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'Independent' Politics In Saskatchewan Before the Nonpartisan League

A desire to find an alternative to the traditional party system was widespread in Western Canada at the turn of the century and remained a theme of its politics for at least two decades afterwards. As early as 1885 the Patrons of Industry, the first farm organization in the West, were deploring the work of partisans among the Western people.

They won't deviate from the old party lines. With them "The King party can do no wrong." Principles are often sacrificed that party may exist. They are partisans, and aim to promote the interests of party. Many of them are seeking lucrative offices as a reward for their allegiance. They won't credit that reforms can be accomplished by any other means than by party. They won't believe that the people can unite in one common desire for their mutual benefit. With them party is supreme and the people are partisans.¹

Experience with party politics had left many farmers with a feeling of despair. To these people the Patrons held out hope, because the Patrons had "thrown partyism overboard" in favor of the adoption of principles which appealed to the "unprejudiced common sense of individuals." Though they achieved some modest success in electing independent farmer candidates, the Patrons eventually broke up as a result of their participation in politics, and their fate was often cited afterwards as an example to farm organizations which might entertain similar ambitions. But the idea was not to be easily dislodged. The desire to "throw partyism overboard" grasped the imagination of farm radicals for many years. Even the federal Progressive party in the 1920's, though it looked and acted (somewhat erratically) like a political party, could never have gained the eminence it did had it not been able to enlist the support of those who regarded its formation as a blow struck at the party system itself. In Alberta the anti-party sentiment issued in the "group government" theory of Henry Wise Wood and in a farmer government which attempted to break from orthodox party forms. In Saskatchewan, however, it left little impression on provincial politics. Until the rise of the Nonpartisan League during the First World War the party system remained virtually unchallenged; and the challenge from that quarter, as it turned out, was trivial. A few years later the parties were able to survive a threat from the provincial Progressives at a time when agrarian parties were forming governments in Alberta and Ontario.

The reasons for the failure of "independent" politics in the early period—before the First World War—can be found in part in the way the two major parties developed. In the period of Territorial government politics had been conducted on a nonpartisan basis, but immediately on the creation of the province in 1905 the Liberals organized themselves into a strong party. They were well-led, handled patronage with good effect and were assiduous in cultivating support from among the stream of settlers from Europe. The Liberals under

¹ Patrons of Industry, *The Political Position of the Patrons*, Rapid City, Man., [1895]

Scott quickly seized the initiative in proposing measures to aid the farmers and they never lost it. The opposition Provincial Rights party was always many steps behind. Its leader, F. W. G. Haultain, was thrown off balance by being passed over as Premier, and party organization was further delayed by his attempt to prolong the nonpartisan tradition. Though able himself, Haultain had few lieutenants with more than average talent, and the only issue the party possessed (and from which its name derived) was for all practical purposes a dead one: the alienation of the province's natural resources to the federal government in 1905. What it stood for beyond that was simply opposition to the Scott government, and it attracted and welcomed the disaffected of all stripes. Because of the looseness of its organization it could embrace both Tories and farm radicals without putting a strain on the principles of either. Though the rival Liberals got the reputation of being the farmers' party, it was none too secure before about 1911. In 1908, for example, the Provincial Rights party nominated as many farmers as the Liberals did; and it could claim quite a few supporters within the leadership of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association. The Provincial Rights party was at first not identified closely with the federal Conservatives. It was the provincial party's misfortune that the link between the two was made fast at the very time that the farmers were engaged on an assault on the Conservative party over its tariff policy. After 1911 most of the farm radicals went elsewhere.

With its appearance of being a perpetual opposition the Provincial Rights party did not offer much attraction for men who wanted to make a career of politics. The Liberals, in contrast, were skillful at drawing off men of ability and ambition from the farmers' organization. The prospect of being called upon to serve in the cabinet was very bright for a farmer who attained high office in the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association if he also had a sound political record. A man like George Langley would have made an excellent leader of the farmers' party which was proposed from time to time. Langley had been associated with working-class movements in England and possessed the instincts of a radical in politics. But on coming to Western Canada he quickly reached the conclusion that third parties and "independent" politics were lost causes; his joining the Liberal party he justified with a few lines from the poet Cowper: "He that would win the race, must guide his horse/Obedient to the customs of the course . . ."² An established party offered the most practical way to accomplishment both for the ambitious and for those who, while they might distrust parties, also recognized that the parties would not be improved by their remaining aloof from them. "I always found on the farm," said Charles Dunning, another farmer turned cabinet minister, in a reference to his entering politics, "that if the pig pen needed cleaning out I had to get inside to do it."³ Though they operated a formidable machine, and though in their administration they retreated in no important respect from the British model, the Liberals did their best to portray their government as a committee of delegates performing as a legislative arm of the

² Related by an acquaintance of Langley.

³ *The Morning Leader*, (Regina), February 15, 1917, p. 1.

farmers' organization—as a true “farmers government.” They were good at playing out the role, and indeed circumstances never permitted them to consider any other: the Premier's annual appearance before the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association to report on his stewardship was more than a conscientious gesture. The farmers insisted on a government that was responsive and accountable in a very direct way to the electorate. They did not insist, however, that a “farmers' government” need be made up wholly or even largely of farmers. In fact, of the twenty-seven Liberals returned in the provincial election of 1908 only eleven were farmers, and only one farmer was given a place in the cabinet.

The opponents of “partyism” had several courses of action open to them. The most thoroughgoing reform was direct legislation, which went straight to the root of the problem: the interposing of party machinery and party interests between public opinion and legislation. The initiative, referendum and recall had been urged by labor organizations in Canada before the turn of the century. The cause was taken up in 1909 by farmers in Manitoba, and support quickly spread into Saskatchewan. The Direct Legislation League of Saskatchewan was formed in 1912 with the intention of enlisting support from farm, labor and temperance groups. Its leadership was predominantly urban, but the reform had the wholehearted support of farm radicals like John Evans, E. A. Partridge and J. E. Paynter. In early 1913 the League was holding two meetings a day at country points and popular support had reached the stage where the government had to do something. It responded in a most disarming way. Several cabinet ministers, including the Premier, announced that they thought highly of direct legislation, taking care to point out, however, that the relationship between the government and the farmers was such that most of its objects were realized already. The government then devised a referendum of a kind that fairly ensured the defeat of the reform. It should be said that, given the nature of the reform proposed, the stringent terms which were set for its adoption in the referendum of 1913 were quite justified. The government counted on the weaknesses of the direct legislation movement to do the rest.

The hopes of the advocates of direct legislation were raised unduly by successes in the United States whose political system left more room for its use. The movement in Saskatchewan lacked money. Moreover, the best it could hope for was success at the provincial level, when in fact the real complaints about “partyism” had to do with federal politics. The demand for direct legislation was above all an uncompromising expression of the distrust of party politics. The main consequence of the movement was that the farmers were distracted from the task of finding an effective basis for action within the existing political system. Whenever farmer politics was discussed the mirage of direct legislation beckoned. Not until it was made to disappear did the farmers confront the difficult problems of principle and tactic which independent political action presented.

