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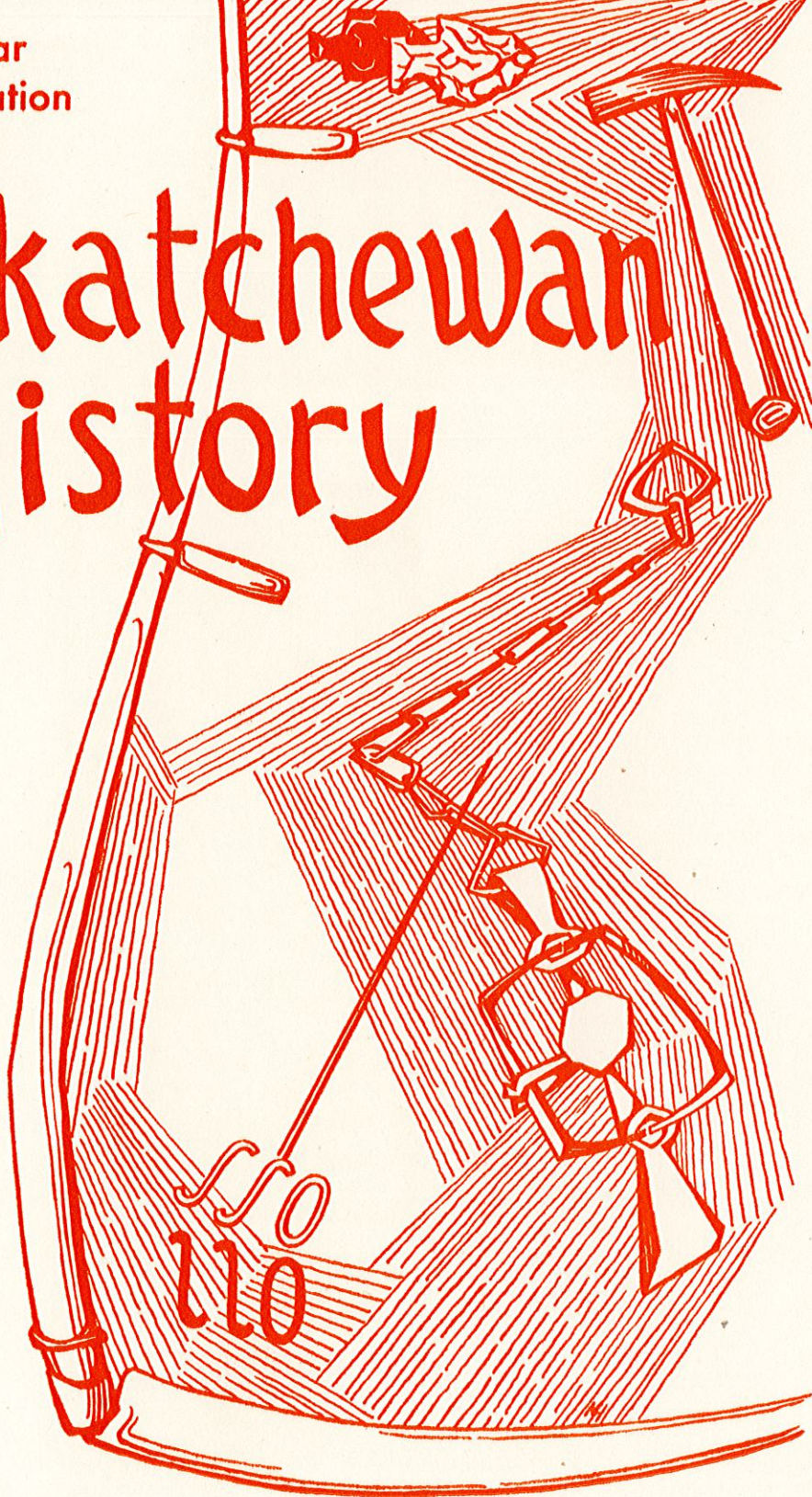
# Saskatchewan History

★ Functions of  
Urban Muni-  
cipalities in the  
N. W. T.: I

BY  
A. N. REID

★ Is Local History  
Really History?

BY  
R. A. PRESTON



Vol. X, No. 3

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# Saskatchewan History

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## Functions of Urban Municipalities in the North-West Territories: Public Works and Public Utilities

ONE of the most striking features of urban local government before 1905 in what is now Saskatchewan and Alberta was the wide and constantly expanding scope of functions. This may seem surprising in governmental units established in the 19th century, when the *laissez-faire* philosophy was so generally accepted, and functioning in a frontier area where development was so dependent upon the individual initiative and enterprise of the pioneers. Several explanations may be suggested. In the first place, it was only in the last twenty years of the century that the units came into existence and by this time public opinion was prepared to accept and even welcome a much larger measure of government activity than in the earlier years. Especially was this so in North America, where government policy at the national level was determining the direction and actively promoting the process of western development. Secondly, the local government units involved were urban. This environment involved problems quite different from those faced by rural residents. In rural areas, the growing population could establish itself and carry on production largely through individual enterprise and voluntary co-operation. Thus the typical rural unit of local government, the statute labor or local improvement district, provided only a few services, of which road construction and protection from prairie fires were the most important.<sup>1</sup> In the growing urban centres, however, the problems of community life were more extensive and complicated. The closer physical association of residents increased the danger of fire, the difficulty of securing adequate supplies of pure water, the likelihood of epidemics, and the possibility of crime, and the like. Furthermore, the ever increasing concentration of population made economic the provision of services, such as recreation, which were not feasible for rural residents. Finally, even the smaller urban settlements had a considerable variety of economic life and thus were faced with the possibility that the self-interest of individual businessmen might on occasions be incompatible with the interests of the community as a whole. A third important explanation of the wide scope of activities is the improvement in the status of urban local government which was general in the 19th century. At the beginning of the century, both in Great Britain and United States, the "borough" type of government was so inefficient that it could not be entrusted with important responsibilities. But during the century a great transformation took place. New types of urban local government machinery were established, e.g. in England by the *Municipal Corporations Act* of 1835. In the United States, it is true, there were many unsavoury episodes, but towards the end of the century many of the worst abuses had been eliminated. In Eastern Canada the development of local institutions had been steady and soundly-based. In each country, as the efficiency of local government increased, it was given an expanded sphere of activities. Thus the immigrants from these places, who composed the bulk of the new urban popula-

<sup>1</sup> A. N. Reid, "Local Government in the North-West Territories: I The Beginnings of Rural Local Government, 1883-1905", *Saskatchewan History*, Volume II, No. 1 (Winter, 1949).



tion of the Territories, were favourably disposed towards local government as an agency for dealing with many of the problems of urban community life.

The actual scope of the functions that might be performed was determined by Territorial legislation, as interpreted by the courts. It was never seriously argued in the North-West Territories, as it had been sometimes elsewhere, that local people had certain inherent rights of self-government. By the time the Territorial urban units were erected the doctrine of *ultra vires* in regard to local government activities was finally established. Local governments exercised no residual authority. What authority they enjoyed was derived directly from the Territorial government and restricted to that which was expressly conveyed by legislation. As noted in an earlier article, this legislative authority was contained in the *Municipal Ordinance*, special acts of incorporation, special legislation affecting individual units, and general legislation dealing with such matters as public health.<sup>2</sup> There was thus a general uniformity of permitted functions but some variation was allowed to meet peculiar needs of particular localities. Although all powers were delegated the scope was extensive. The *Municipal Ordinance* specifically authorized activity in many fields. In addition, rather wide powers were conferred by a general clause in the *Municipal Ordinance* which in 1883 read as follows:

. . . and generally to make and establish all such by-laws for the government and good order of the municipality and the suppression of vice and immorality, protection of property, the benefit of trade and commerce, and the promotion of health not inconsistent with the Law.<sup>3</sup>

In 1885 the clause was amended by the deletion of "the benefit of trade and commerce" and in this form was continued to the end of the Territorial period. Individual units were sometimes accorded additional powers, and occasionally powers were restricted by the legislation incorporating them and by subsequent special legislation.

A second feature of urban local government in the North-West Territories was the concentration of this great range of functions in a single all-purpose unit of government. This contrasts sharply with 19th century practice elsewhere. In Britain, as additional responsibilities were entrusted to local government, special-purpose units were frequently established. Important examples were those formed to deal with poor relief, public health, and education. In the United States, special-purpose units were established for such services as fire protection, water supply, sanitation, policing, and education. In the North-West Territories, only education was singled out for special attention. It was administered by independent and locally-elected school boards. All other local functions were entrusted to the general-purpose municipal unit. The activities of Territorial municipal councils were therefore more extensive and the work more complicated than in most other jurisdictions.

A third feature of urban local government in the North-West Territories was freedom from interference by superior government. In this they resembled their

<sup>2</sup> A. N. Reid, "Urban Municipalities in the North-West Territories: Their Development and Machinery of Government", *Saskatchewan History*, Volume IX, No. 2 (Spring, 1956).

<sup>3</sup> Ordinance No. 2 of 1883, s. 147 (23).



British counterparts rather than their American ones. For a long period in the 19th century the latter were seriously interfered with by state legislatures. Local and outside persons and special-interest groups, not able to attain objectives by direct dealing with municipal councils, had recourse to the state legislature which passed special legislation overriding local objections. From such interference with local autonomy the urban units in the North-West Territories were quite free. Almost invariably special legislation affecting particular units was passed only at the request of the council of the local unit involved. Furthermore, there was almost no administrative control over local affairs. There was no Territorial government department with responsibility for general supervision, and individual departments seldom concerned themselves with municipal affairs except on the initiative of local officials. The department most frequently involved was that of the Attorney-General. It handled matters relating to the status and powers of municipalities, and from time to time was called on for an opinion about the extent of local authority. Even in this case, however, the final authority was the courts rather than a government department. Finally, there was almost no financial control. Occasionally the Territorial government did make special grants to individual municipalities. But these were for special purposes and regarded as exceptional. No general attempt was made to control local activities by providing subsidies conditional upon the local government unit meeting stated requirements. Because of the absence of these usual forms of superior government control, the urban units in the North-West Territories enjoyed a larger measure of local autonomy than has been usual in the history of local government. By legislation they were given sources of revenue and a wide sphere of activity and then left almost completely free to carry on in accordance with local opinion. The explanation may well be that in a predominantly agricultural economy and with sizable urban centres separated by considerable distances, there was little danger of individual localities pursuing policies which were incompatible with the welfare of others or of the Territorial area as a whole.

Public works and public utilities were amongst the more important matters with which urban communities were concerned. The remainder of the present article is devoted to problems and policies in these fields, with particular reference to the experience of urban centres in what is now the province of Saskatchewan. Other functions of urban local government will be dealt with in a subsequent article.

### PUBLIC WORKS

A typical view of public works is contained in an editorial in the *Moose Jaw* newspaper in 1895.

The improvements . . . were simply the ordinary necessities of any modern town. We are all aware that when people are crowded together certain sanitary conditions must be observed to prevent disease, drainage is a necessity, sidewalks are perhaps not. Yet few will deny they are a great convenience and improve the appearance of any town. Capitalists looking for investment will be captured much quicker by an im-



proved and business-like town than one that bears a resemblance to a hamlet in the backwoods.<sup>4</sup>

Confidence in progress, and a desire to promote it through local effort, was a constant feature of western development. But the sources of revenue granted to local government, chiefly taxation of property, did not easily provide large sums to finance local government activities. Experiences in Manitoba had warned Territorial residents of the dangers of debenture financing. As a result, there was little in public works policy throughout the Territorial period that could be described as extravagance. Instead, the expenditures in this field were essentially to provide the minimum necessary for the modest desires of the residents and for the commercial and industrial growth of the community. Amongst the important public works were street-surfacing, drainage, sidewalks, town hall, an occasional bridge and dam, and public parks.

