested in historical authenticity, rather than distorted "tall tales." Many parents have already expressed the hope that their children will now have the benefit of such a history in the schools, written with honesty of purpose and factual correctness.

So much of its material was gleaned from the press, that it might have been as dry and as dusty as the old newspapers to which Earl Drake had access, but he seems to have had an uncanny perception in sensing the personality behind some apparently commonplace news item. Pioneers are apt to be jealous of their heritage of stored memories, but this young interviewer gained their confidence by his unassuming sincerity. We are sure he could write another volume of the little stories he was told "in confidence." We are curious, though, as to why he did not use to a greater extent the newspaper, the *Province*, in his research work; the editorials from the pungent pen of the brilliant newspaper man, Tom Blacklock, were known and read across Canada. Perhaps his verbal caricatures of the political figures of that day were too sizzling to include in a "sponsored" book.

And we looked vainly in the index for the name of Dr. Norman Black, the greatest educator Regina ever had, and whose *History of Saskatchewan* is the only scholarly, authentic one. His influence here was far-reaching, far above some of the more flamboyant figures who are slightly over-emphasized.

But, knowing that everyone cannot be included in such a history, and that it is more difficult to assess qualities of spirit and mind than it is to sum up business acumen, we come to the conclusion that the author has done a tremendous task most creditably. And then our telephone rings—long distance—"Have you read the history of Regina? We are old friends of the Rowell family—their

daughter Regina Mary, was the first child born there. Find out why she was left out." So here's another query to the author. On page 3 it is stated that near the Old Crossing, "tradition says, Julia Flameau, daughter of a French trader, was born in the autumn of 1859—the first white baby of the Regina plains." That, of course, has no reference to Regina itself. Then on page 127 there is a reference to "William J. P. Selby (the first male child born in Regina) . . ." On page 8 it is stated that "the land was conveyed to a body of four distinguished townsite trustees: Richard B. Angus and Donald A. Smith, appointed by the C.P.R., and William B. Scarth and Edmund B. Osler, appointed by the Land Company." But the author fails to note that the first official document signed by these noted Trustees was a "deed of Land, situate in Regina," being "Deed No. 1, Regina," dated April 11, 1883, to Regina Mary Rowell, who had been born in Regina on December 13th, 1882. The deed states that she was the first child born in Regina, "And Whereas the said trustees are desirous of commemorating the said event by granting to the said party of the second part—Lot 23 in Block 282 in the Townsite of Regina, in the North West Territories," etc. Unfortunately, succeeding civic bodies, not realizing that a gift of this nature was tax free, sold it for taxes, as the Rowell family had moved to a homestead, and being struggling English immigrants were not able to pay the taxes. A photostat in the Saskatchewan Archives of this historical document was obtained from the original "Regina" who is now living at the Coast. Realizing the "treasure hunt" Mr. Drake must have had in sorting out the material available, such an oversight is understandable, but painful to those who are involved.

Attractive in format, with an unusually striking jacket design and other illustrations by McGregor Hone, the publishers in their blurb inform us that here we can read of "Nicholas Flood Davin, and the many colourful figures who played important roles in the development of the City." The author's interpretation of some of these early participants in the local scene is beyond criticism, but why limit it to the past—what of the colourful figures of the present? Surely no one's political outlook is so biased that he does not recognize in our present Premier, the Hon. T. C. Douglas, one of the most challenging politicians who has ever held office as head of a government in the capital city. Yet his name does not appear in the book. In the final chapter, "Seventy Years of Age: 1945-1955," only a few lines are given to the activities of the provincial government, either critical or commendatory. Even realizing that this is the history of Regina alone, and not of the Province, anyone who has lived a lifetime in this capital city is aware of the tremendous influence of the government in office on the welfare of the city. Not only the hundreds of civil servants, but all citizens are affected by the laws passed, and the policies propounded "Under the Dome." Perhaps only those who have experienced the upheaval of a change of government, with sometimes tragic results, can appreciate the profound effect on the history of Regina, both social and economic. Surely to the majority of its citizens, the names of Dunning, Gardiner and Anderson have more historical significance than an imported football player, however popular he might have been in his brief stay, or the fantastic figure of a Cornelius Rink, even though we can understand the temptation to play up this doughty, but dubious Dutchman.