Direct legislation was not without critics among the farmers. The most voluble critic was F. W. Green, the secretary-treasurer of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association, who periodically sniped at the movement in his column in *The Grain Growers' Guide*. Green was not, as has sometimes been

supposed, a socialist. His political position was that of a respectable farmer who thought that his profession was being denied the political power and other emoluments that it deserved. He believed in the primacy of agriculture in the economy and the superiority of rural life: his dream was the building of a "well-rounded, well-balanced Canadian yeomanry" which could take its rightful place in the national community.⁴ The place of agriculture he saw threatened by the growing urban population; that much of this population was not Anglo-Saxon added to his concern. Direct legislation, he feared, would permit political power to slip further into the hands of the cities. Canvassing the other alternatives, he found some merit in a farmers' party but mostly favored the candidature of independent farmers who would commend themselves to their class for their personal and professional qualities. In 1912 Green had an opportunity to put the matter to the test personally when he announced his candidature as an "independent" in the constituency of Moose Jaw County. He had already made a nuisance of himself in the eyes of the Liberal party by criticising various pieces of legislation. When the Conservative candidate stepped down in Green's favor, the Liberals called his independent stand a sham and set about defeating him with a vengeance. Green added to his trouble by acknowledging and welcoming the support of the Conservatives. He was badly defeated. Green's case casts an interesting sidelight on the difficulty of maintaining an "independent" stand at elections. If an "independent" made a relevant comment on a question of the day, or if he did not disclaim party support loudly enough, he became a partisan in the eyes of one party or the other. The Liberals were especially sensitive because of the opposition party's mercurial character and its tendency to throw support behind any man who had a chance of defeating the Liberal candidate. A total of eleven "independent" candidates let their names stand in the provincial general elections of 1905, 1908 and 1912.⁵ All but one ran last, and he ran second. Candidates who ran "on their merits" were no match for those who ran with party support.

The question of a farmers' party was debated at length at the conventions of the farm organizations and in the columns of *The Grain Growers' Guide*, and in a few instances talk led to action. The earliest third party to take part in elections in Saskatchewan was a group called the Comrades of Equity. The origins of this party are not entirely clear. Despite the similarity of names, it appears that the Comrades of Equity were not connected with the American Society of Equity, the farm organization then in the ascendant in the Middle West of the United States and in the course of organizing (as the Canadian Society of Equity in Alberta, where it became quite strong) in Western Canada. The American organization's objects were economic; it had no political program. The Comrades of Equity, in contrast, were a political party. The evidence suggests that the Comrades were a local product, and more particularly that they were the work of the Paynter brothers of Tantallon. The Paynters came to the Qu'Appelle Valley in the 1890's as members of a rural settlement co-operative known as the Harmony Industrial Association. Both were lively critics of the political and

⁴ *The Grain Growers' Guide*, February 28, 1912, p. 10.

⁵ The eleven do not include Green who is designated a Conservative in election records, probably because of his acknowledgement of support from that party.

economic order, drawing upon utopian literature and the Bible for many of their ideas. J. E. Paynter, the Provisional Secretary of the Comrades, published in 1912 a collection of highly unusual views on various social, religious and scientific questions.⁶ W. C. Paynter had an intense interest in monetary reform, and in 1924 he published a pamphlet on the subject entitled *Canadian Money and Progress* which went through two further editions.

The object of the Comrades of Equity was stated in the constitution⁷ to be:

To work as a political organization to get sufficient control of all Governing Bodies in Canada, that the people may, with all possible speed, be furnished with the Public Service of all Public Utilities, such service to be owned and operated by the different Governing Bodies for the benefit of the Public.

This object was spelled out in a platform calling for government ownership of elevators, railways, telegraphs and telephones, and administration of the public domain by the province in the interests of the people. There was also a declaration for "Equal rights to all. Absolutely no special privileges to any individual, municipal body, province or state." A large part of the Constitution is given over to the description of an elaborate system of organization and protocol. The Comrades were to be organized on a base of ten. Ten Comrades made up a Recruit's Band, one of whom was invested with the disconcerting title of Decimator; ten Decimators associated under the direction of a Centurion; and so on to officers with titles such as Decimator Millesimal. Though direct legislation was not a part of its platform, the party used its devices within the organization. Candidates sponsored by the Comrades were obliged to sign an undertaking to resign from any legislative body if and when "a vote of 'Want of Confidence' is passed by a two-thirds referendum vote of the Comrades of Equity in my constituency. . . ."

It is unlikely that the influence of the party ever extended very far beyond the district where it began, or that the party ever attained proportions where a Saskatchewan farmer might style himself Centurion. But despite small numbers the Comrades made their presence felt in at least one election. In the provincial general election of 1908 they threw their support behind the Provincial Rights candidate in Pheasant Hills constituency. The campaign they conducted was by all accounts an energetic one. When the Liberals held their nomination convention they arrived to find the hall half-filled with Comrades and were obliged to listen to an address by J. E. Paynter in opposition to the Liberal cause (at the end of which Hon. W. H. Motherwell, the Minister of Agriculture, pronounced Paynter a "dreamer").⁸ The outcome of the election surprised Premier Scott, who had been confident of holding the seat for his party. When he asked the Liberal candidate for an explanation the latter replied that he had "had to work very hard

⁶ Under the title *Spectres of the Night*. The book is unobtainable, but a fragment of a contemporary account of it is worth quoting for its own sake: according to the reviewer in *The Grain Growers' Guide* the book contained a new hypothesis concerning the location of the Garden of Eden, a harmonization of science and religion, an "exposure of Spiritualism, a murder mystery and, of course, the inevitable love story." (Number for October 23, 1912, p. 20).

⁷ *Constitution of the Comrades of Equity*, no date, 8 pp.