### *Streets and Drainage*

The relatively level surface and heavy soil of most townsites made street travel a problem well before the day of the automobile. Tales of experiences in Regina mud are proverbial. Consequently, urban councils were under constant pressure to provide road surfaces adequate for vehicles and other traffic of residents of the town and surrounding country. Frequently all that was done was to attempt to maintain a level surface. In Regina in 1889 certain streets were to be "ploughed and harrowed".<sup>5</sup> Road graders, scrapers, and road rollers were the usual items of equipment. Maple Creek in 1905 invested in a "Steele patent road grader and plower".<sup>6</sup> But such roadways were in bad condition after autumn rains and especially during the spring run-off. Frequent newspaper editorials and letters to editors suggest, however, that councils were loath to go beyond this. Some attempt was usually made to provide pedestrian crossings of stone, log, or plank. In a few instances the use of gravel to form a harder surface is reported. In Moosomin in 1891 a street was gravelled to a depth of 4 inches at a cost of 14 cents per square yard.<sup>7</sup> In winter-time road conditions were better, except after the occasional blizzard. The purchase of snow scrapers from time to time indicates that attention was given to keeping streets usable in winter.<sup>8</sup>

Closely related to roadways was the problem of surface drainage. Because of the level surface of many townsites, this was essential if there was to be any hope of maintaining usable roadways. Frequently also, sloughs were present and drainage of these was required. Otherwise, the spring-time rise in level could cause serious flooding and as the water level fell during the summer the stagnant water was regarded as a menace to health. At first drainage was supplied mostly by open roadside ditches, with streets being graded to ensure that water was carried off. But open ditches were criticized as being dangerous and unsightly.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Moose Jaw Times*, September 20, 1895.

<sup>5</sup> Regina Council Minutes, April 15, 1889.

<sup>6</sup> Maple Creek Council Minutes, June 12, 1905.

<sup>7</sup> Moosomin Council Minutes, June 3, 1891.

<sup>8</sup> E.g., Regina Council Minutes, December 3, 1894.

<sup>9</sup> E.g., *The Whitewood Herald*, April 9, 1903.





Typical Early Street Scene in a Prairie Town



and in some places were replaced in time by "pipe sewers" and box culverts at crossings were introduced. A completely satisfactory solution of the drainage problem involved a complete underground sewerage system, but this was attained only in the larger centers and towards the end of the Territorial period.

Road surfaces and drainage facilities of such elementary standard required constant attention. Newspaper editorials and deputations of citizens regularly pressed councils for action. Graders and scrapers were kept in use to level surfaces in summer and to remove snow in winter. Holes in roads had to be filled and ditches and culverts cleaned out. Roadside weeds were cut and burned. Debris was removed from time to time at public expense and residents and business men were constantly being warned to remove obstructions to traffic.

### *Sidewalks*

Community life could exist only with great inconvenience if sidewalks were not built to protect pedestrians from water, slush, and mud. But councils never seemed to be able to keep up with the demand. The acuteness of need for more sidewalks in some cases is indicated in a letter from "Sufferer" to the editor of the Prince Albert newspaper in 1902. Referring to a request for a two-plank sidewalk, he wrote: "It is impossible for any resident of that portion of the street I mention to get to that sidewalk on either side of him without wading through mud and slush, without exaggerating, six inches deep. Is that either just or right?"<sup>10</sup>

For some time the usual material for sidewalks was wood, which made them relatively inexpensive to construct. Costs varied with the width. Moose Jaw in 1886 accepted a tender of 46 cents per lineal foot for spruce walks, seven feet wide.<sup>11</sup> Moosomin in 1894 was paying 15 cents per foot for 30 inch walks and 25 cents per foot for 4 foot walks.<sup>12</sup> Complaints were frequent about the condition of the sidewalks and much repair work was required. Deterioration was frequently the result of such misuse as driving vehicles over them, but was mostly associated with the lack of durability of the wood, and gradually other materials came into use. References are encountered to the use of sand, gravel, brick, and eventually granolithic walks. The Prince Albert newspaper in 1903 noted that the wooden walks were rapidly decaying and that the debentures issued to finance them were not paid off.<sup>13</sup> It argued that granolithic walks would be more economical in the long-run as the higher original cost would be more than offset by the long life and absence of maintenance expense.

### *Town Halls*

The earliest meetings of councils were usually held in quarters rented from churches, schools, business and professional people. But increase in municipal business, the convenience of officials, local prestige, and the need for auditorium

<sup>10</sup> *Prince Albert Advocate*, June 16, 1902.

<sup>11</sup> Moose Jaw Council Minutes, April 27, 1886.

<sup>12</sup> Moosomin Council Minutes, May 10, 1894.

<sup>13</sup> *Prince Albert Advocate*, October 12, 1903.



accommodation led to the erection of a town hall early in the history of most municipalities. Such buildings served various purposes. There was normally a council chamber, rooms for municipal officials, and an auditorium. Sometimes provision was made in the same building for the housing of fire equipment and for a lock-up. Regina began construction in 1885 and the combined town and firehall was opened in February, 1886. The tender accepted was for \$2250.00.<sup>14</sup> An addition and repairs in 1887 cost an additional \$775.00.<sup>15</sup> The Moose Jaw hall of 1892 involved expenditure of \$3308.00.<sup>16</sup> But rapid expansion of the communities led in due course to demand for better and larger accommodation. The Moose Jaw Board of Works recommended to council in 1902 the sale of the old building and the erection of a new one, because the old town hall was "altogether unfit for present requirements owing to the increase in population and consequent increase in business, besides we are badly in need of a Firehall, together with police offices and lock-up".<sup>17</sup> After some delay, the council in 1904 accepted a tender for \$25,571.00 for building a new city hall.<sup>18</sup> The presence of an auditorium in town halls gave the councillors some headaches in administration and a small amount of revenue. The usual practice was to refund the rental if the hall had been used for charitable or educational purposes, and there were many such occasions. Regina in 1886 charged the Board of Trade \$20.00 for twelve night meetings a year in the council chambers, and in 1889 churches were charged \$5.00 per night for use of the hall for concerts and socials.<sup>19</sup> For the new city hall the rates were fixed at \$25.00 per night for three nights in one week and \$20.00 per night for more than three.<sup>20</sup> As evidence that town halls served a variety of necessary social functions is the use of the old Regina town hall as a school in 1886-1889, and as sleeping quarters for Territorial Exhibition visitors in 1895.<sup>21</sup>

#### *Miscellaneous Public Works*

Some attempts were made at town beautification. Trees were planted along streets and land set aside for parks. Regina fenced Victoria Square and planted trees there, but the dry climate and insufficient water supply kept it rather barren for years, and it served chiefly as athletic grounds. The Regina Council paid \$25.00 monthly in the summer of 1898 in sharing with the Canadian Pacific Railway the expense of a gardener for the park and gardens between the tracks and South Railway street.<sup>22</sup> Moose Jaw in 1905 appointed three citizens to a park committee "to beautify the city with trees" and granted \$300.00 for this purpose.

Circumstances peculiar to particular centres necessitated a variety of public works. Regina spent considerable money from time to time on repairs and main-

<sup>14</sup> Regina Council Minutes, October 21, 1885.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, June 6, 1887.

<sup>16</sup> Moose Jaw Council Minutes, July 18, 1892.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, January 20, 1902.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, August 19, 1904.

<sup>19</sup> Regina Council Minutes, September 6, 1886, and March 4, 1889.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, January 30, 1905.

<sup>21</sup> E. G. Drake, *Regina, The Queen City* (Toronto, 1955), pp. 69, 75, and 85.

<sup>22</sup> Regina Council Minutes, March 21, 1898.



tenance for the dam and sluice-gates at the reservoir. A bridge over the river was built by Moose Jaw in 1891.<sup>23</sup>

#### *Public Works Administration*

The public works program involved much activity for councillors and other municipal officials. Sidewalk projects were usually initiated by petitions of rate-payers but in some cases by individual councillors. Road work plans normally originated within the council, frequently under informal pressure from citizens and the local newspapers. Building programs, such as a town hall, usually evolved out of long public discussion which frequently included special public meetings. In the case of each public work project, however, the matter was usually referred at an early stage to a council standing committee entitled "Board of Works", "Committee on Public Works", "Public Improvement Committee", or with some analogous title. Sometimes public works were coupled with other functions, as in the case of the Prince Albert Board of Works and Health.<sup>24</sup> In the planning of public works the committee was advisory to the council as a whole. It considered the merits of a proposal, prepared detailed plans, and secured cost estimates. In more technical matters it secured expert assistance, e.g., architects in the case of buildings, and civil engineers to establish grades of roadways and granolithic walks. The committee report was discussed by council, normally approved immediately, but sometimes referred back to the committee for further consideration.

Once a public works project was approved by council, the public works committee was entrusted with the responsibility of seeing to its execution. The work was done either by contract or under the direct management of municipal officials. Contracts were awarded either by council resolution or by the public works committee on council's behalf. Council records indicate that the normal practice was to call for tenders and award the contract to the lowest bidder. But that councils were not beyond suspicion of abuse is suggested by a letter to the editor of the *Moosomin* newspaper in 1890. "It is said that no tenders are asked for in *Moosomin*, but that contractors are told to do the work and put in the bill to the Council. Is it legal, or has the town got under the influence of the Tammany Ring?"<sup>25</sup> The supervision of the contract work was the responsibility of the committee and carried out either by its individual members or, in the case of larger or more technical matters, by persons appointed by it. Regina appointed an "Inspector" to oversee the building of the original fire and town hall,<sup>26</sup> and architects to supervise repairs to the dam and the new fire hall.<sup>27</sup> In the last case the remuneration was  $2\frac{1}{2}\%$  of the contract price. In 1905 the civil engineer who had established levels for the proposed granolithic sidewalks was employed to superintend their laying and additional "Inspectors" were authorized to assist him.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Moose Jaw Council Minutes, October 26, 1891.

<sup>24</sup> Prince Albert By-laws, No. 2, December 28, 1885.

<sup>25</sup> *Moosomin Courier*, August 14, 1890.

<sup>26</sup> Regina Council Minutes, October 21, 1885.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, May 21, 1894.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, July 20, 1905.



Much public works was done not by contract but under the direct management of municipal officials. While this system appears to have worked satisfactorily for routine types of work, it involved a serious strain on the small and inexperienced municipal machinery when the project was of substantial size. This is illustrated by the experience of Yorkton in building their town hall in 1905.<sup>29</sup> Construction by day labour had begun in 1904 but apparently difficulties were encountered and work was discontinued in November. Tenders had been called for the completion of the structure but none had been received and in March, 1905, it was decided to proceed again with day labour. The town had purchased a machine for making cement blocks and the mayor was to oversee the cement work. Another person was hired at \$5.00 per day to have charge of all carpenter work, including hiring, firing, and fixing of wages. But this arrangement did not work out satisfactorily and at the end of May, it was decided to have the work finished by contract, with an architect supervising the tenders involved.<sup>30</sup>

The direct management of public works involved further responsibility and activity for the public works committee. Sidewalk construction, ditch-digging, and major street-surfacing jobs were done on an individual project basis rather than by permanent employees. The committee hired labour on an hourly or daily basis and purchased most of the materials required. Occasional references indicate that attempts were made to secure competitive bids for such items as lumber and to purchase from the lowest bidder.<sup>31</sup> Occasionally the municipality owned its own gravel pit to supply material for streets. Yorkton bought a three-acre pit for \$300.00 in 1900.<sup>32</sup> Streetwork involved the use of municipally-owned graders, scrapers, and road rollers, and owned or hired horses and wagons. Municipal records give some indication of costs of resources. Moose Jaw in 1889 paid \$1.50 a day for an individual labourer and \$4.00 a day for a man and team.<sup>33</sup> In 1904 labour on streets there was paid \$.20 an hour.<sup>34</sup> Moosomin in 1896 paid \$1.75 a day to a foreman and \$2.50 a day for a man and team.<sup>35</sup> Yorkton in 1901 paid \$3.00 a day for a man and team.<sup>36</sup> In 1902 Regina bought a road grader for \$250.00, a scraper for \$55.00, and a road roller for \$750.00.<sup>37</sup> The price paid for lumber in Yorkton was \$22.40 per 1000 feet in 1902<sup>38</sup> and \$25.40 in the following year.<sup>39</sup> As the size of public works projects increased, the volume of purchases became larger. Moose Jaw in 1904 ordered a whole car of Portland cement for sidewalk construction.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Yorkton Council Minutes, March 14, 1905.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, May 30, 1905.

<sup>31</sup> *E.g.*, Regina Council Minutes, August 15, 1892.

<sup>32</sup> Yorkton Council Minutes, September 3, 1900.

<sup>33</sup> Moose Jaw Council Minutes, September 16, 1889.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, June 27, 1904.

<sup>35</sup> Moosomin Council Minutes, July 7, 1896.

<sup>36</sup> Yorkton Council Minutes, June 3, 1901.

<sup>37</sup> Regina Council Minutes, June 7, 1902.

<sup>38</sup> Yorkton Council Minutes, June 27, 1904.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, July 21, 1903.

<sup>40</sup> Moose Jaw Council Minutes, June 27, 1904.