The fault is not with the author, whose scholarship and industry are revealed through the whole book, nor are we convinced it is with the committee who worked with him on it. It is to this reviewer a confirmation of an opinion long held after years of experience in the world of books, that a "sponsored" book is never a spontaneous, uninhibited creation. *Regina, The Queen City*, should be in every school, library, and bookcase in the homes (if you can find any) as a really valuable contribution to the understanding of pioneer problems, as a tribute to its founding fathers (and mothers!); but we hope that some day a writer, alone with his typewriter, unfettered and untrammelled, will pound out with fiery finger another story of this our birthplace. It might even turn out to be a best seller. Earl Drake could do it but, unfortunately, he has disappeared behind the diplomatic curtain of the External Affairs Department at Ottawa; his training there will make him even more diplomatic than he was in his choice of materials for *Regina, The Queen City*.

May we add a word to the publishers, in case there should be a second edition, which we sincerely hope; it may seem trivial, but it is annoying to look vainly through the index for the reference to the Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery, finding it at last under the "N" column instead of the "M"; the same applies to "Robert Simpson Co." which is included in the "R" instead of the "S" section. It might be well to re-check the index if further publication is anticipated.

A minor factual error also occurs on page 25, where it is stated that "Miss Fanny Laidlaw started the first private school in March 1883." It was an older sister, Miss Mary Laidlaw, who afterwards became the wife of Charles H. Black, the owner of Regina's first stationery store, a picture of which appears in the book. Fanny Laidlaw was later organist of the original Knox Church, where her father, J. S. Laidlaw, was the first elder on the session role of that Church, and the noted C. J. Atkinson, Davin's rival, was its Sunday School Superintendent. Unimportant except to remaining relatives, and a mere trifle in an otherwise amazingly correct history of the "old hometown."

JESSIE ROBSON BOTHWELL

GULLY FARM. By *Mary Hiemstra*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1955. Pp. 311, illus. \$4.00.

MARY HIEMSTRA emigrated from England with her parents, Sarah and Walter Pinder, and a younger sister and brother, as a member of the "Barr Colonists" in 1903. She grew up on "Gully Farm," north of Lashburn, Saskatchewan, and with many others, experienced the hardships of homesteading on the prairie.

*Gully Farm*, written approximately fifty years after the settlement of the Barr Colony, is an episodic story told with a very personal viewpoint. The author makes an admirable attempt to express what she remembers of her thoughts and feelings as a six-year-old. Her parents are her heroes, determined and resourceful in spite of their inexperience.

The episodes of the story, namely, the decision to emigrate, the voyage, the overland journey, and the settling on the land, are well connected and are high-

lighted with sufficient humor, pathos and suspense to hold our interest. Although the author's memory for details is excellent in most respects—unbelievably accurate if she has depended upon memory alone—a few inaccuracies as to fact appear. The train journey from St. John, New Brunswick, to Saskatoon, took five or six days, not two weeks (p. 52). The colonists arrived in Saskatoon on April 17, not late in April (p. 54). The Reverend I. M. Barr *had* visited north-western Saskatchewan before the settlers came out (p. 108). And it must have been well known in Lloydminster that Barr had left the area months before the winter of 1903-4 (pp. 213-14).

The details of the first year on the homestead are very well woven into a story common to most pioneering groups on the prairies: the first breaking, the mosquito menace, the terrible prairie fire, the first Christmas away from England, the deep cold of mid-winter, and the beauties of spring, summer, and fall. The many references to well-known personalities in the Lashburn area give the book authenticity.

To this reviewer, Walter Pinder summed up the main purpose of the emigrants, when he said before leaving England:

"There's no future here . . . Nothing to look for'ard to. The ruts are near too deep to get out of, and everything's that crowded . . . And look at the folk! Them that don't see beyond the end of their noses, what do they do if a man tries to get on? They laugh at him. Tell him it's no use, and he's making a fool of himself, trying to be something he isn't. After a bit, if things go wrong, he believes them, and starts doing as they do. He goes to the pub Saturday night, saves a shilling now and then for a decent funeral, and that's all. I want summat better'n that." (pp. 19-20).