⁸ *The Daily Standard*, (Regina), August 5, 1908, p. 1.

against a third party called the Comrades of Equity who are quite a factor in this Pheasant Hills district for this is the Home of the Leaders. They have been working hard for over a year organizing."⁹ In the federal election later in the year the Comrades nominated J. E. Paynter to contest Saltcoats constituency.¹⁰ Paynter ran a poor third, getting no votes at many polls but enough to lead in a few where the Comrades had members. Though he lost his deposit, he possibly won the distinction of being the first candidate in federal politics to seek office while pledged to recall. The Comrades survived for a year or two but apparently took no further part in elections.¹¹

The Comrades were responsible for the formation of another short-lived third party which went under the name of the People's Political Association of Canada. The Association was meant to be a vehicle for farmer-labor co-operation in politics: its stated purpose was "to unite under one head all organizations of industrial workers for national advancement through political action."¹² Possibly it was inspired by attempts at co-operation on the part of labor groups, especially those in Winnipeg, and the Canadian Society of Equity in 1907. About thirty delegates registered for the Association's organization meeting in Regina in June 1908. The Comrades of Equity preponderated, but also present were several independent farmers as well as delegates from the American Society of Equity, the Regina Branch of the Canadian Labor Party,¹³ the Trades and Labor Council of Regina and of Moose Jaw, and a group called the Independent Producers of Battleford District. All of the delegates were from Saskatchewan except two who were residents of Manitoba. The offices of the Association split about evenly between farmers and labor. W. C. Paynter was elected president. Other officers were Thomas M. Molloy, president of the Regina Labor Council; Hugh Peat, president of the Regina branch of the Canadian Labor Party and editor of *Saskatchewan Labor's Realm*; J. E. Paynter; and George Boerma, a farmer of North Battleford.

The platform adopted was a fairly exhaustive catalog of the current, pre-occupations of farmers and labor, running to sixteen items. The Comrades' platform was taken over without change. Labor contributed planks calling for abolition of the contract system on public works, abolition of child labor, institution of a minimum wage for an eight-hour day, government inspection of industry, and the restriction of immigration from Asia. Rounding out the platform were, among other things, demands that land values be taxed, that all money be issued by the federal government, that education be made compulsory to age fourteen, and that direct legislation be put into practice. Except for some disagreement over a resolu-

⁹ Archives of Saskatchewan, *Scott Papers*, H. W. Lindsay to Scott, August 19, 1908, p. 38977.

¹⁰ Paynter is designated an Independent in election records. His nomination by the Comrades is reported in *The Voice*, (Winnipeg), July 31, 1908, p. 4.

¹¹ James Nixon, the Conservative candidate in Saltcoats Constituency in 1911, was a prominent member of the Comrades. It is unlikely, however, that the third party was still in existence at that time.

¹² *Saskatchewan Labor's Realm*, (Regina), June 19, 1908, where the Association's platform and constitution are reproduced. There is a report of the organization meeting in *The Morning Leader*, June 11 and 12, 1908. I am indebted to Mr. Joe Cherwinski for drawing attention to this material.

¹³ Formed in October 1907.

tion on prohibition, on which the Association eventually decided not to take a stand, the experiment in farmer-labor co-operation proceeded amicably and concluded with expressions of hope that the People's Political Association of Canada would become a strong force in Canadian politics. It got off to a bad start. The president annoyed some members by pressing the prohibition question, the Socialist Party of Canada wrote off the new organization as a creature of bourgeois reformism, the suspicions of Liberal newspapers were aroused by the interest which the Conservatives allegedly took in the Association, and before long *Saskatchewan Labor's Realm*, which the Association planned to use as its organ, folded. There is no record of the Association having held any further meetings.

There were further attempts to elect independent farmer candidates in the federal election of 1911. The farmers' March on Ottawa in 1910 had stirred interest in federal politics and had given the farmers a set of policies around which support could be rallied. The farmers' demands were presented in a rather aggressive manner to Sir Wilfrid Laurier on his visit to Western Canada during the campaign, and while the Prime Minister's stand on reciprocity won the support of large numbers of farmers, the impression he left of a politician with votes in other parts of Canada to worry about made the radicals impatient. The columns of *The Grain Growers' Guide* were full of talk of a farmers' party, and the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association heard early in 1911 and eventually rejected a resolution to enter politics. Some action had been taken already. David Ross, a farmer of Strassburg, corresponded in 1910 with leaders of the British Labour Party asking advice on the best way to elect representatives who would advance the interests of the farmers. The advice he got was to secure the election of farmers to the legislatures. "What I think you can learn from the English Labor party," F. Herbert Stead told Ross, "... is that if you farmers want to be properly represented in Parliament you should not commit your cause to your doctors and lawyers; you ought to send farmers—men of your own class and calling to Parliament." George Barnes, M.P., chairman of the Labour Party, concurred, adding: "I have no hesitation in advising you to keep clear of the lawyer type."¹⁴ In the summer of 1911 Ross called a meeting of farmers to discuss the formation of a "Western party in the interests of agriculture."¹⁵ The farmers decided to proceed with it and at a nomination convention in Regina in August, Richard Fletcher, a farmer of Lake Centre, was nominated to contest Regina as an independent. The Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association made it clear immediately that this action had nothing to do with the farmers' organization. There was also activity in other constituencies, notably Battleford, Saskatoon and Humboldt, though apparently unconnected with Ross's projected party. The only candidate to emerge besides Fletcher was Newell Baumunk in Saskatoon constituency. Baumunk's nomination grew out of a meeting of farmers in Dundurn district (where Baumunk farmed) who declared for the nomination of a farmers' candidate if the candidates of the two major parties did not endorse a specific program. The candidates did not endorse it, apparently balking at an item on direct legislation,

¹⁴ *The Grain Growers' Guide*, June 21, 1911, pp. 10-11.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, July 5, 1911, p. 21.

and the farmers proceeded to nominate at a meeting in Saskatoon.¹⁶ Both Fletcher and Baumunk were pledged to recall. It was, on the whole, a bad time for independent politics. The farmers were anxious to cast a vote for reciprocity, and they closed ranks behind the Liberals.

The defeat of the Laurier government and reciprocity sharpened the farmers' desire for independent political action. In 1913 the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association again considered a resolution (moved by David Ross) calling upon the Association to enter politics, and this time it came close to passing. What defeated it was an amendment proposed by Charles Dunning which asserted that direct legislation would better achieve the aims of the farmers.¹⁷ The amendment carried narrowly. After the vote was taken E. A. Partridge, the radical farm leader of Sintaluta, invited those who favored a third party to meet at a local church the next day.

Out of this meeting came a thumping manifesto¹⁸ and plans for creating an organization called the No-Party League of Western Canada. The "insurgent faction," as it described itself, had decided that what was needed was not a third party, but rather a political education league which would foster progressive ideas among the farmers, leading eventually to the nomination and election of farmer candidates to public office. It is quite likely that most of the farmers went to the meeting more or less determined to form a third party, and that what they went away with owed more to Partridge's rhetoric than to prior consensus. Partridge was an opponent of third parties—not because he had any use for the major parties, but precisely because he had no use for any parties. Two were bad enough; a third simply made matters that much worse. Political parties were ruled from the top by self-interested men, they were open to manipulation by distant and unfriendly interests, and they divided the farmers and rendered their cause ineffectual. The name chosen by the League is a classic expression of the anti-party sentiment: "The significance of the name," it is stated in the constitution, "lies in the purpose to avoid that centralization of power in a group of general officers which characterizes party organizations and makes them easy of control by influences that render them useless as instruments of popular government."