Because of the materials used, sidewalks and roads needed much maintenance and servicing. The public works committee had a continuing responsibility for seeing that public works were kept in good condition but regularly the members were urged to be more active in their duty by deputations of residents, newspaper editorials, and fellow councillors. Clearing of crossings, opening of drains, and some snow-shovelling were frequently assigned to the individual who performed general duties. It was usual for the council to pass a by-law putting the responsibility for snow-shovelling on the owners of abutting property but this was of doubtful effectiveness. A letter to the editor of the Moose Jaw newspaper in the winter of 1893 said that a house-to-house canvass by the town inspector informing residents of their obligation had brought little improvement and that sidewalks were in a disgraceful state. However, a news item in the next issue credited the publication of the letter with effecting an improvement. "Citizens who have never been known to work in such a capacity before have been seen with their coats off, shovelling for dear life. The Town Inspector is also taking a hand in the good work".<sup>41</sup> Sidewalk repairs and road maintenance were done by day labour or by the general officer with the assistance of hired labour. The members of the public works committee were responsible for the supervision of maintenance work. As population grew and standards rose, the volume of public works maintenance increased to an extent that warranted the employment of a permanent labour force. The formation of a permanent works department usually involved the purchase of horses and an increase in the amount of municipally-owned equipment. Regina in 1902 bought a team of horses and harness for \$375.00 to replace an older team that was sold.<sup>42</sup>

## PUBLIC UTILITIES

### *Water Supply and Sewage Disposal*

From the beginning of local government in the Territories the urban officials were much concerned with problems of water supply and sewage disposal. At first, facilities for these were of an elementary nature and provided separately. But by the end of the Territorial period the larger centres had installed elaborate and expensive underground water and sewer systems.

Water was needed in quantity for domestic use and for animals, and was the basis of the fire protection system. Except in Prince Albert, Saskatoon, and Moose Jaw, where river water was available, adequate supplies of water were difficult to obtain. Frequently the depth at which water could be found was so great that few individuals could afford the expense of digging wells. Moose Jaw Council in 1887 contracted for the boring of a well at the following rates: 100 feet at 75c per foot; 100–150 feet at 88c per foot; 150–200 feet at \$1.00 per foot; 200–250 feet at \$1.12 per foot; and 250–300 feet at \$1.50 per foot.<sup>43</sup> Maple Creek in 1904 was inquiring about the cost of sinking a well 1000 feet or more.<sup>44</sup> Even municipal

<sup>41</sup> *Moose Jaw Times*, January 27, 1893.

<sup>42</sup> Regina Council Minutes, July 14, 1902.

<sup>43</sup> Moose Jaw Council Minutes, August 27, 1887.

<sup>44</sup> Maple Creek Council Minutes, October 10, 1904.



efforts sometimes required the borrowing of Territorial government deep-boring equipment. The usual procedure was for council to have a well dug, and when water was found, to install the necessary equipment. At Moosomin a derrick, bucket, and chains were used but the normal equipment was an inexpensive hand pump. In some cases windmills were used to raise water which was stored in a tank. In 1898 Moosomin erected a 40 foot windmill and installed a 15,000 gallon water tank. Water from the tank was not to be used except for fire purposes when it fell below a specified level. Maintenance of even such simple equipment and of a pure water supply was a problem for councillors. Pumps and other equipment were regularly repaired and replaced. In 1893 Moosomin Council paid \$1.00 for having a cat taken out of the town well<sup>45</sup> and instructed the Inspector to prohibit the watering of stock at it.<sup>46</sup> In 1896 one well was made available for all purposes and another was reserved for domestic use and from it water was to be taken in buckets only.<sup>47</sup> The area surrounding the well had to be kept clean and dry and ice had to be removed in winter. Sometimes a shed was erected over the well.

Water at the well was free to residents, but frequently water was delivered to residences by water carriers. This business was invariably a private operation. At Prince Albert and at Moose Jaw water was drawn from the river, and there and elsewhere from wells. Both private and town wells were utilized. Regina in 1885 charged fees for the privilege of drawing supplies from the town wells: \$15.00 for each vehicle drawn by two horses, and \$10.00 if the vehicle was drawn by one horse.<sup>48</sup> In Moose Jaw the water-wagon had a 35 barrel tank.<sup>49</sup> In the early days in Regina water was sold for 25c a pail.<sup>50</sup> Water supply by water carriers was frequently unsatisfactory. Within a short period the Moose Jaw Council had to deal with complaints that storage tanks were not in a sanitary condition, that water from the river (not satisfactory for drinking) was being hauled in the same tanks as well water, that water was not supplied to customers regularly, that the price had been raised, and that the carriers were not very civil.<sup>51</sup>

Sewage disposal was at first a matter for individual families, subject to certain health regulations. The council usually provided a nuisance ground for the disposal of refuse and wastes. Later, regular collection and disposal facilities were organized under private or public auspices. Residents were required to keep garbage, sewage, and refuse in covered containers. This was picked up, and toilets were emptied, by a scavenger who made regular rounds. In 1888 Regina licensed private scavengers and fixed the fees they were permitted to collect.<sup>52</sup> More frequently scavenging was provided free as a municipal service. In some cases,

<sup>45</sup> Moosomin Council Minutes, November 9, 1893.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, March 2, 1893.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, December 29, 1896.

<sup>48</sup> Regina Council Minutes, August 17, 1885.

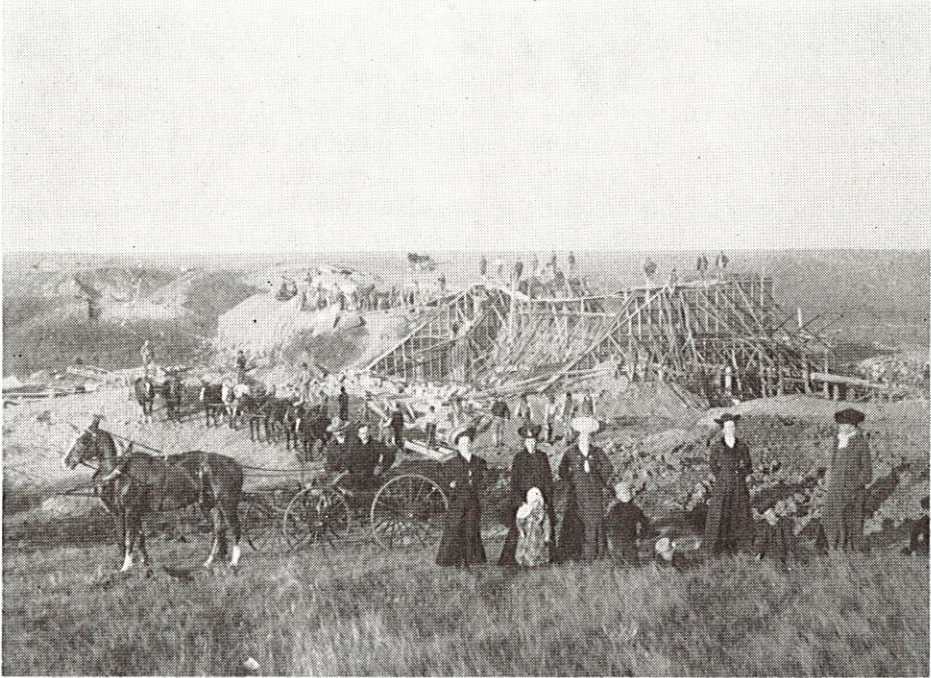
<sup>49</sup> *Moose Jaw Times Herald*, "Progress Edition", February 24, 1951.

<sup>50</sup> Drake, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

<sup>51</sup> Moose Jaw Council Minutes, July 9 and 21, 1902, August 3 and 27, 1903, and June 13, 1904.

<sup>52</sup> By-law No. 46.

council contracted for this service with an individual who provided his own equipment. Moose Jaw paid such a scavenger \$1300.00 a year in 1904.<sup>53</sup> In other cases the municipality provided the equipment (wagon, sleigh, tank, horses, etc) and engaged a scavenger on a salary basis. Complaints about the irregularity



Constructing Boggy Creek Reservoir, Regina, 1904

and inefficiency of the service were frequent, and the turnover of personnel was rapid at times. Such elementary facilities in expanding urban communities produced such an “ugly situation” as existed in Regina in the early nineties: “several small undrained cesspools; excreta of typhoid victims thrown on refuse heaps in back yards; and the whole town served by a single scavenger whose filthy, stinking cart was dumped at the bare edge of town without any attempt to destroy the putrid waste”.<sup>54</sup>

In the smaller centres reliance on elementary sewage and water utilities continued throughout the Territorial period. As the *Whitewood* newspaper said editorially in 1905: “The Town Council could do no better work than to spend a sum of money each year in providing wells throughout different parts of the town”.<sup>55</sup> In the larger centres, however, modern underground sewer and water systems were essential to avoid the very serious health hazard and provide adequate quantities of water under high pressure for fire protection, growing

<sup>53</sup> Moose Jaw Council Minutes, February 1, 1904.

<sup>54</sup> Drake, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>55</sup> *The Whitewood Herald*, August 24, 1905.



domestic needs, and the use of industrial plants, which were beginning to be established. The desirability of complete sewer and water systems was broached as early as 1890 in Regina<sup>56</sup> and Prince Albert.<sup>57</sup> Although there was a proposal in Maple Creek in 1905 to give a 25 year franchise to a private company to install a waterworks system,<sup>58</sup> in other cases there seemed to have been no question but that sewer and water systems would be municipally-owned utilities. The city of Calgary installed waterworks in 1899 and issued \$90,000.00 of debentures to finance the project. One obstacle elsewhere was the limited borrowing power of a community with "town" status. This was one of the most important factors leading Regina and Moose Jaw to seek incorporation as cities, accomplished in 1903. Moose Jaw engaged the well-known Willis Chipman to make surveys, prepare plans and specifications and give estimate of cost for waterworks and sewerage (and electric lights).<sup>59</sup> Regina appointed John Galt of Toronto as consulting engineer and he drew up plans to pipe water from Boggy Creek outside the city. For the first time the municipalities were engaged in really large projects. Moose Jaw received tenders from 40 firms located in Winnipeg, Vancouver, Toronto, Hamilton, Montreal, and other places in Canada, and Chicago, Philadelphia, Buffalo, and elsewhere in the United States.<sup>60</sup>

The entry into this utility field imposed additional burdens on the councils concerned. Responsibility in Moose Jaw continued to reside with the standing committee on fire, water, and light. In Regina a special committee on waterworks was established in 1903 to supervise the construction stage, and a standing committee on waterworks was appointed subsequently to supervise operations. Under its direction was the newly-created "Department of Waterworks", which had as chief officers a superintendent and secretary-treasurer.<sup>61</sup> The original rates charged for water for domestic use were for 4 rooms or under, \$12.00, or if bath and water closet were included, \$22.00. \$1.00 additional was charged for each additional room. An additional charge was made for water for lawns and gardens, \$4.00 for 1000 square feet or less. Special rates were fixed for hotels and business establishments<sup>62</sup>.

### *Light and Power*

The provision of light and power was a matter of municipal concern during the Territorial period but much less urgent than water supply and sewage disposal. Technological developments had not opened up wide fields for industrial application of electric power. Electric lights for domestic use and for public buildings were admitted to be a great convenience, but coal-oil lamps were accepted without too much complaint. Street lighting was thought desirable, but urban residents were prepared to get along with such simple facilities as at

<sup>56</sup> Regina Council Minutes, April 7, 1890.

<sup>57</sup> *Prince Albert Times and Saskatchewan Review*, July 18, 1890.

<sup>58</sup> Maple Creek Council Minutes, March 13, 1905.

<sup>59</sup> Moose Jaw Council Minutes, February 16, 1903.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, May 16, 1904.

<sup>61</sup> Regina By-law No. 336, August 7, 1905.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

Whitewood in 1898 where there was a single lantern placed on a flag-pole and lit by the "Inspector" in the evening as required.<sup>63</sup> It is thus understandable that there was no early movement for municipally-owned light and power utilities.

The first such utilities were privately organized and reached Territorial centres not long after their introduction in Eastern North America. Municipal approval was necessarily required for the erection of poles and the stringing of power lines. Franchises were usually granted for a period of years, e.g. in Prince Albert<sup>64</sup> and Moose Jaw<sup>65</sup> in 1890. In the latter case, council stipulated that "that light supplied shall be of good quality and shall be of the strength agreed to be supplied to the user", and that two street lights of 32 candle power each were to be supplied free. The Moose Jaw company in 1891 had a capacity of 350 lights with 200 lights in operation, supplied with alternating current from 6.30 p.m. to midnight by a plant with a 35 h.p. boiler.<sup>66</sup> The fuel used in the early power plants appears to have been wood as evidenced by advertisements for tenders for supplying it.<sup>67</sup> In 1892 the Moose Jaw newspaper reported indifferent patronage and financial loss and urged local support. "The mere fact of having electric light has given the town a standing. Looked at from the narrow standpoint of dollars and cents, electric lighting may be a trifle dearer than coal oil, but we consider it the duty of every citizen who has a grain of public spiritedness to support a public institution such as the Electric Light Company".<sup>68</sup> In spite of such exhortation and of new ownership the company suspended operations a few years later and for some years thereafter Moose Jaw was without electricity. Perhaps it was such feelings of public interest in the electrical utility that led the Yorkton council to purchase \$2,000.00 worth of shares of the privately organized North-West Electric Co.,<sup>69</sup> and Edmonton to guarantee \$10,000.00 of debentures issued by the Edmonton Electric and Power Company, Ltd.<sup>70</sup> In Regina the private Electric Light and Power Company built a \$20,000.00 plant and began operations in November, 1890.