CLIVE TALLANT

FOUNDATIONS OF CANADIAN NATIONHOOD. By *Chester Martin*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1955. Pp, xx. 554, illus. \$7.50.

PROFESSOR MARTIN considers four major themes in the development of Canadian nationhood. These are self-government, confederation, territorial expansion, and international recognition. The course of the book runs pretty well within these terms, set down explicitly at the beginning. It is the pursuit, then, of one particular thread through the fabric of Canadian history, the tradition of parliamentary government, as it finds its way from the British conquest to the present. For such a study the starting point is the representative institutions of the First Empire prior to the American Revolution, for the popular Assembly was the same in Nova Scotia as it was in the American colonies along the Atlantic seaboard. Nova Scotia is the important link, since Quebec, once British, was to be governed by a new device, the Quebec Act, in which representative assemblies had no place. To the American colonists the Quebec Act was an evil omen, and they struggled to free themselves from the contracting coils of a tightening and hardening imperial policy. Then in a single bound the United States won self-government and international recognition, with federation becoming necessary for survival, and expansion inevitable from the first. Canada, however, although travelling the same four stages followed much more slowly,

through the patient working out of precedent and practice, and always within the framework set by a hesitant and groping imperial power, under the forms of imperial statutes. But the end product is the same. Nationhood has come to Canada at last; and through the experience of almost two hundred years a distinctive tradition has been formed, a different spirit has been fashioned. There is something which is uniquely Canadian.

For those who have read the author's *Empire and Commonwealth*, and *Dominion Lands Policy*, the theme of this book will not be new. But it is pursued with such a wealth of quotation from primary sources and devotion to detail that it would prove a *vade mecum* for any student of Canadian constitutional history. Professor Martin has the gift of weaving his sources with his text; indeed the text takes on the nature of a commentary or gloss on the sources. Moreover, it is the comment of one who seems to be on intimate terms with all the characters in the story, of one who has followed them observantly into drawing room and secret conference chamber, as well as through the lobbies and corridors of parliaments. Here Professor Martin reveals his incomparable knowledge of the sources of British policy and of the men who created it and followed it through. Canadian nationhood does not seem to have lacked its champions in the mother country itself. Elgin and Head have done as much for Canada as Baldwin and Macdonald. Some of our heroes were British and some of our villains were Canadians. The theme of the book may be nationhood, but the author does not beat it out blindly on the drums of prejudice or chauvinism.

This work, then, represents the special interests and research of an expert in a particular field. It brings together in one place the results of a lifetime of thought and study. Although not all will agree with the theories so trenchantly proposed in this book, scholars in future will always have to give them respectful consideration.

JOHN LEPINE, S.J.

FIRST IN THE WEST. The Story of Henry Kelsey, Discoverer of Canadian Prairies. By James W. Whillans. Edmonton: Applied Art Products Ltd., 1955. Pp. 175, maps. \$3.50.

NO North American explorer of importance has received so little attention as Henry Kelsey, the youthful Hudson's Bay Company servant who, in 1690-91, became the first white man to penetrate to the Canadian prairies. Kelsey's journal of exploration, a curious document, partly rhymed couplets, written in crude and often abbreviated English, was lost to posterity until 1926. In 1929 it was edited and published as *The Kelsey Papers* jointly by the Public Archives of Canada, and the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. However, little or no attempt was made to trace the route of Kelsey's travels nor to assess the man, until the late Rev. James William Whillans undertook in 1952 what he called "The Crusade for Henry Kelsey". Careful study of the Kelsey papers had impressed Whillans that Henry Kelsey was one of the greatest unsung heroes in the annals of North American history. Moreover, he thought he could detect certain clues in the journal which pointed to an identifiable route which the young explorer must have followed. As soon as retirement from his life-long



career as a Presbyterian clergyman permitted, Mr. Whillans set out to prove that Kelsey had followed a traceable route which took him to the Eagle Hills, and in doing so had demonstrated himself a veritable Ulysses amongst explorers. The scant four years which remained to him were dedicated to this cause. The result, published posthumously, was the volume, *First in the West*.