Early in his career Partridge had been convinced that, from a tactical point of view, the farmers' best course of action was to permeate and capture the organizations of the two parties. Then no matter which party won the election it would be a party controlled by farmers. Further, once they gained control the farmers would have an opportunity to do away with the more objectionable features of party activity. As author of the constitution of the Canadian Council of Agriculture in 1909 Partridge succeeded in committing the first national farm organization to this tactic. As time went on he became less sanguine about the

¹⁶ *The Daily Phoenix*, August 22, 1911, pp. 1, 3.

¹⁷ Though Dunning's action admirably served the interests of the Liberal party which he supported, he was in fact an advocate of direct legislation. He was a director of the Direct Legislation League in 1912.

¹⁸ *Manifesto of the No-Party League of Western Canada*, [1913]. This pamphlet of twenty-six pages was prepared by Partridge. It contains an account of the meeting, the League's constitution, and some articles on the farmers' grievances.

ability of the farmers to gain control of the parties, and even less so about their ability and willingness to make the parties over into democratic institutions once they did control them. Hence before anything else could be done there must be a massive educational program to impress upon the farmers "the complete community of interest of all who live, and desire to live, by useful labor" so that they could work together to take control of the machinery of government from those "who lived by owning." The No-Party League would expect members to buy and read progressive literature; it would hold meetings for propaganda purposes, and canvass door to door. The books and pamphlets recommended were mostly on direct legislation and the single tax. These two reforms were to be the main instruments for accomplishing "the rescue of the natural resources and public utilities from private control and their administration for the benefit of all the people." The signatories to the manifesto, numbering twenty-four, included David Ross and several others who had been associated with the nomination of independents in 1911; John Evans, a Progressive member of Parliament in the 1920's; and James S. Aitken of Cheviot, who some thirty years afterwards was elected a CCF member of the Saskatchewan Legislature. The League turned out to be another organization of a day's duration. Partridge was its moving spirit, and at the time he was living in Winnipeg where he could do little to organize the League. In any case he was by temperament more suited to launching projects than to administering them. Such was his distrust of formal organizations that had the No-Party League survived and taken on a form that enabled it to carry out its work efficiently, Partridge likely would have washed his hands of it.

The demand for "independent" politics had in all four expressions. Two of them—direct legislation and the nomination of independent farmer candidates for election "on their merits"—did not involve participation in the party system, and the latter especially was favored for that very reason. By the beginning of the First World War both had been ruled out as practical courses of action. Direct legislation had been defeated in a referendum, and experience with independent candidatures had been uniformly discouraging. The third alternative, the capturing of one or both of the major parties' organizations by the farmers, had become by 1913 an unlikely prospect. The Liberals were too solidly entrenched and after the election of 1911 the Conservative party was an improbable vehicle for farmer politics. As other avenues were closed off, the building of a third party became increasingly attractive.

D. S. SPAFFORD

Saskatchewan Homestead Records

The Saskatchewan Archives received the Homestead Records of the former Department of the Interior in 1956. Since that time a name index has been created by means of which files for any one homesteader can be located. The records occupy 1,800 linear feet of shelf space and the index consists of approximately 360,000 cards.

THE EDITOR

The lure of "free" homestead grants was one of the more significant factors inducing many settlers to come to the western Canadian plains. As in other areas and other periods of the history of North America, free lands attracted those who wanted a fresh start in life or those who sought the challenges of a new venture in a new land. By paying a small registration fee and performing the labour necessary to make improvements, a settler could obtain a farm which would give him the opportunity he sought. The general history of homesteading is fairly well known, many articles, books and reminiscences having been written on the subject, but the homestead records are a unique source of information about pioneer days. Created by the Department of the Interior in carrying out the routine business of settling a farmer on his free land, they are now found to contain information available in no other source. Much of the statistical information they contain was never used in the compilation of government reports, and accounts of specific episodes in the lives of settlers contain interesting details which would be unknown but for its preservation in the files of the Department of the Interior.

Each file is concerned with a specific piece of land and the settler who sought to gain title to it. As the land was occupied the local land agency forwarded certain documents to the Department of the Interior in Ottawa, where a number was assigned to the file. Subsequent correspondence regarding the same piece of land was entered in the file. When the land was patented to a homesteader the file was closed and the land was registered in the name of the new owner at the local land titles office.

Many of the files consist of nothing more than basic documents that had to be completed in order to meet the requirements of the homestead regulations. However, other files include the correspondence written between the officials of the Department of the Interior and the settler in which the problems of the settler are often vividly portrayed. Crop failures, drought, prairie fires, sickness, death, neighborhood quarrels, rival claims to ownership of land and many other problems are the subject matter of these letters. Besides containing information about the homesteads, the files also contain incidental information about Indian Reserves, church missions, lands procured for school sites and crown lands set aside for other specific purposes. Records of individual accomplishments give a more complete picture of certain settlement groups such as the Temperance Colonization Society, the Barr Colonists, the York Colonization Society and various ethnic groups. Moreover, by means of a careful compilation of details, information can be obtained on early settlements such as those around Battleford, Touchwood Hills, Prince Albert and Qu'Appelle, which will supplement the information already available on those districts. As well as containing documents about homesteads, the files also contain records filed in connection with various

types of land scrip issued by the Canadian Government. Among these are the North West Half Breed land grants, grants to those who served with the Canadian militia and other units in the 1870 and 1885 rebellions, South African scrip which was issued to the volunteers who served with the Canadian units in the Boer War, and soldier grants made to veterans of the 1914-1918 war.¹ All these factors mean that a more complete picture of the settlement of western Canada can be obtained from the homestead records.

Settlement under the free land grant system was established by Order-in-Council in 1871. In the succeeding years the passage of Dominion Lands Acts made many changes in the regulations under which homesteads were obtained but in general they allowed for settlement on a 160-acre farm upon the payment of a registration fee of \$10.00. In order to receive a patent for the land, the farmer had to reside on it for a specific period and show his serious intentions as a settler by making improvements on the land. By means of second homestead entries, pre-emption rights and purchased homesteads, the settler was able to expand his holdings. The greatest influx of settlers into the North West occurred under the regulations of the Dominion Lands Act of 1908.

This Act granted entry on a quarter section of land to males over 18 years of age, or to a widow who was the sole head of a family. A proxy entry could be made by members of the immediate family, but the entrant had to apply in person within a stated period. Before receiving patent, the homesteader had to become a British subject, had to perform six months' residence in each of three consecutive years and cultivate at least thirty acres of land, a portion of which had to be done each year. Instead of residence on the actual homestead quarter the settler could live within nine miles of his homestead on a farm of at least 80 acres solely owned and operated by him or by an immediate relative. The homesteader also had to erect a house worth at least \$300.00. In certain areas a pre-emption could be obtained for a quarter section adjoining the homestead. The homesteader had to pay \$3.00 an acre for this, cultivate 50 acres and also reside in a house erected on either the pre-emption or homestead for six months in each of six years from the date of homestead entry. Purchased homesteads were also available. These could be applied for when there was no available quarter section adjacent to the homestead. In such a case the homesteader could buy land within 9 miles of his homestead at the price of \$3.00 per acre. This amount was to be paid one-third down and the balance in five general payments.