It was usual for the municipality, in granting the franchise, to regulate the rates charged to private consumers. Regina in 1890 limited rates to 1¼c per hour for each 16 candle power light.<sup>71</sup> The other connection between the private utility and the municipality was in regard to street lighting. Regina arranged in 1891 to have upwards of 10 incandescent lights of 50 candle power each.<sup>72</sup> However, enthusiasm for them must have been limited as they were usually

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<sup>63</sup> Whitewood Council Minutes, October 17, 1898.

<sup>64</sup> Prince Albert By-law No. 113.

<sup>65</sup> Moose Jaw Council Minutes, November 25 and December 8, 1890.

<sup>66</sup> *Moose Jaw Times*, April 3, 1891.

<sup>67</sup> *Prince Albert Times and Saskatchewan Review*, October 28 and November 11, 1891.

<sup>68</sup> *Moose Jaw Times*, Sept. 23, 1892.

<sup>69</sup> Yorkton By-law No. 82.

<sup>70</sup> Ordinance No. 31 of 1893.

<sup>71</sup> Regina Council Minutes, August 28, 1890.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, July 6, 1891.



turned on only on Saturday nights,<sup>73</sup> and council discontinued purchase of power for street lighting for a period after 1895.<sup>74</sup>

Eventually municipal governments became more directly involved in the electrical utility business by taking over ownership from the original private promoters. Private operations appear to have been generally unprofitable and proposals were made from time to time for the municipality to assume operations. With the lapse of time the original equipment tended to become worn out and obsolete and lack of profits inhibited modernization by the proprietors. Thus municipal ownership appeared necessary for the provision of adequate service and this secured considerable support. In Prince Albert the local newspaper advocated it on various grounds. "The scheme now under consideration has in view several advantages. 1st, all night service; 2nd, a much better street lighting system than we at present enjoy; 3rd, a much lower rate for light, both for commercial and domestic purposes; and 4th, this can all be accomplished without increasing the burden of taxation to the individual ratepayer".<sup>75</sup> Its explanation of its optimistic forecast that municipal ownership would improve service and reduce cost was as follows:

The capacity of the present plant is only 500 lights, and is below the point where financiers say profit can be earned, since it takes almost as much attention and expense for that size of plant as the one we propose to establish which is three times as great . . . We can immediately place over 1000 lights and in a short time after it is running, the full capacity may be taken up.

Electric lighting is one of a number of services which can be economically given by municipal corporations, and a number of progressive towns in Manitoba and the North-West Territories have already extensive plants in successful operation, and the first failure in any instance has yet to be recorded.<sup>76</sup>

Prince Albert proceeded to buy the private plant in 1903.<sup>77</sup> In Regina an offer to sell the plant to the municipality for \$14,000.00 had been made in 1893<sup>78</sup> but was not accepted. In 1903 more capital investment was needed to meet growing consumer demand, and the owner offered to make the investment if he were given a 20 year monopoly of the franchise or alternatively to sell the plant to the town at an arbitrated price.<sup>79</sup> The municipality bought the plant in 1904 for \$14,000.00.<sup>80</sup> Moose Jaw again had electricity when a municipal power plant was established there in 1904. The rates charged for power from the new plant were 14c per kilowatt for up to 100 kilowatts per month, 13c per kilowatt for 100-200 kilowatts, and 12c for over 200 kilowatts, with a meter rent of 25c per month.<sup>81</sup> In Regina the municipal plant in 1905 charged 75c per lamp per month

<sup>73</sup> Drake, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

<sup>74</sup> Regina Council Minutes, September 16, 1895.

<sup>75</sup> *Prince Albert Advocate*, August 11, 1902.

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

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, February 9, 1903.

<sup>78</sup> Regina Council Minutes, June 5, 1893.

<sup>79</sup> Drake, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

<sup>80</sup> Regina By-law No. 305 (April 25, 1904).

<sup>81</sup> Moose Jaw Council Minutes, November 28, 1904.

for one to four lamps of 16 candle power. If a larger number of lamps was in use, the power was metered at 14c per kilowatt hour plus 25c monthly meter rent.<sup>82</sup> In the smaller centres as well, there was an interest in municipal electric light plants. In Yorkton the council was considering such a project in 1905, and wrote to other towns in the West about their experiences.<sup>83</sup>

#### *Miscellaneous Public Utilities*

Telephone service was first available in Regina when the Mounted Police line was connected with some town buildings, but the first general service was introduced in 1887 when the Bell Company took over that line and installed additional phones.<sup>84</sup> Whitewood in 1902 granted a private company the privilege of installing a telephone system and operating it for a period of ten years.<sup>85</sup> The Moosomin Council in the same year passed a by-law permitting the "Telephone and Light Company, Ltd. of Moosomin" to install a telephone system and a gas or electric light plant. Gas was to be furnished for public uses of the municipality at fair and reasonable rates.<sup>86</sup> Legislative provision for street transportation was made in 1904 in *An Ordinance to Incorporate the Strathcona Radial Tramway Company, Ltd.*<sup>87</sup>

Weigh scales were of some importance in urban centres during Territorial times. Cattle were weighed before being shipped and there was considerable need for scales available to the public to weigh hay, coal, etc. Sometimes weighing of such commodities was compulsory.<sup>88</sup> Weigh scales were privately or publicly owned. Whitewood in 1901 permitted a private operator to charge 10c for each weighing and 5c per head for animals.<sup>89</sup> Regina in 1888 bought lots for a market site and in the following year a local person was asked to transfer his scales from South Railway Street to the Market Square.<sup>90</sup> Later council purchased scales, erected a weigh house, appointed a Market Superintendent, and fixed charges for weighing.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Regina By-law No. 333 (June 6, 1905).

<sup>83</sup> Yorkton Council Minutes, January 17, 1905.

<sup>84</sup> Drake, *op. cit.*, pp. 32, 54.

<sup>85</sup> Whitewood By-law No. 142 (November 15, 1902).

<sup>86</sup> Moosomin By-law No. 135 (August 12, 1902).

<sup>87</sup> Ordinance No. 34 of 1904.

<sup>88</sup> E.g., Regina. See By-law No. 131 (December 19, 1892) and Council Minutes, (November 6, 1893).

<sup>89</sup> Whitewood Council Minutes, August 5, 1901.

<sup>90</sup> Regina Council Minutes, October 1, 1888, and April 4, 1889.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, May 4 and August 12, 1891 and By-law No. 131 (December 19, 1892).



## Is Local History Really History?

The following article is based on a paper read by Dr. Richard A. Preston at the Congress of Local Historical Societies, Buffalo University, Buffalo, N.Y., on July 24, 1957. Dr. Preston, who is Professor of History at Royal Military College, Kingston, Ont., has most graciously permitted the Editor to make excerpts from this stimulating paper for publication in *Saskatchewan History*.

*The Editor*

Is local history really history? This question was put to me by one of my colleagues when I first began to work seriously in the field of the local history of Kingston. It sounds rather a rude and discourteous question to pass on to a conference of people who have spent many years of their lives engaged in local historical studies. If it is so, I ask your pardon in advance. And I hope that afterwards you will think that a discussion of this subject has been worthwhile. I think that those of us who are working in the field of local history should be prepared to reflect seriously on the unkind comments which are sometimes made about our work by our so-called "professional" colleagues.

First about these so-called professional historians. The controversy between the professional historian on the one hand and the local historian on the other is, of course, an old one. I am not going to take up much time presenting the case on either side, but I want to clear up a few points. The term "professional historian" can be rather misleading. One tends to think of amateurs and professionals in the sporting world. A professional is one who is paid as opposed to the amateur who is not paid. Actually in the sporting world everybody seems to be able to get paid if he is any good. In the field of writing history few people make much money out of writing books. Thus comparison with sport doesn't help us very much. The "professional historian" is one who is paid, but not as a historian. He is paid as a teacher.

The words "professional" and "amateur" also tend to suggest that one is an expert and the other is not. This is, again, not necessarily the case. Recently I was privileged to spend a weekend visiting American Civil War battlefields with a group of enthusiasts. Only one of the four could be classed as a trained or professional historian. The others were a millwork dealer, an automobile mechanic, and an obstetrician. One of these men had not had a college education. Two of the others had been educated in college in fields very remote from history. But all had a tremendous interest in, and an amazing knowledge of, the American Civil War. We tramped over six battlefields in two days armed with all the available official accounts and with a battery of official maps. We worked out where formations of troops had approached the field of battle, and then discovered lines of trenches which they had made. Many of these were not marked by the National Military Parks Service. We speculated on why such and such a strategic or tactical move had been made. This was history worked out from the original source material on the ground. Work of this kind is very like the kind of work which can be done in the field of local history. I think it was Professor Tawney, the British economic historian, who said that what an economic historian needs even more than documents is a stout pair of boots, and it is just as true for

the local historian. But the point I want to make here is not the practical work involved; but that these men were real experts with the documents, as well as on the field. They worked on scientific principles from source material; yet they were almost all amateur historians. They were all great collectors of books. And they knew their authorities. They worked in a very narrow field, it is true, but in that field they were expert specialists.

In contrast with this single-minded specialization of my four friends, the professional historian, or professional teacher, usually has a field of specialization very remote from local history. At the same time he probably teaches three or four courses in widely different general or special fields of history. He has, therefore, no time to spare for serious work in the field of local history; and he rarely makes it his research specialty because of the fact that every locality is a very specialized field of study in itself. It is not a subject which he can hope to discuss with his colleagues in other universities in other localities and therefore it gains him little academic prestige.

Thus the professional historian has usually little interest in local history. There are, of course, notable exceptions among professors of history who have done very good work in the local field. But the exceptions who are interested in local history are very few. This is actually a great pity, for there is plenty of room for the use of the professional historians' training in the field of local history.

This, then, is the professional historian who asks the question, "Is local history really history?" For him it is a rhetorical question to which the answer is usually "NO". He believes that the local historian "fusses with the parish pump", that we are "cemetery crawlers with a graveyard philosophy", that we are "ancestor-worshippers", or that we are "merely antiquarians", that we repeat myths and legends and old wives' tales. Local history, he says, is too parochial, and too antiquarian, and too genealogical to have any real value for the greater study of human society in which he is engaged. Local history, he says, is full of errors and inaccuracies and too obviously the work of enthusiastic but incompetent amateurs.

Is there anything in these allegations? Are they completely false? Or is there some truth in what is said about us—usually behind our backs of course, or put in much politer terms? I think we should examine these allegations with an open mind. By so doing I hope that at the least we may learn something about ourselves and what we are doing.

First let us remind ourselves what history is. History comes from a Greek word which means "to enquire" or "to investigate". It means the record of what has happened, so far as it can be ascertained. Some historians have taken history to include the investigation of all that has happened, including the origin of the universe. Others would restrict history to the story of man and his society. Usually however it is restricted yet further still and it is distinguished from such studies as archaeology and anthropology by being the investigation of written records, rather than of evidence based on monuments and artifacts and legends.



But the historian has to do much more than seek out and set forth the records of the past. First he has to test his evidence to make sure it is reliable. Then he has to present it in such a way that it has some meaning, at least in so far as it helps to make the past credible. Hence, in earlier periods of time when the evidence is scant, the historian may have to generalize on the basis of little information, just as the archeologist builds up a remarkably complete picture of a civilization by examining a few pieces of shaped brick or stone. In the later periods, when historical evidence becomes vast and well-nigh unmanageable, his biggest task is to select the material which he needs to produce his picture and make his generalisations.