The volume first traces the background of Kelsey's explorations and discusses the controversy early in the 18th century over the authenticity of the report. It then develops in some detail the reasons why the author believes Kelsey took a particular route to a particular destination in the years 1690-91. It concludes with a brief resume of Kelsey's later life.

In accomplishing all these things, James Whillans revealed himself as a great fan of a great explorer. As a matter of fact, like many fans, he became inclined to make something of an idol of his hero. In trying to prove the most for Henry Kelsey he jumped to some questionable conclusions. These are largely because he was sure that Kelsey travelled by a certain route to an identifiable destination. Two hundred and sixty years after the event this alone would have been a formidable task, but it was further complicated by the vagueness of the Kelsey journal. For the discoverer of the plains, incredible as it may seem, not only neglected to give his daily course except once during his entire journey, but also failed to identify a single geographical feature by a later recognizable name.

It will therefore not appear strange that Mr. Whillans fails to be convincing in his arguments for the Kelsey trail. The explorer's journey, from the maze of indefinite clues left by Kelsey, may be traced with some logic (but without conclusive proof) over not one, but several routes. The author—undoubtedly in his zeal to make the most of Kelsey's achievements—fixed on the longest and most improbable of the alternatives without weighing for the benefit of the reader any evidence to the contrary.

The question arises in this connection, was it necessary to be so specific about the details of Kelsey's journey? After all, does it really matter whether he reached the Eagle Hills, the Touchwood Hills, or the Beaver Hills; or whether the Washreesebee river is the South Saskatchewan or the Red Deer; or that Kelsey first glimpsed the Canadian prairies near Saskatoon or Quill Lake? These are minutiae in the grand plan of Kelsey's achievement, and Mr. Whillans has at last made us conscious of the magnitude of that achievement—and the man who made it. Here his devotion to subject has borne its richest fruit.

No callow youth made the perilous journeys from the Bay to the hinterland of Saskatchewan a half century before his nearest follower. No mere stripling walked the hundreds of lonely miles, sharing starvation and hardship with his savage companions. No casual wanderer pursued his employers' interests so conscientiously. Of his trials, his thoughts and his emotions Whillans has written with imagination and feeling. Instead of a half-remembered name, Henry Kelsey rises full-bodied from the page, a man girt by nature physically and morally for his task—resourceful, determined, visionary, yet never quite conscious of his high destiny.

J. D. HERBERT

## Notes and Correspondence

Readers of *Saskatchewan History* who know the whereabouts of records of the United Farmers of Canada (Saskatchewan Section), particularly the minute books of locals or the correspondence of officers and members of the organization, are invited to communicate with the Saskatchewan Archives Office, University of Saskatchewan. The Archives Office now has many of the older records of the central office of the U.F.C., the S.G.G.A., and the Farmers Union, but a more accurate and complete picture of the activities of these organizations could be obtained if additional papers belonging to individuals and locals could be procured. A graduate student now working on a master's thesis on farm organizations in the province, reports that records in the Archives are scanty for the years 1935-41. It is never too soon to transfer valuable papers to the Archives, as is testified by countless incidents of premature destruction by accident, carelessness and neglect.

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Further light on the colorful career of William Henry ("Honore") Jackson, pioneer resident of Prince Albert, secretary of Louis Riel, crusader and radical, is contained in issue No. 22 of *Western Ontario History Nuggets* (1955), published by the Lawson Memorial Library, University of Western Ontario. The issue is given over to an article by Dr. Louis Blake Duff, entitled "Amazing Story of the Winghamite Secretary of Louis Riel". Dr. Duff has spent much time and effort in reconstructing the episodes of Jackson's wandering life in the Canadian West and the United States.

## Contributors

MARCEL GIRAUD teaches in the College de France, Paris, where he is professor of the history of North American civilization.

MONTAGU CLEMENTS, C.A., A.C.I.S., Regina, was a member of the staff of the Auditor General of Canada from 1934 until his retirement in 1950.

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MRS. A. M. Bothwell, Regina, retired in 1950 as Legislative Librarian of Saskatchewan. She has written many articles on the history of Regina, a number of which have been reprinted in booklet form under the title *Pioneers! O Pioneers!* (Regina, 1955).

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## **Directory of Saskatchewan Ministries, Members of The Legislative Assembly and Elections, 1905-1953**

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