The files contain three basic documents showing that the farmer had fulfilled these regulations: an application for entry on the land, an application for patent and a notification that the patent had been granted. The application for entry on a piece of land was the first document filed by the homesteader. This gives the land location, the age, place of birth, nationality and citizenship status, previous place of residence and previous occupation of the homesteader. The homesteader was also supposed to list the members of his family by age, indicating

¹ For details of homestead regulations and different types of scrip see Morton, A. S. and Martin, Chester. *History of Prairie Settlement and "Dominion Lands" Policy*. Vol. II of *Canadian Frontiers of Settlement*. Toronto: The MacMillan Company of Canada Ltd. 1938.

whether they were adult male, adult female or children under 12 years of age. Quite often this section was incorrectly filled in, even if it was completed at all. Names of the members of the family, other than the entrant, were not required. In fact, other members of the family were seldom mentioned in any of the records except to prove residence requirements or legal relationships.

The application for patent is possibly the most interesting of the documents. It was a sworn statement made under oath and attested to by two neighbors of the farmer. It shows the name and citizenship status of the homesteader, the location of the homestead, and the duties performed on it in meeting the regulations under the Dominion Lands Act. Thus the farmer had to list the periods during which he resided on the land, the amount of land broken and cropped, and the value of his house. The farmer also had to list the stock which he owned, the other buildings which he had erected and the extent of fencing. If the application showed that the farmer had fulfilled all the requirements he was advised that a patent had been issued and he was to apply at the Land Registration district where he could get it free of charge. The sworn statement also revealed other aspects of the pioneer's life which were incidental to his farming activities.

When absent from the homestead, the farmer had to state the reasons for the absence, where he had resided and his occupation while absent. In the period prior to 1900, absences were frequently explained as being for freighting, serving in the rebellion, working on the railways, working for some other farmer in order to earn enough money to return to the homestead, or returning to eastern Canada for furniture or machinery and equipment. In some cases the farmer returned to Eastern Canada for his bride but this was not always a successful venture because there are occasional abandonments filed when the farmer could not persuade his wife to return to the west with him. In other cases the settler returned to eastern Canada to wind up business affairs before settling in the west. Occasionally, a farmer returned to the "old country" in order to induce other settlers to emigrate to Canada.

Occupations other than farming are sometimes listed on the application for patent, the most common of these being teaching, the ministry, blacksmithing, or storekeeping. Many teachers and clergymen found in the very early days that they had to farm in order to provide themselves with necessities or possibly additional income. Thus clergymen and teachers worked a homestead near the school or mission at the same time that they were carrying on other duties in the community.

The hardships faced by the pioneers are rarely mentioned on the application for patent; more often these difficulties are described in the correspondence asking for an extension of time in fulfilling the homestead duties or when applying for extra time in which to pay seed grain debts. But one application for patent had the arresting words "The Armless and Legless Wonder of Moose Jaw" written in quotation marks after the name of the applicant. In the application, the farmer stated "... in the winter of 1887-8 I was frozen losing both legs and arms and did no active work personally after that though I had a crop or two put in and some

plowing done after that." While this farmer was in hospital, neighbours put up a house for him to meet the homestead regulations, but the kindness shown by some was not shown by others as he reported that a frame stable he had built was stolen while he was in hospital. Subsequently he earned his living by selling "notions" in the district. Officials of the Department of the Interior considered that he had fulfilled the requirements to get his patent and it was issued shortly after he applied for it.

Under the homestead regulations, a settler could abandon the land he had first chosen and enter on another homestead. He had to state his reasons for abandoning the land and the information given on this form reveals the situation faced by many farmers. Often the farmer stated that the land was not suitable for farming because it was too dry, too wet, too stoney, or too sandy. Sometimes when the farmer said that he was abandoning the land, stating simply "not suitable for farming" it is not really clear whether he was referring to the land or himself because in many cases the land was later successfully homesteaded by another settler. Possibly the later entrant was more industrious, more experienced, had more machinery or was even richer than the previous entrant. It is also possible that his success was due to the fact that he had a large family to help him do the hard work associated with pioneering.

The abandonments show that lack of a good water supply was one of the main problems faced by some settlers. Two farmers wrote on their abandonments that:

Unfortunately I cannot live on it, since there is no water to be found. The cattle must be driven 4 or 5 miles to a watering place, and we have to go 5 or 6 miles for drinking water. I have hunted all over the homestead, and can find no water. What is the farm to me if I have no water.

We tried for water in 4 different places 3 wells we went down 60 feet and one 106 feet without finding water. At the time of thrashing last fall we had to drive 30 miles for water to do our thrashing with.²

In 1886, one farmer near Pense thought he could solve the water problem by digging in ravines. He offered to buy a quarter section adjacent to his homestead at \$1.25 per acre because it had ravines and he would be able to get water which, until that time, he had been unable to find on his own homestead:

In spite of failing crops for the last three years and my neighbours all leaving, as you may see by the number of cancelled sections round me, & those who remained to get their deed have removed there houses after fulfilling the regulations. I have persevered in trying to get water and thought I was successful after digging 124 feet and boring 50 feet but it has been an endless expense for the last two years. . . I paid in the first place for digging and Kerbing a well 97 feet & boring 50 feet \$195. As there was no water a man witched the land so I dug where he indicated and had to remove my house, dairy & stable. The present well cost \$291 the first outlay and as it was impossible to pump by hand I had a geared Windmill erected which with the pump cost me \$400. And now it is useless, and all the time this work has been going on I have

² In all quotations in this article, the original spelling and punctuation have been retained in order to preserve the character of the correspondence.

had to haul water & melt snow and last winter I lost two valuable mares & their colts, I believe from no other reason than lack of water. It is utterly impossible for me to carry on this farm without water.

Although some settlers lacked a suitable water supply, some had too much. One farmer was flooded out after being on the land for three years. One can assume that another settler was a trifle exasperated at the amount of water on his land for when he abandoned it he wrote "Land was only fit for pasture. Now only fit for ducks." Droughts, if not of the proportions of the one in the 1930's, were all too prevalent from the early days of settlement. One farmer, who with his wife and six children lived in a sod house 16 by 24 feet for three years, finally abandoned his homestead after having successive crop failures. He also mentioned a lack of school facilities, another common reason for leaving certain localities:

In 1893 I put in ten acres of crop and received no return from Drought. In 1894 I put in forty acres of crop and received twenty bus in return and having eight of a family to support with no other means of support was forced to abandon [the homestead] Another reason four of my children are of school age and there is no school nor likelihood of any as the settlers have all left.