This work of reconstruction, the stage beyond that of the collection and the testing of primary evidence, is a very important function of the historian. And this is the reason why history is not a final objective study. "*Il n'y a pas d'histoire, mais seulement des histories*". There isn't one history, but as many histories as there are historians. Inevitably a finished historical reproduction also reflects something of the historian himself and of the contemporary ideas and attitudes among which he lives and moves. Furthermore, although the historian knows that his picture can never be complete, although he may be working along in only one small narrow field which is only a small part of the whole territory, although he knows that the picture he sees and perceives will never be the same as that seen by anyone else, yet the historian's chief aim is to add his own personal contribution to the recovery of the past and to its reconstruction as a means of explaining the present. He is thus still concerned with the whole story of man; and his own investigation must illuminate some part of that greatest of all dramas.

Obviously, in this process of discovering, selecting, testing, interpreting and presenting history, anything from the past is possible grist for the historian's mill. A well-known Canadian historian on this programme, Mr. Louis Blake Duff, once put this very succinctly. He said "History has no rubbish heap". Nevertheless at the same time, the process of producing or presenting history means that some things have to be shelved, or pigeon-holed, even if they are not actually cast into the garbage can. Everything cannot be put in. If one attempts to put too much into a reproduction it destroys the shape and meaning of the historical presentation. History, therefore, may have no garbage can—but the historian must have lots of filing cabinets—and he must often use them in the way that bureaucrats are alleged to use their filing systems, *i.e.* to file away letters that can't be destroyed but which the bureaucrat wishes to forget.

I think that local historians are often not sufficiently ruthless in their filing away. They are too inclined to collect and distribute everything. This lays them open to the charge by the professional historian that they are antiquarians rather than historians.

The difference between an antiquary and a historian is that the antiquary is interested in the past for its own sake, while the historian is interested in it because it makes the present intelligible. Antiquarianism has its place, its use, and its value. But if a local historian becomes too much of an antiquary he must be

prepared to accept the challenge of the historian that what he is doing is not really history.

A second allegation that is made about local historians is that they are "ancestor-worshippers",—or, if they are interested in some one else's ancestors rather than their own, that they are genealogists rather than historians. Here again the charge includes some truth. It is not necessarily unjust; and again it may not be as derogatory a comment as some of the professional historians seem to believe. Everyone who has worked in the field of local history knows how valuable is the accumulation of information that will identify the characters that he meets. And the reconstruction of genealogical information is a highly specialised task which someone has to undertake. It is fortunate indeed that some people are fascinated by such a laborious task which others, who want to make use of the results, would find dull and boring. The real point at issue is, then, whether too many local historians become over-interested in genealogy.

A second point on this question arises out of motivation. Information about ancestry, on this continent far more than in Europe, is one of the most important sources of interest in local history. To criticise the amount of interest that local historians show in genealogy is to criticise one of the chief sources of income for many local historical societies. The most prolific source of enquiries about genealogy comes from people who want to prove their claim to be a Daughter of the American Revolution, a United Empire Loyalist, or a United Daughter of the Confederacy, or some other pious filial organization. Individuals whose ancestors mistakenly by-passed the patriotic movements from which such claims derive, attempt to trace their ancestry back to some pioneer whose crossing of the Atlantic—is regarded, *per se* as a source of virtue and prestige. Some go further still, jump the Atlantic, and establish a pedigree back into the Middle Ages—one which is invariably found to be of gentle origin. Thus, North Americans, who pride themselves on rating a man for what he is and what he can do, at the same time search vigorously for an ancestry which values a man on the basis of what his ancestors did.

Now you can argue on both sides of the case about the merits or demerits of this kind of ancestor-worship—and the side which you take will probably depend on how successful you are in your own search for evidencing what is called "good stock". But the question of the value of the individual motivation is not what I am concerned with here. My point is that, where so much interest in local history derives from this source, the professional historian finds some justification for saying that local history is overweighted by genealogists, cemetery-crawlers, and by "the philosophy of the graveyard". If a local historical society puts all its publication funds into genealogy, then it seem to me to be a poor distortion of the purpose for which such a historical society exists.

More serious than these charges against local historians which arise from antiquarianism and ancestor-worship are the accusations that many erroneous stories have gained circulation and have become hallowed truths. The historian's task of reproducing an accurate picture of the past is thus not carried out. Local



history is particularly susceptible to this kind of weakness, not because of the incompetence of local historians (though no doubt that sometimes causes it) but rather because of the nature of the subject and of the sources. The memory of old men, when told to the historian or set down in reminiscences, is a very large source of local history; yet the human memory is the most fallible kind of historical evidence that we have. An enthusiastic amateur historian recently told me that she had been prevented by Indian secretiveness from discovering the facts about a certain Iroquois legend. Then she got hold of two very old men who were willing to reveal the secret. She did not worry that the incident had happened 200 years before these old men were born! Worse still, stories grow up that are based on rumour or legends and which in the course of time become accepted as fact. It is often very difficult to refute such stories when they have got a real hold.

Perhaps more serious than the allegations of inaccuracy is the charge that local history is the history of the parish pump and has little meaning. To this local historians have replied that, on the contrary, you can't write general history until you have studied the history of all the component parts—that the story of the nation is the sum total of all the component local history. Now that retort just isn't true. There is much more in the national story than the aggregation of local histories; and much of the local historian's work must be discarded when the national story is told. However, it is certainly true that the national historian can produce a much more complete picture when the local histories have all been written and that he should not ignore them. In the social and economic fields particularly, he will draw heavily on the work of the local historian. It is at the level of local history that the historian touches the lives of ordinary men and women and the historian needs to include them in his overall picture.

This brings us to what is, I think, a key problem in the writing of local history, namely the question of its relation to the writing of general history. Too often the local historian forgets that his community did not exist in a vacuum. He forgets that it is part of the history of the nation and of the human race. The local historian should always keep this in the back of his mind. There are differences of opinion about how far he should go in this respect. In 1897 Professor J. Franklin Jameson wrote: "By avoiding fussy antiquarianism and looking carefully at the larger aspects of local history, they [local historians] would accomplish the difficult task of serving both God and Mammon". A local historical society's aim, he went on, should be to present "American history locally exemplified". On the other hand, as Mr. Duff has written, national history, national events, national figures are outside the scope of local history, except in so far as they relate to the area.

Obviously this raises problems for the local historian. What should he include and what leave out? How shall he arrange his work and how far shall he relate it to what went on elsewhere? In this respect, I think that there are at least two different kinds of local history varying with place and perhaps with period. Some places have figured largely in the main stream of the national development.

Their local history could not be entirely disentangled from the general story, nor must an attempt to keep it separate be made. On the other hand, care must be taken that the local story of such places is not lost in the recounting of events that had a wider significance.

Most places, however, have played no central role in national development. These should be considered rather as examples of settlement and development, in order to illustrate the general national story. In both cases, a good rule to follow is one laid down by Professor Donald Parker in a book called *Local History, How to Gather and Publish It* which appeared in 1944. He suggests that "waste of effort on non-essentials is easily prevented by keeping before one the question: What would an intelligent outsider want to know about this community or this subject?"

Professor Parker says that the aim of the local historian must be to make a useful contribution to the goal of all historical effort—"the understanding of the world in which we live", and he points out that within the field of local history there are useful specialised subjects which are worthwhile, such as the history of a simple family, the growth of a business, the history of a church, or the life of an individual. The aim which he indicates is, of course, the same aim as that of the general historian. Neither can ignore the fact that they are seeking to give some meaning to their presentation of the past; and both must make use of their speculative faculties in presenting their materials.

A few brief instances will illustrate these points. Fort Frontenac, the French fort built on the present site of Kingston, played an important part in the history of the French fur trade which was the life blood of New France. Its history is therefore well known as part of the national story. As the fur trade moved westwards, Fort Frontenac became important as an entreport at which cargoes were transferred from lake schooner to river batteaux. But until careful study of the local scene was made, it was not noticed that Fort Frontenac continued also to be a going concern as a fur trading post, and that it actually operated at a profit until the eve of the Seven Years' War.

Similarly, Kingston's settlement and early development, and also to a large extent its decline from the middle of the nineteenth century, was based on its function as a port of transshipment. Until recently this point was not adequately stressed, largely because the eyes of local historians were focussed too narrowly on the local scene. In the case of Kingston's decline, they did seek a wider cause but, as a result of statements made in a contemporary pamphlet, they placed too much emphasis on the fact that Kingston had lost its status, which it had held briefly, of being the capital of the Province of Canada, and also on the withdrawal of imperial garrisons to fight in the Crimean War.

Local history, then, must be written with the broader picture as a background. It needs skill to set the special story in its correct setting. It demands a sense of proportion. Too many local histories in North America start with Columbus. Some go further back to Leif Ericson; and I have even seen volumes on the history of small North American communities which began with Adam and Eve and



Noah! On the other hand it is just as wrong to tell about happenings on Main Street without saying where Main Street goes to; or to start with an account of early settlement without showing where people came from or what part the city played in the national economy. This kind of weakness is all too evident in much local history; and it is up to those of us who are working in the field to correct them. For the local historian has an essential task and performs vital service to the community.

History is the memory of the human race. A nation without a history is exactly in the same state as a man without a memory. The man who has lost his memory is a lost soul. The nation which forgets its past is a lost nation. We have inherited a society which has been built by the sweat and tears of generations of by-gone men and women. We must repay to the future the debt we owe to the past. We cannot defend and develop our society unless we understand it. We cannot maintain it unless we know how it grew! The spirit of a community depends on the growth of a sense of tradition and continuity. This is just as important in the local sphere as in the national; and there is nothing incompatible between loyalty to one's village or town, and loyalty to one's country and perhaps even loyalty to the human race. The function of the local historian is to develop that civic pride which is the true basis of all good citizenship.

RICHARD A. PRESTON

## DOCUMENTS OF WESTERN HISTORY

## The Edward J. Brooks Letters: Part I

In this issue of *Saskatchewan History* we are privileged to present a first installment of selections from the letters of Edwin Jackson Brooks, a distinguished pioneer of Indian Head. The original letters are owned by his son, Mr. Murray G. Brooks of Barrie, Ontario, who made them available to Archives of Saskatchewan for copying and with whose permission they are being published, in part, at this time.

Edwin Brooks was born in Lennoxville, Quebec, in 1848, and attended Bishop's College School. For some years he was engaged in merchandizing business with his father in that community. In 1882 he migrated to Western Canada, arriving in Winnipeg early in May. In the latter part of June he and his brother Edward joined those who were seeking homesteads in the Qu'Appelle-Indian Head district. Edwin had also undertaken to act as agent for a Mr. McFee of Winnipeg in establishing land claims. The brothers travelled as far as Brandon by train, then by wagon over the trail leading west into the District of Assiniboia. Their plans to secure homesteads in the vicinity of what is now Indian Head were frustrated by the Qu'Appelle Valley Farming Company ("Bell Farm") which had secured a large tract of land from the federal government and from the C.P.R. Edward Brooks returned to Eastern Canada, but Edwin remained, working on the railway out of Broadview, doing carpentry work on the Bell Farm, and clerking in stores in Indian Head. In 1883 he went into partnership with George P. Murray, founding the firm of Murray and Brooks, General Merchants, at Indian Head. In 1884 he brought out his wife and children from Eastern Canada, and filed on a homestead north of the town. He combined farming with merchandizing, and became the sole owner of the business after Mr. Murray's death.

Edwin Brooks was on the first board of trustees of the Wide Awake School District No. 54 and is credited with suggesting that colorful name, which persists to this day. He was a member of the jury which tried Louis Riel for high treason in Regina in 1885, and was the only jurymen who spoke French. He died in Indian Head on March 26th, 1939, after a long life marked by leadership in many civic and community enterprises.

Edwin Brooks married Helene Outhred, the "Nellie" of the following letters, in 1876. They had eleven children. During the two years when he was establishing himself in the West, Brooks wrote each week to his wife. His letters are remarkably vivid and candid reflections of his thoughts and experiences, and must have been a source of great comfort and interest to his lonely wife and children. For the historian today they provide many significant and intimate insights which cannot fail to enlarge our understanding of the opening years of prairie settlement.

*The Editor*

On the prairie  
Tuesday, July 4, 1852

My dear Nellie:

I expect to have a chance to send this letter to Winnipeg tomorrow and know you will be anxious to hear how we are getting along. We are within about 4 miles of my destination and if I cannot find land there, I shall have to work back down the railway line about twelve miles. The land here we are told is all taken up but we do not propose to believe all we hear but rather see and find out for ourselves. If you have a map of this country, you find Fort Qu'Appelle and we are within 25 miles of there.<sup>1</sup> If I find it necessary to remain here, I will probably have to go to the Fort for my mail. I am very anxious to hear from you I have not received a letter for about 3 weeks and you know a good many things might happen in that time. If I had time I would give you an account of our trip up here but will leave that for another letter. I am writing in my tent, time 8.40 evening and just as light as day. There are four mounted policeman camped within a few feet of us. They have a prisoner with them taking him to Qu'Appelle<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Brooks was probably writing this letter from the vicinity of present-day Indian Head.

<sup>2</sup> Brooks probably means Fort Qu'Appelle, where there was a N.W.M.P. post. The present-day town of Qu'Appelle did not exist as yet.



for trial. The prisoner was selling liquor on the Railroad.<sup>3</sup> The mosquitoes are something awful in this country. They almost eat men and horses up alive. We have to keep a good smudge up most of the time. The roads from Brandon (where I last wrote you) to here are generally awful bad. We got along all right but saw a great many teams stuck and badly stuck. I will try and write to Robbie next time. You had better write to Winnipeg as usual and if I remain here I will have them forwarded. I hope to hear good news when I do hear. The weather has been hot for a couple of days and my neck and hands are badly burned. The plaguey mosquitoes are nearly eating me up. We have been very well but have had a hard time of it. Shouldn't like to go over the same road many times. I have thought of you most all of the time since I left Winnipeg and want to hear from you dreadfully but do not expect to for two weeks at least and perhaps a month.

With very much love for yourself and the boys.

Your affn boy  
Edwin

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South Qu'Appelle<sup>4</sup>  
10th July 1882

I wrote to you and Ma last week on my way up but perhaps you will get this letter about as soon as the other one. Edward and I have just returned to camp after walking seven miles. I am using my knee for a writing desk, and don't find it a very good one. I must tell you something about our experiences on the trail, and to do so must refer to my notebook. We did not leave Brandon until the 28th June. Edward was quite sick for a couple of days before that which delayed our departure. We went about thirty miles the first day. The trail was not very bad but we got stuck early in the evening in a bog hole, and were obliged to take out the *old grey mare* and unload all of our provisions and outfit and then we worked like a couple of niggers for a full hour before the wagon could be got out. We pitched our tent at 9 o'clock and had our supper after that in the dark. It commenced raining very soon after camping and rained awfully hard, accompanied by thunder and lightning. We managed to keep dry and warm. The next morning we started at 7 o'clock. The roads were very bad but we travelled slowly, determined not to get stuck again if possible to avoid it, and not wishing to have any accident on the way. The weather was very pleasant most all day. 30th Pleasant day again. We made it a rule to start by 7 o'clock and did not generally camp in the evening again until 8 o'clock which made it pretty hard work for all concerned, but we were anxious to arrive at our destination as soon as possible. Passed today through an alkali district and hardly saw a tree all day. A mounted policeman stopped us and asked if we had any liquor aboard. Edward told him we were temperance fellows and never drank. He remarked that nearly every man on the

<sup>3</sup> Under federal legislation, prohibition was in force in the North-West Territories, and a special effort was made to enforce the law during the construction of the C.P.R.

<sup>4</sup> Not present-day Qu'Appelle, but rather in the vicinity of Indian Head; the latter name had not yet been adopted: see the letter dated September 21, 1882.

road was temperate but still lots of *liquor was being smuggled* across the line into the North West. He let us pass all right and we very soon went into camp. Edward fried some ham and snipe for supper which went first rate. *July 1.* Dominion day found us still on the trail. We went over the worst roads today that we had yet seen. A young man named Gamble camped near us at night. We were glad to have his company, and he was very glad to have ours as he was travelling all alone. He is going all over the North West and does not expect to return to Winnipeg until fall. Edward shot a rabbit today and we all had a big feed on it and ham. Rained very heavily at night, and the thunder and lightning was something awful. Lots of half-breeds' camps near us. We meet lots of these fellows every day going to Flat Creek for freight. They generally drive either a horse or an ox, hitched to a Red River cart. One man will drive about six. Sunday we rested all day. Made oatmeal pudding for dinner. Gamble cooked rice for supper and Edward went into the bean business so you see we eat and live as well as we know how. I laid under the wagon all afternoon reading my bible and the Witnesses<sup>5</sup> you sent me. *3rd* We had breakfast at 6 o'clock. I make Edward do most of the cooking and I sleep. We saw lots of wagons stuck today in the mud. Had several friendly chats with the women. It seemed good to see one of the fair sex and have a talk with them. One woman told us she was perfectly satisfied with her experience in the N. West. They had been stuck several times. I must write to Robbie this time as promised. I hardly know what to do about your letters. The mail comes here but once in 3 weeks and then we have to go 20 miles for it. If I thought I should not go to Winnipeg before that time I would write to John to forward it. You may just as well direct your letters to Winnipeg and I will get them all right after a while. I am very anxious to hear from you and must have a letter soon if I have to go for it.

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South Qu'Appelle  
19 July 1882

I suppose write what day I will, you will receive my letters very irregularly. I am going *down town* this morning and will leave this with one of our neighbors who often has chances to send letters to Winnipeg. We expect the cars to be running here by next week Saturday. They are less than 40 miles away from here now and are laying track at the rate of three miles and over a day. We hope after their arrival to be able to get our mails oftener than once in three weeks. When I get your letters it will have been nearly eight weeks since I heard from you and I hope to hear nothing but good news of my dear wife and little ones. In order to mail your letters before I had to walk about ten miles; that is, five miles and return. I hurt my knee the day before and it has been quite lame ever since but think it will be all right again soon. When we get a little tired of ham we go shooting snipe. There are lots of them here and they are very nice eating. Edward makes quite a cook. We eat a good deal of oatmeal, rice, beans, ham, and pancakes and so far they agree very well with us. Have been out of bread for nearly a week,

<sup>5</sup> The well known Montreal paper, favourite reading in Canadian Protestant families for many years.



and cannot always get it from the boarding houses on the railroads. It has rained more or less nearly every day since I wrote to you before, and generally rains very hard. The Witnesses you sent me are about thread-bare from being read. We have not seen a paper for four weeks, but probably will get a few from some of our neighbors. Edward is trying to build a house on his lot. As there is very little timber in this country we have to make use of sods. These make a very warm house but of course do not last a great while. Last Saturday was washing day with me and I had quite a time washing my handkerchiefs and stockings, but succeeded in making them look very much better after a good deal of hard scrubbing. My knuckles have been quite sore since. My trunk is still down at Brandon but is all right in a store house. I am wearing my old coat and vest and one of my blue shirts, and find that they suit this country very well. I always liked a hard bed and I must say I have had nothing else since leaving home. Our present one the harder of the whole lot. The bare ground nearly. Merely a blanket or so between us and mother earth, but we eat well and sleep well and feel well for all this. We have good neighbors. (The nearest one is  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles away, and he lives in a wagon box) and, all the vacant land around here is about taken up, so that we do not expect any nearer neighbors until the town of Qu'Appelle<sup>6</sup> starts. When, if I can get a job in the town, I will accept it and still locate at night on my present section viz. No. 4. We are afraid the government will not get around to receive our entry this year; in that case we would be obliged to remain close by our section, so as to prevent anyone from jumping it. After the entry is made we can leave to be away 6 months without any such danger. If we cannot enter here this year, I will try and find a section about eighteen miles east of here. You never saw anything as plentiful (excepting mosquitoes and black flies) as gophers are. We see hundreds of them every day. Our horse has a very bad foot caused by gravel getting into it and I have felt quite blue for several days in consequence. We do what we can to help him and hope for the best. Blackbirds are quite plentiful. You tell little Allan and Harry as well as Robbie that these little birds like the pony very much and I often see as many as two on his back at once having a ride and singing away as merrily as possible . . .

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South Qu'Appelle,  
25th July 1882.

. . . It is expected that the cars will be running as far west as here by the middle of next week. Although I am not located very near them ( $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles) still we are very high comparatively and can see them quite distinctly. I have been down to the railroad dump several times of late sometimes for bread (which I did not always get) and again for rice, etc. There are a couple of women in one of the boarding houses, and I pay them a visit. One of them is the baker and as she and I are now on quite friendly terms, I have no fear of being without bread again as long as the boarding houses remain in the vicinity. She is quite a large fine looking woman and I like her first rate. I suppose I would like most any woman

<sup>6</sup> Indian Head, as it was to be called: see letter dated September 21, 1882.

at the present time for I have seen but three of them since we arrived here. I have been building a house on my lot since I last wrote you. It is not yet finished but it is merely from want of material. We make them out of sods. Mine is 12 feet square outside and 8 feet square inside. . . Sods make a very warm house, if not a very durable one. The sods here are quite different from those at home. Here they plough but two inches deep and the plough makes a sod, 12 inches wide and are square and nice so that it is not a very difficult matter to build quite a good looking and very warm residence at little expense. There is a Company<sup>7</sup> here who claim all the land in this vicinity for ten miles square this includes Edward's section and my own besides a great many of our neighbors. We do not propose however to give up our claims to them or anybody else until they produce papers to show a better title than we have. We have a meeting this evening to consider the situation. We would be very sorry to have to leave this place as the land is very good indeed and we have good neighbors and besides that, there would be great difficulty to finding again as good land as near the railroad. We don't propose to be bluffed off anyway and hope to hang on. We have possession anyway, and that is 9/10th of the battle. It has been quite warm for several days and exceedingly sultry. The mosquitoes have taken advantage of the weather and bit lively. They are a terror in this country. We build a smudge every evening in our tent and the question often arises which is preferable mosquitoes or smoke for sometimes we nearly choke. . .

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South Qu'Appelle  
1st August 1882

. . . I took your last letter down in the evening and started to walk back rather late (3 miles) and darkness overtook me. I had quite a hunt after the tent. In fact hunted around until after eleven o'clock (3 hours) and then didn't find it. I hated awfully to remain out all night on the prairie as the night was very cold and windy and threatened rain, but I could see no other way for it. I got dreadfully tired walking so much and finally I gave up the hunt as useless, pulled off my coat and crawled into some bushes, made me a bed as well as I could of the twigs and grass, and pulled my coat over my head to keep the mosquitoes from devouring me. I laid here until four o'clock and I can tell you I was glad to see daylight. I was nearly frozen. My teeth chattered like everything and my legs were like a couple of sticks. You may be sure I hustled around to get warm and find the camp. I was about three quarters of a mile away from it but could not see it until some time after I got up. I could find nothing to go by when I got up that looked natural but fortunately went in the right direction. Reached camp and mixed up a good and strong dose of Perry Davis' painkiller and took that. This soon warmed me up and I had a good sleep and felt all right next day excepting being stiff and lame. When you catch me out again in this country after dark without matches or a blanket something will be amiss more than common. It is quite a common occurrence for people here to have to remain out

<sup>7</sup> Qu'Appelle Valley Farming Co. ("Bell Farm"). For further information on this company, see T. Petty, *Echoes of the Qu'Appelle Lakes District* (Indian Head, 1955), pp. 36-40.



over night and very seldom feel any the worse for it. Edward picked quite a little batch of strawberries on Saturday. Isn't it awfully late for this kind of fruit? We have been out of bread for a long time now. I very seldom go down to the Railroad to see my women or I should get some. We have pancakes instead. These go all right as long as we eat them while hot. Edward may go to Winnipeg soon if he does will get some cornmeal, etc. They ask 8 cts. for cornmeal here, 10 cts. oatmeal, 15 cts. rice, \$2.00 syrup, 25 cts. sugar, 25 cts. ham and bacon, 30 cts. for about 4 bread. We have bought nothing but rice and bread since leaving Brandon. We bought a keg of syrup at Brandon (4 Imperial gallons) and used up the whole of it in a month. Can buy some of the railroad contractors for four dollars and fifty cents a keg. This is cheaper than we can buy anywhere this side of Winnipeg. We paid \$4.75 for ours at Brandon. We drink tea once a day. Don't use coffee at all. Use brook water and have to go about a mile or more for it. There is a good deal of excitement here just now about the town. Where it is to be located we hear all kinds of rumors. If it is on No. 23, Edward should make a good thing and if he does I will. We think we can hold the land all right but may be mistaken. We have sent a delegate to Ottawa to find out. Of course my pay goes on just the same but still I am interested in Edward's, and he has a splendid 320 acres. . .