The settler who followed this farmer on the same piece of land only stayed on it from June to August in one year and then abandoned it. The third settler was more permanent. He stayed on the land and got a patent for it but he only cropped the same amount of land which the first settler had broken and used the remainder for grazing purposes.

There were other reasons for abandoning land. One farmer had his entry inspected because a neighbour complained that when the occupant filed on it he made a false statement claiming that there was less hay land on it than allowed for grazing purposes. The file does not contain the results of the inspection but the occupant left the land to settle elsewhere. His stated reason for leaving the land was "The immigration of foreigners and the exodus of all the English speaking settlers from these parts . . . now there are a number of Galicians around and I would be the only Englishman for miles." Another homesteader left his quarter section because there were no Mennonites settling in the district as he thought there would be, so he wanted to go to a district where there were some. One farmer abandoned his land when he made an incorrect entry on it because he could not find the survey mounds. Another settler could not speak English and he was told to detrain at the wrong land location. Instead of getting off the train west of the third meridian, he was put off west of the second meridian, about 180 miles short of his destination. It was not until the land agent investigated a double entry that the error was discovered. One farmer deviated a mere six miles off course from his intended destination. He gave the following reason for abandoning his entry "I filed in error on this land being intoxicated at the time. . . I had entered for [other] land two days previously but being drunk at the time could not remember." Possibly this entrant should have swapped homesteads with another who abandoned his quarter section because there were too many "alcohol" lakes on it. Of course, it is more probable that he had difficulty spelling "alkali" rather than was guilty of overlooking a good thing when he had it. It is entirely possible

that many settlers did not give complete reasons for abandoning their land, but one homesteader showed that he was master of telling a lot in a few blunt words when he abandoned his homestead for one seven miles away. He wanted to move his children seven miles closer to school and seven miles further away from his wife's relatives.

Another form frequently found in the records is an application for inspection. If a farmer had settled on a piece of land and appeared to be neglecting his duties, another farmer could request that the entry be inspected with a view to having it cancelled. A homestead inspector was then sent out to ascertain the facts. Sometimes, the person requesting the cancellation was in error in claiming that the entrant was not performing his duties. Other times the claim for inspection was upheld and the original entry was cancelled. The person who called for the inspection could then apply for the land. Sometimes the evidence presented by the entrant and the person requesting the cancellation was so conflicting that the investigation assumed the aspects of a trial in which evidence was taken under oath before the chief land inspector. One of the more interesting of such cases concerns a man who apparently contributed a great deal to the settling of his district but who could have easily lost his homestead because of the animosity of his neighbours. This file shows that not all the difficulties faced by the pioneers were the result of geographic factors, but that many were man-made.

Henry A. Mitchell was an immigrant from the United States who made an entry for land in the southern part of the province in 1909. Early in 1911 a request for inspection of his entry was made and in his defense Mitchell stated that he had been short of funds and had to work for others away from his homestead but that he had 60 head of cattle on his homestead. The homestead inspector reported that Mr. Mitchell and his son-in-law were good settlers, that they had considerable stock and a gasoline ploughing outfit. The cancellation proceedings were dropped in October but seven months later new cancellation proceedings were filed by another person who wrote a letter to the Department of the Interior accusing Mitchell of giving false evidence concerning the duties he had performed, and also accusing him of getting someone to sign his papers as witness, even though the papers were false. In defense of his entry, Mitchell stated that he had only been absent when obtaining supplies from Moose Jaw. He also stated that his wife was looking after a nearby post office but that he had a part interest in a store which was looked after by his son-in-law. Further explanation of his activities are contained in a report of May, 1913 when another homestead inspector reported:

This man has a general store . . . where his family are in residence & where he spends most of his time sleeping on the homestead an occasional night. This is the report I get from the entire neighbourhood. I could not find one settler who would give Mr. Mitchell credit for any continuous residence at the time of my calling. . . he was away from home but had a man engaged to do his seeding.

Because this report showed him to be negligent in performing his duties and because of others sent in by the inspectors, the Department wrote a letter to Mr. Mitchell explaining that merely sleeping on a homestead at night while

engaged in an occupation other than agriculture during the day could not be accepted as fulfilling the residence requirements of the homestead regulations. He was given thirty days in which to go into actual residence and use the homestead as his place of residence. The only reason why his entry had not been promptly cancelled was because of the valuable improvements he had made to the farm. However, the extent of these improvements did not seem to convince the Department of the Interior officials that Mitchell was a serious farmer. It might have been that the officials were more interested in the exact letter of the homestead regulations rather than the spirit in which Mitchell was actively engaged in agriculture.

Mitchell replied to this letter and gave an indication of his holdings and the extent of his activities. He had bought 320 acres from the Hudson's Bay Company and of this he had 250 acres in crop; on his homestead he had 50 or 60 acres cropped and he had grazing leases on four other sections. Mr. Mitchell gave his opinion as to why he was being troubled by the repeated cancellations:

Now the whole trouble comes from some trouble I got in with a tribe of . . . Settlers Here. I know they are the parties because they are now Bosting around the neiberhood that they will be the means of my loosing my Homestead. . . . it will be necessary for me to explain the trouble I had with these Parties in order for you to fully understand the Situation. in the Summer of 1910 these Parties got trusted to large bill of groceries at the store. The crop was a failure here that year and they were unable to pay up in the fall then in the Spring of 1911 I furnished them with their seed grane and lent them money and signed Notes in the Imperial Bank of Moose Jaw and if it hadn't been for this they couldent have lived on their homesteads as they would have had to went out to work for their Liven in the fall of 1911 they refused to Pay me and I was obliged to make collection and there the trouble began. now the only Homestead inspector that has been on my place on this cancellation now pending went to these Parties and Stayed all night with them. . . and made out his report on the Strength of what they told him. . . .