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So. Qu'Appelle  
18th Aug. 1882

I have very little indeed to write this week, in fact almost nothing. I am however sorry to tell you that I have received instructions from Mr. McFee to proceed to Pile of Bones Creek<sup>s</sup> fifty miles west from here and take up some land there for him. We will probably try and hold this here as well and I will try and make this my headquarters. I don't intend to go there to live anyway, it is bad enough here but it will be I expect a great deal worse there, further from the Railway and all alone excepting for neighbors. I shall probably go up there and remain about a week and then visit it occasionally afterwards to keep it from getting jumped. The mail arrived yesterday but the papers you so kindly sent me have not yet put in an appearance. We did not receive any letters either, in fact we have received letters but once since we left Winnipeg 2 months ago, but they will probably put in an appearance before long. Trains are running quite regularly here now and we enjoy seeing them. There will probably be a good town here. It is said the station will be built here at once and the town laid out and put on the market. There is a telegraph office here so that we can always receive or send messages. The tent town is growing quite rapidly. There are lots of stores and boarding houses, livery stables, etc. It is supposed the great city of this country will be at Pile of Bones Creek and this is the reason why McFee wants me to go up there. I do not expect to locate on land nearer than ten or twelve miles from the city. We had preaching here last Sunday and I went to hear it and was very glad I did so. It was a Methodist preacher and I expect he will be here soon again. I saw a couple of pure blooded Indians down at the station

<sup>s</sup> Wascana Creek.

a couple of days ago and could not tell whether both were Squaws or not but finally made up my mind that they were man and wife. They were both dressed as nearly alike as possible, had long braided hair, wore lots of jewellery and had their faces painted with Vermillion paint. . .

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South Qu'Appelle,  
23rd Aug. 1882.

I wrote to you last week that I intended going up to Pile of Bones Creek. I did so. Started from here Saturday morning and arrived there about seven o'clock in the evening. Found no hotel whatever to stop at, and consequently had to do the best I could. As I had plenty of grub along with me, and my thick blanket as well, I got along better than at one time I supposed possible. I camped in a large tent used as a stable. There was plenty of fresh air, in fact rather too much. There were several of us in the same predicament and as misery likes company we were all happy together. We got tea for breakfast which warmed us up nicely and ate bread and cooked corn beef. I am very sorry to say that I spent that Sabbath day as I hope never to spend another. I hunted all around the country for a section for McFee and pitched his tent. I did this because I was later getting up there than he would have liked and was very much afraid of losing any chance to secure land for him, but I can assure you I would not do it again for McFee, myself or anybody else for I never was so ashamed of myself or hated myself more for doing any one act, and I shall endeavor to spend my Sabbath hereafter so as to have a higher opinion of myself than I did have last Sabbath. I returned to the city in the evening and started out again Monday and was gone all day. I have not been so sore and played out as I was yesterday for a long time. The prairie is altogether different from what it is here and driving on it is just like driving over ploughed ground. I do not like the country nearly as well as here; the land is very heavy and not the least particle of wood can be found without driving from twenty to thirty miles for it. Where the town is to be, the land is quite high and I like the situation well. Can you imagine Uncle Albert driving to Sherbrooke for a load of poplarwood, this is about the distance one would have to haul it to what is supposed to be the great city of this province. There is plenty of water there which is of course a great thing. I expect there will be the capital of this province and the city that so much anxious thought has been expended upon.<sup>9</sup> The Government have reserved for some reason or other, 6 miles by 9 miles so that squatters (excepting a few already located there sometime) will hardly derive very much benefit from the town. The country between here and there is in places well timbered but very sloughy. Where no sloughs are to be found timber is scarce. We are almost certain to have a good town here and perhaps as good a one as Pile of Bones. They talk of calling Pile of Bones Leopold after the Duke of Albany.<sup>10</sup> I returned yesterday. Started from there at about 10 o'clock and never arrived at the Station here until 7 o'clock,

<sup>9</sup> For a full discussion of the selection of Regina as the capital, see Earl Drake, *Regina, The Queen City* (Toronto, 1955), Chapter 1.

<sup>10</sup> Youngest son of Queen Victoria.



and then it took me an hour to walk up to the camp. Boiled rice had to suffer for a few minutes. I caught a bad cold while away and my nose bothers me a good deal to-day. Edward and I are going up again to-morrow, and will probably return Saturday. I could not finish my work for McFee without Edward's assistance. I have written you a good deal about my trip up and I am afraid you will find it rather dull. There are several Mounted Policemen stationed there and I can tell you they look after there whiskey dealers awfully sharp. One never sees a drunken man in this N.W.T. or if ever very seldom. A man found with a bottle in his possession is either obliged to drink the contents down at once or spill it. Otherwise he is hauled up and fined or imprisoned. I got a chance this morning to hire out to a man who keeps store here; he wants me to go to work next week. I think I shall do so . . .

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So. Qu'Appelle,  
Sept. /82

I intended writing yesterday but had no time to do so. I commenced working in a store for Walsh and Co. last Tuesday morning and as we have been moving goods from one tent into another and getting in new goods and marking them we have been pretty busily employed. We have the post office for the present as well so that I have an opportunity of seeing all the late papers. . .

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So. Qu'Appelle  
17 Sept. 1882

. . . We heard yesterday through two different sources that the government had decided to give us our land. If true this is good news. The squatters at Regina are a worse lot than we are here. The govt. have been trying to get them to give up the land and they not only refuse to do so but have banded together and go armed and are determined to fight it out. Probably the govt. will give them the land all right. I don't believe the Mounted Police will make Regina their headquarters as their major has condemned the place on account of the scarcity of wood and the poor quality of the water. The water all through this country is hardly fit to use and a great many just now are quite unwell, biliousness principally or something like it with a good deal of fever. Perhaps it is the Red River fever. When I remain here over night I don't get anything to eat but crackers and cheese etc., pretty dry and cold living. The boss intends getting up a stove and we will try then and have warm meals with tea or coffee. I had a horseback ride Monday. Went 9 miles and back (18 miles). My legs have been stiff ever since. I don't believe I have been on a horse before for fifteen or twenty years. One of the young fellows that works in the store with me got lost on the prairie the night before last. Fortunately he had 2 pairs of blankets with him and kept warm. He did not wake up until nearly noon the next day, and was not far from camp. Edward has put out a light for me several times, otherwise I would have

had to repeat my first experience. Sunday was a terribly hot day as also was Friday and Saturday. I notice my boss keeps open on Sunday but if he expects me to work for him on that day he will be very much disappointed. . .

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So. Qu'Appelle N.W.T.  
21st September 1882

. . . I have been very busy for the last two days marking goods and trying to get them into shape. A tent is the meanest place out to keep goods in. The dust flies like everything and we find it almost impossible to keep things clean. Mr. Walsh (my boss) has bought out a hotel here and takes possession on Saturday next. He asked my opinion about buying out the business and I told him I thought money could be made out of it. Of course, whiskey is not sold, in fact nothing stronger than hop beer and cider. They have about 20 boarders on hand and as most of the trains stop here for grub a good business is done . . . The name of this place for the present is Indian Head, and I can tell you there is great indignation here over the name. The Indians on the reserve quite near here received their money from the government last week and have been spending money very freely for a few days. I believe they receive about five dollars a head. Very few, if any of them, can speak English, but we get along all right. I shall have to learn their language. We have green apples to sell and get five cents each for them. . .

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Indian Head  
November 2nd 1882

. . . Some of the boys had a stag dance here last night but of course did not enjoy themselves as much as they would have done had there been a few women present. It was very stormy last Sunday and blew quite lively. Most of us were glad to remain in doors. Some of the people are using sleds but the greater number of them prefer using wagons. I hardly think the snow will remian. There were a couple of Englishmen here yesterday and are thinking of buying out some business in the Northwest. Their friends would like to have them settle here on account of not being able to get liquor. Perhaps they will decide to buy Mr. Mr. Walsh out. . . Everyone is busy getting their houses into shape for winter. I have not yet heard from McFee and perhaps never will. I see that he is quite interested in the sale of Regina lots. Moose Jaw will I believe be a much better place in the near future than Regina. Lumber business is brisk here. Common boards sell for \$40. Matched lumber for \$50 per 1000 feet. Prairie chickens are very plentiful and will be quite easy to shoot now that cold weather has set in. I find the book you sent me very interesting and I am sure it will do me good to read it. I will lend it to some of my neighbors when I have finished. We are trying to get the name of this place changed. We don't like the present name. With very much love for the boys and yourself.



Broadview, N.W.T.  
18th Jany 1883.

. . . You will notice that I am in a different place from usual, and of course you will want to know the reason why. You will also notice if you examine the map that I have gone east from Indian Head . . . I came down here . . . and hired out to work on the railroad. If a man is willing to work in this country there seems plenty of chances to get employment. I have to work hard but feel none the worse for it. Can eat anything and plenty of it. I shovelled gravel and clay for a couple of days out of a hole, am now shovelling snow off the track. I received a telegram a couple of days ago from our old Cook at Walsh's Hotel to go to Regina as carpenter. The pay is I believe \$2.50 a day. I get \$2.00 here but I prefer remaining here unless I can get \$3.00 a day as I am very comfortable where I am, good board and warm beds. Yesterday was a terrible cold day 33 below zero, and a strong wind which made it equal to 50° below, everyone of us got frost bitten, some of the men quite badly. I froze one of my cheeks and the tip of my nose, but gave them both a good vigorous rubbing and they were all right again at once. We have a chance to make overtime. Last Saturday the first day I worked I made 2 days. We all took the cars and went East 65 miles and did not return until Sunday morning at 3 o'clock. We only worked a half hour all this time. We were ten hours going 65 miles and the track was perfectly clear all the way. The Engines on the C.P.R. are nearly all played out from overstraining the tubes last summer. Broadview is about the size of Indian Head but as it is the end of a Railroad division there is plenty to do and should become quite a Railroad town. . .

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Broadview  
23rd Jany 1883

It is very stormy out this afternoon and we are not at work so that I intend commencing a letter to you, and will try and answer some of your questions &c. I am afraid I have been rather unfaithful in writing to you of late. My letters will very likely go very irregular anyway as half the time there are no trains running. The weather since my last letter to you has been very cold indeed—terrible weather and it is almost impossible to stand the wind. It was 46° below at Winnipeg on Sunday last. The weather west of here has been a great deal rougher than here. It took the Saturday night Express about 20 hours to go from here to Indian Head (45 miles). I see from the papers that the storms in Dakota and Minnesota have been very much worse so far than here. Bad weather gives us plenty to do shovelling snow and I expect we will have a sweet time of it after this blow has settled down. We worked until ten o'clock last night which gave us 1½ days for yesterday. We were called out on Sunday but it was too rough and did not go. We do not have to work on Sundays unless very necessary. I got as far as this in my letter when we were ordered out but as our work was to be partly under shelter we did not mind it very much. I would rather work every day regularly so as not to lose any time this winter. . .

Broadview, N.W.T.

27th Feby 1883

You wonder how people can possibly live in such a cold climate. Do you know that when the Thermr registers 45 without any wind we do not feel the cold, not more if as much as you would at home at 25, but the wind and cold are a terror. Most of the people in this country live in canvas houses boarded up inside and live very comfortable; if people at home lived a winter in such a place they would be thought crazy. Wood is not nearly as scarce as it might be and although poplar, it is very much better than the poplar at home. People need to be very careful not to get caught on the prairie in a blizzard. We had a young blizzard here last week which lasted one afternoon and all night. We did not work outside so that we got along very nicely. It gave us a little more snow shovelling for the next two days than we had been having. For the last two days the weather has been very warm indeed; fancy us working all day to-day in our shirt sleeves, and then too warm. I had my coat off all day to-day and part of yesterday. The snow is melting quite rapidly but I expect there will be a change soon. One of the section men gave me a pair of boots for which I was truly thankful as it is too soft for moccasins and I had nothing else to wear. This gift saves me the expense of a new pair. Did you ever think your husband would have to work on the R.R.! I get along first rate and like my new boss tip-top. I don't intend to kill myself working, but I do intend to be faithful to my employers (let my wages be what they will) and give them a good honest day's work. My boss seems to understand this and trusts me much more than he does most of the others. I think I shall try and get up to Indian Head this week. I am anxoius to find out what the squatters are doing. I received notice from the government to-day that if I wished to remain on the land I must make arrangements to that effect with the Bell Co. as the land had been theirs ever since the 29 of last April. It is very strange that the government could not have told us this before instead of encouraging us to remain. To tell you the truth I feel very much relieved now that they have arrived at some kind of a decision, but consider they have used us very shabbily indeed and I doubt very much if but few of the squatters leave. I understand that out of 48 but two get their land. I am afraid there will be many curses called down upon Sir John A's head but I cannot curse him. I believe it would be a relief for me to punch him. Well, he will get his pay all right enough. I think if I was at Indian Head I could find another section near the town and in that case I would let my old section go. I would have a much better chance now than later as most of the squatters are away and perhaps I could get a better job . . . .