The conflicting reports came into the Department concerning the performance of homestead duties. Two of Mitchell's neighbours made declarations to the effect that Mitchell was not running a store but that it was being run by his relatives. At the same time, homestead inspector's reports stated that Mitchell was not performing his homestead obligations and the inspector further reported that, according to neighbours, Mitchell's statements were more than likely false. Other neighbours, possibly ones who had paid up their obligations to Mr. Mitchell, rallied to his support because in September some declarations were filed to the effect that Mitchell and his family had resided on the homestead continuously since June 20. It is obvious that Mr. Mitchell was desirous of complying with the regulations for he must have gone on the homestead immediately after receiving notice that he had only thirty days in which to take up actual residence. The cancellation proceedings were dropped once again, only to be raised a year later when Mr. Mitchell applied for the patent for his homestead. This caused another inspector's report to be made and finally an official inquiry was held. Both actions resulted

in detailed accounts of Mr. Mitchell's contribution to the opening up of the district in which he resided. The homestead Inspector reported on November 30, 1914:

I consider this homesteader has done his duties. . . Mr. Mitchell filed in November 09 when this country was comparatively new had all the hardships of pioneer life he built a little store. . . a short distance from his Homestead he drew his supplies for his store from Moose Jaw 40 miles through all Kinds of roads & weather. The few homesteaders that lived in the vicinity of Mr. Mitchells Store used to trade with him he furnished them with everything they needed & carried them along from year to year without pressing them for his pay. When he told them he must have his pay they turned against him. These same parties are the ones that are giving him so much trouble saying they will make it difficult for him to prove up. Part of this store was made into a dwelling & Mrs. Mitchell lived in it & looked after the store & Post Office. Since June 1, 1913 Mrs. Mitchell has been going home to the Homestead every night—sometimes walking all the way through all Kinds of weather. I know of no other couple in the South Country that is more deserving of their Patent than these people. They are hard-working industrious boan fied [*i.e.* bona fide] settlers. the reports that have been sent in against Mr. Mitchell have been supplied I think by people that is not very friendly to Mr. Mitchell I would recommend that Mr. Mitchells Patent be accepted by the department.

This report still did not clarify the conflicting evidence possessed by the Department so the Chief Inspector of Dominion Lands was authorized to investigate the situation and to take evidence under oath.

The inquiry was held on May 6, 1915. About seventeen pages of evidence was taken from eight witnesses and it was recorded by a stenographer. On his own behalf, Mr. Mitchell stated that he had sold the store and dissolved the partnership with his son-in-law and resigned as postmaster when he received the notice to take up residence on his homestead. However, the postal officials asked Mr. Mitchell to stay on when they could not get anyone to take his place. In the Spring of 1914 someone else was appointed to take on the postmaster's work but this person turned out to be unqualified. Mr. Mitchell once again took on the work when requested by the postal authorities and he also bought another store.

The witnesses were all in favor of the patent being granted to Mr. Mitchell. Their comments show the high esteem in which Mr. Mitchell was held by his neighbours. Parts of the statements of two are reproduced here exactly as they were recorded. Not only do these statements show this esteem but they also reflect the forthrightness and the sparse, dry humour of prairie settlers. One witness stated:

As far as Mr. Mitchell is concerned he ought to be given a section of land for what he has done for the community around there instead of trying to take his homestead away from him. If it had not been for him lots of people would have starved to death—no store or anything. I have seen him on the prairie many a time sleeping when he could not get a place drawing in stuff to keep the people. Instead of making a complaint about him they ought to give him a section and say nothing about it.

Another witness stated:

... I have known him since 1910—he has bought a lot of feed from me—I would say two or three hundred dollars worth and he bought it from 1910 until 1912 and then I guess they got their own feed—they never got any more from me. In 1912 and 1913 Mr. Mitchell had his family there and in 1913 I think it was I was working with my engine and he had the post office there in town and he and his wife used to leave there about five or six to go to the homestead—I don't think they went out on the prairie. I think this is simply a case of malice because I think if anybody is entitled to his rights in that country it is Mr. Mitchell... he has bought an awful lot of feed from me and I am sure he didn't make a bonfire of it because he had a lot of registered stock down there and I don't think he fed them on wind—80 or 90 head of Herefords there.

The Chief Inspector reported that there was evidence to show that Mr. Mitchell had performed sufficient duties to entitle him to a patent and it was issued to him on August 6, 1915.

Another instance of animosity between settlers concerned the use of grazing lands in the Prince Albert District. This incident is indicative of the sheep farmer versus cattle and grain farmer animosity prevalent in frontier history. On October 29, 1887, James MacArthur applied for a homestead and pre-emption on the S $\frac{1}{2}$ of 16-48-24 W2, stating that the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ in wet years was a marsh, but in dry years was fairly good hay land. He claimed that in the previous 17 years it had only been in condition to cut during four or five years. It was his intention to dig an outlet so that the marsh would be drained and could be used for farming. The homestead inspector was asked to make a report on the request. On January 23, 1888 Inspector R. S. Cook made a report which was favorable towards MacArthur's request, and which also gives a very interesting account of MacArthur's plans and the extent of his farming activities:

Mr. McArthur has applied for an entry for the above claim. He will no doubt make a valuable settler and has already invested a considerable sum of money in sheep and has now 450 head which require 110 tons of hay to winter them, and he informed me that if he is granted an entry... that it is his intention to increase his stock and also to expend 3 or \$400.00 in draining the meadow in which the hay can only be cut during the dry seasons.

The settlers in the vicinity are for some reason adverse to Mr. McArthur getting this claim and say that the sheep will destroy the grass, but as the claim is at the extreme eastern boundary of the settlement and the south half of the township is only fit for grazing, and hay both upland and meadow appears to be plentiful. I do not see how it can materially effect any of the settlers, in fact one would think that it would be to their interest to encourage small stock-men, "especially sheep raising" as it may ultimately lead to the manufacture of woollen goods which would be a great benefit to the district. It is impossible at this season of the year to make an estimate of the hay in the locality as the snow is from 2 to 3 feet, but judging from the appearance of the country there appears to be an abundance. On the adjoining section 17 at least 100 tons could be cut, only about one third of which was cut last year.

If Mr. McArthur is granted an entry I would recommend that section 17 be reserved until the spring when an estimate of the hay in the locality the amount owned by each settler and the amount required could be made and if it were found that the hay on said section 17 was not actually required by the settlers the section could then be leased or otherwise disposed of. Mr. McArthur is at present the only person who has gone extensively into sheep raising and I think it is both in the interest of the settlers and country in general that he should make it a success.

On the basis of this report, the Department of the Interior decided to grant MacArthur the homestead and pre-emption, but before action was taken to do so, Inspector Cook reported that he had also been in touch with some of the farmers who were adverse to MacArthur's claim. He had called on eleven of the farmers in the McBeath Settlement, all of whom lived within six miles of the land requested by MacArthur. These farmers had a total of 278 head of cattle and claimed that they required a total of 565 tons of hay above that which they were able to get on their own land. They were unanimous in their opinion that the "Big Marsh," comprising all of section 17, S $\frac{1}{2}$ 16, NW $\frac{1}{4}$ 9 and Section 8 should be reserved for the use of the settlers. They claimed that if MacArthur got the S $\frac{1}{2}$ 16 as a homestead and pre-emption and was allowed to lease sections 17 and 9 as the inspector believed he had made application for them, it would cut off the source of supply of hay for the other farmers. They also felt that if MacArthur were only granted the S $\frac{1}{2}$ of Section 16, his sheep would destroy the hay in adjoining lands as the other farmers did not have enough fencing to keep the sheep off their farms. Because of this representation, the Department decided to reserve judgement on the disposition of the lands until a better assessment of the land could be made in June.