(To be continued)



## The Newspaper Scrapbook

### A GREAT FARMING SCHEME

Sir John Lester Kaye and private secretary arrived in Winnipeg Tuesday morning. The object of his visit to this country is, as is well known, in connection with his extensive farming interests in the Northwest. There are eleven farms owned by the syndicate Sir Lester Kaye represents, distributed through the Northwest, each comprising 10,000 acres. The Balgonie farm is already tolerably well equipped, but vigorous steps are to be adopted to complete the equipment of this and the other farms. To this end an expenditure of \$150,000 has been provided for. The equipment includes building and wire fencing. The buildings on each property will comprise a large central farm house, where the manager and agricultural laborers will reside; a stable which will accommodate 55 working horses; a cattle shed which will accommodate 500 breeding heifers; sheep sheds to accommodate 5,000 sheep, and a piggery to accommodate 300 pigs. Operations will now be pushed forward as rapidly as possible so as to have all the buildings and fencing completed before winter comes on. The cost of the buildings on each farm will be about \$15,000 including the fencing. Extensive measures are also being taken relative to stocking the farms. The Powder River ranch herd, on Mosquito Creek, Alberta, consisting of 63,000 head has been purchased for this purpose and will be distributed among the different farms.

An arrangement has been made to purchase upwards of 50,000 sheep in Washington Territory and Oregon. These will be delivered on the eleven properties in the spring of 1889. Eleven choice Clydesdale stallions have been selected in England and Scotland and will be shipped forthwith. In order to improve the product of the sheep which, by the way, are almost entirely ewes, 1,100 rams have been secured. They include such well known breeds as Cheviots, Shropshires, border Leisters and Cotswolds. In order to improve the breed by a fresh cross with the product of the shorthorns, 99 polled Angus and Galloway bulls are now on their way from Scotland to the Northwest. In the same manner the product of the sows will be improved by the importation of middle and white Yorkshire boars and sows, which he promptly imported and distributed among the farms. One manager and three foremen will be placed on each farm.

— *The Commercial* (Winnipeg), August 20, 1888.

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### LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE LINE

"Hello! Is that the Winnipeg Free Press?"

"Yes. Is that The Leader?"

The above question was asked by the editor of The Leader over the long distance line of the Bell Telephone Co. yesterday afternoon and the answer and second question came from W. F. Payne, news editor of the Free Press. These

words constituted the opening remarks of the first commercial message over the new long distance line which the Bell Company has just completed between the capital cities of Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

. . . . .

But it is not Winnipeg alone with which this new trunk line gives Regina connection. It brings Brandon, Portage la Prairie, Neepawa, Virden and scores of other Manitoba points within actual speaking distance, and through Winnipeg brings us in almost instantaneous touch with Minneapolis, St. Paul, Duluth and other cities and towns in the Dakotas and Minnesota. It breaks the monopoly of the C.P.R. Telegraphs.

The wire to Winnipeg is an all copper wire and when all the testings have been completed and the weak points discovered and strengthened a clear and satisfactory service may be expected.

As already outlined in these columns it is the intention of the Bell Company to make Regina one of the most important points in its system in the West. Lines will be run from this city in all directions. The walls of the new exchange building which the company is erecting here are practically completed, and upon the removal of "Central" to the new building the central energy system, which will do away with ringing a bell to call "Central" will be installed.

The cost of a two-minute conversation between Regina and Winnipeg is \$1.40 with an additional charge of 70 cents for each additional minute. Between the hours of 6 p.m. and 6 a.m., however, night rates are in effect which are only half of the above figures, *viz.*, 70 cents for a two-minute talk and 35 cents for each additional minute. All telephone subscribers in the city have been supplied with copies of the new official directory giving a complete list of phones on the Bell system in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, with tables of rates between the various cities and towns.

—*The Leader* (Regina), November 7, 1906.



## Book Reviews

ONE UNIVERSITY, A HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA 1877-1952. By W. L. Morton. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1957. Pp. 200. \$5.95.

THE University of Manitoba was founded in 1877 as a federation of the three colleges then existing in the province: St. Boniface, a French Catholic institution; St. John's, Anglican; and Manitoba, Presbyterian. Another college, Wesley, was founded soon afterward by the Methodists and federated in the University in 1888. Manitoba and Wesley joined as the United Colleges in 1928 and became United College ten years later, remaining affiliated with the University. St. Paul's College was organized for English-speaking Catholics during the early 1920's and affiliated with the University in 1931. Brandon College, which traces its origin to 1879, was originally a Baptist institution and was prevented by the tenets of that denomination from establishing an affiliation which might be interpreted as a state-church relationship. In 1912 it affiliated with McMaster. However, it suffered great financial difficulties during the great depression and was reorganized as a non-denominational college with city and provincial aid. In this position, affiliation with the University was achieved in 1940. Various professional courses evolved into affiliated colleges or schools, or faculties, of the University. The growing demand for study and research in agriculture led the Province to establish Manitoba Agricultural College in 1904. For twenty years this College was an independent, degree-granting institution, but in 1924 it was integrated with the University, becoming the Faculty of Agriculture and Home Economics. Thus by 1940 all the colleges in the province were affiliated with the University of Manitoba. Many problems remained, "But one provincial system of education with common standards had been achieved". (p. 168.)

Originally the University was only an examining and degree-granting institution. At its founding it was empowered to grant degrees in arts, sciences, and law. But it was not enjoined from granting degrees in other fields, and these have been added from time to time. With two exceptions, it has been the only degree-granting authority in the Province. One of these, already noted, was the Manitoba Agricultural College. The other was in the field of divinity. The Act of 1877 authorized the denominational colleges to form faculties for conferring degrees in theology, and these colleges were empowered to grant such degrees in 1895.

From the beginning there were those who hoped that the University would be a teaching institution, with its own faculty and buildings. While some objected strongly to such a development, it seems inevitable that it would have come about as a result of changes within the society of the Province. Be this as it may, the initial, successful pressure came from a more specific source, the need for pre-professional education. A course leading to a degree in law was established in 1884. The preceding year the Manitoba College of Medicine had been founded and affiliated with the University. Whatever the needs of lawyers, doctors required instruction in the natural sciences, which the colleges were neither

prepared nor required to give. The founding of the medical college led to a struggle for University teaching of science. Such teaching was authorized by the Council of the University in 1889 but not achieved until 1900. Even then, the teaching was done by members of college faculties. Not until 1904 did the University appoint and pay any of its own professors. Since that time the institution has evolved to the proud position of a university in the truest sense of the word.

The University was originally governed by a Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, and Council. This body was dominated by representatives of the Colleges. When the University grew as an independent teaching agency, the question of provincial support to an institution controlled by church colleges became acute. The matter was settled in 1917 when the Province placed the control of the University in the hands of a Board of Governors appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council. No member of this Board could be a member of the staff of the University, or of the staff or board of an affiliated college. Academic matters were delegated, subject to the plenary power of the Board of Governors, to a senate called the University Council. The colleges were represented on this new Council, but their representatives were in the minority.

It was no easy task to reduce to order the complicated history of this state university with which church colleges are affiliated. But Professor Morton has done an admirable job. He has shirked not the responsibilities of an historian. Here the reader learns of the resolution of differences among the colleges, among leaders, and in political and educational thought; of organization and administration; of financial problems and the achievement of provincial support; of the struggles over a site for the University; of the effects of depression and war; of curriculum developments; and of library, laboratory, and research. This is not a "company history". The author shows acumen and courage unusual among historians of colleges and universities. Praise is given where it seems due, but neither persons nor parties are immune to penetrating criticism.

The volume is well-written and well-organized. While it basically follows a chronological order, it is no mere chronicle. The reader finds that he is considering, not decades or administrations, but significant problems and developments. The University of Manitoba has just cause for pride in both its history and its historian.

WILLIAM H. CARTWRIGHT



## Notes and Correspondence

ONE hundred years ago The Palliser Expedition began its explorations and scientific investigations in what are now the prairie provinces, sponsored by the Imperial Government and The Royal Geographical Society. The centenary is being marked by a special broadcast in the "Young Saskatchewan" series of school broadcasts. An article by Allan R. Turner, "Palliser of the Triangle", appears in the Autumn 1957 issue of *The Beaver*, and a series of articles by the same writer will be published by the *Medicine Hat News*, *Calgary Herald*, and the *Winnipeg Tribune*. A series on the Expedition also appeared in the *Regina Leader Post*, prepared by Mr. Tom Petty of Indian Head.

Four largely attended meetings of the Wolverine Hobby and Historical Society have been held since the last report published in *Saskatchewan History*. The annual rally was held in June at the site of Fort Ellice, near St. Lazare, Manitoba, and was attended by over 200 persons. The main speakers were Mr. W. J. McDonald of Yorkton, Honorary President and founder of the Society, and Dr. R. C. Russell of Saskatoon, author of the well known publication *The Carleton Trail*. Others who participated in the proceedings were Mr. Carl Perrin of Indian Head, Mr. Pateman of McAuley, Mr. Arthur Kelly of Welby and Mr. Peter Cropp of Rocanville (speaking on behalf of Mr. John DeLorme of Welby), Mr. Walter Miller of Spy Hill, and Mr. W. W. W. Wilson of Russell, Man.

The July meeting was held in Spy Hill, and was addressed by a former medical practitioner of the district, Dr. F. O. Gilbert, now of Victoria, B.C. Dr. Gilbert spoke on his collection of Indian artifacts (recently presented to the University of Saskatchewan) and on the activities of the local historical society centered in Rocanville in the 1930's. Mr. Laddie Martinovsky of Gerald exhibited colored photographs of the Cypress Hills area.

Members of the Society also participated in the extensive and successful hobby fair and flower show sponsored by the Ladies Auxiliary, B.E.S.L., held in the Spy Hill School on August 15th. Mrs. Barker's press report indicates that the exhibits were unusually numerous and varied, and of high quality. Family heirlooms and antiques brought to the prairies by the pioneers formed one of the many sections of the exhibition. In the evening the visitors had an opportunity of hearing Mr. A. Hudson of Mortlach, speaking on the archaeology of Saskatchewan.

On August 18th the Society held a picnic meeting at the site of the Harmony Colony, south of Spy Hill, which was addressed by Mr. E. Paynter, Director of Wildlife for Saskatchewan, and a son of one of the founders of the Colony. Mr. Paynter recounted the history of this community—"the cradle of the co-operatives in Saskatchewan".

The September meeting was held in the lounge room of the Western Development Museum at Yorkton, and featured a tour of the Museum and a discussion

of the possibility of securing a building to serve as the permanent headquarters for the Society.

The microfilming of school histories by the Saskatchewan Archives Board has been the subject of a number of articles, radio broadcasts, and a television program in recent months. Compiling local histories was a Social Studies project which the Department of Education, in co-operation with the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, instituted to mark the province's Golden Jubilee in 1955. As a result some 1600 schools prepared histories, of which one hundred were published in one form or another. The remaining 1500, of which only one copy exists, are being called in systematically for micro-filming. Over 500 have now been filmed. Through this process about twenty histories can be reduced to occupy a hundred foot roll of 35 mm. film. A rough calculation of Archives staff time involved in this project indicates a minimum of one and one-half hours per book, including correspondence, checking, filming, cataloguing, wrapping and mailing. It is expected that the project will be completed by the end of another year.

The books provide a valuable source of local historical information. They tell the story of the growth of communities, pioneer experiences, church, school and social activities. Letters, diaries, reminiscences, newspapers and minute books have been consulted to provide thorough and accurate information. Many contain fine photographs and maps or charts showing the locations of homesteads and prairie trails. The covers display artistic ability and ingenuity. They include examples of beadwork, leatherwork, engraving on wood and metal, and painting in oils and water colors. While there is a considerable variation in the scope and thoroughness of the books, worthwhile items appear in all of them. Some of the most interesting were compiled by one-room rural schools.

The project may well be unique in Canada. The microfilm copies, preserved in the Archives Division, Legislative Library, Regina, ensure that the valuable information so collected will be readily available for the use of writers, researchers, and other interested persons as the occasion arises.

## *Contributors*

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## A. W. Davey Historic Prints

The Saskatchewan Archives Board is pleased to offer to the public six black and white prints by Mr. A. W. Davey, Saskatchewan artist. These prints, die sunk on heavy paper suitable for framing, depict pioneer themes. Dimensions including border approximate 13 inches by 18 inches.

The prints are reproduced from original sketches prepared for the Jubilee year volume *Saskatchewan, The History of a Province*. The set comprises the following pairs:

- A1 Hudson Bay Co. fur post on river bank.
- A2 Homesteader moving in with oxen and wagon.
- B1 A winter scene with elevator, station and snow fence.
- B2 Pioneer home, sod house, oxen ploughing.
- C1 Threshing outfit on the move (steam era).
- C2 Hauling grain to elevator.

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★ ★ ★

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