On February 22, 1888, the Minister of the Interior received a letter from one of the farmers in the district, enclosing a petition that the "Big Swamp" be reserved for the common use of all the farmers. The writer of the letter did not hesitate to state that he had been asked by his neighbours to send in the petition and write the letter because he was the chairman of the local Liberal-Conservative Association. The same person wrote to D. H. Macdowall, Member of Parliament for Saskatchewan, who forwarded a copy of the letter to the Department. This letter shows the animosity which existed between MacArthur and the other settlers:

The only mistake the Collector of Customs made in levying on McArthur's sheep was that he didn't charge enough duty to keep them out altogether.

You must have found them a nuisance during the election, and we've been bothered with them ever since. . . .

The enclosed copy of a petition, which is now being almost universally signed, will show you what new trouble those confounded mongrel sheep are responsible for. Every one who dares (McArthur charges from 18 to 25% to farmers) is wild about it. Some of us who don't want to cut hay down there, are just as mad as those who do.

. . . I have been asked to show you the inwardness of the matter and to ask you to explain it to the Minister.

Mr. Macdowall also added his request to that of the farmers to have the land reserved for the use of all the farmers.

On April 9, 1888, Inspector Cook took evidence from eleven farmers. It was taken in a very haphazard manner when compared to that taken concerning Henry Mitchell. Of course, it was taken at an earlier period when the offices and procedures of the Department were not as well organized as they were at a later date, but the questions asked of each farmer varied and as a result there was no consistency in the evidence. Of the eleven farmers, only three really depended on the Big Marsh for hay. Others stated that they would only need hay from it in dry years if there was none closer to their own farms. Three farmers expressed the view that MacArthur should get the land which he wanted for his homestead and pre-emption but should not be allowed to get all the Big Marsh. Two farmers would have cut hay had they been able to get a permit for doing so, but someone else, possibly MacArthur, had applied for hay permits in 1888 or 1889. The agent for Dominion Lands at Prince Albert verified this statement as being almost correct for no farmer applied for a permit in 1888 and only two in 1889. On December 31, 1889, it was decided that MacArthur should be allowed to homestead and pre-empt the S $\frac{1}{2}$ 16-48-24 W2, the land for which he had originally applied. Furthermore, the Department stated it would allow him to purchase an additional half section in the Big Marsh. However, MacArthur had previously obtained most of the land he wanted for homestead and pre-emption by having his wife, Jane MacArthur, purchase the North West Half Breed scrip applied on the land by the Rev. George MacKay. It appears that the Department had made an error in allowing the Rev. MacKay to locate scrip on the land after refusing MacArthur the right of homestead and pre-emption on the basis that the land was to be reserved for hay purposes. The Department also made a mistake in suggesting that MacArthur should be allowed to purchase the additional half section because he had never applied to purchase it, just to lease it. In view of the treatment which MacArthur had received from the Department over the S $\frac{1}{2}$ 16, it was decided that the Department should still allow him to purchase the S $\frac{1}{2}$ of 17 at \$2.00 per acre. MacArthur could not make the purchase at that time because of a change in his business. No further action was taken concerning this land by MacArthur but it is apparent that at a time when he was able and willing to put the land to good use, he was prevented from doing so by the opposition of his neighbours. The potential value of the land is shown by the application for patent made by a later occupant in 1919. In that year this farmer cropped 30 acres and had 125 head of cattle on the SE quarter of section 17.

Although difficulties over the ownership of land loomed large in the lives of many farmers, these difficulties could be remedied one way or another. However, in the face of difficulties caused by natural hazards such as drought, frost, hail and prairie fire, the farmer was left with the feeling that he was almost helpless.

The file of one Moosomin district farmer covers a period from 1884 to 1904 and tells of the difficulties he faced in his attempts to farm his land, raise a family and pay off his debts. On December 9, 1884, this farmer filed on his home-

stead quarter. He had come from England, where he had been employed as a clerk, under the auspices of the Canada North-West Land Company to whom he was indebted for \$250.00. This amount was more than likely a travel advance or an advance made to get him established on the land. It was charged against his land and before the patent could be issued in his name, he would have to repay the advance and interest at not more than 6%. In 1887, the farmer received seed grain from the Canadian Government for which he had to repay \$37.00. This Seed Grain Lien constituted a permanent charge against the land, and it would have to be paid before title to the land could be issued. In March 1888 the farmer applied for an extension of time on the repayment of the lien because he had been unable to get a machine to thresh his crop. In April of the same year he filed his application for patent and this showed that by 1887 he only had 22 acres cropped and a further 15 broken, his livestock consisted of one team of oxen and two cows. The homesteader, his wife and 9 children lived in a house 16 feet by 32 feet. In reply to his application for patent he was advised that it would be issued as soon as the liens against the land were discharged. On December 25, 1888 he wrote to the Department:

I find it utterly impossible to raise the amount due for seed grain that the government so generously supplied, having only enough wheat & barley left for seeding 45 or 50 acres in the ensuing year; after reserving the above I have not enough left for Bread for my large family (I have a wife & nine children). . . . My crop of 25 acres only averaged 8 bushel & I had to pay for stacking, cutting & threshing. Having to work out for sustenance.

The Department replied that he would be given until the next harvest to pay the seed grain lien provided he paid at the current market prices with interest at 6%. By the end of 1889 his debt with the Canada North West Land Company, which also had not been paid, amounted to \$333.75 of which \$83.75 was interest. In 1890, the homesteader was forced to get more seed grain from the government and that year he claimed that he got the first "decent" crop since going on the land. He requested that the Department use its influence to prevent the land company from pressing him for his debt because:

. . . If the said company are allowed to push me . . . all my terrific struggle and labour will have gone into their coffers and myself a little better—if at all—than a beggar. You will judge of my prospects when I tell you I hope to seed down sixty—and if possible to even extend to seventy—measured acres next year. This year I farmed 45 acres.

The farmer felt that a couple of good crops would set him up in the country for life but his hopes were not realized. There is no indication in the file as to the results of the 1891 crop but in December 1892 the collection of some of the seed grain liens had been placed in the hands of Winnipeg lawyers and to them the homesteader wrote:

I am most anxious and willing to discharge this obligation, and have been trying for a long time to make enough headway to enable me to start making payments; but the absolute need of the barest necessities of life for my large family of ten members, and the fearful struggle

with fire (one crop with Hay & Stables entirely destroyed) & Drought and Hail (one year since the year of the fire, I had only 80 Bushels of grain and the next 300) I am just at present without the change of one Dollar, and my fine crop of 70 acres, to which I most anxiously looked to reduce if not clear up, this claim, having suffered from the two latter causes and gophers, is, unless it pans out far better than appearances bids me to hope, about enough to feed my family with bread groceries (clothing I cannot begin to hope for, although greatly needing them for those members who must face the fearful winter on these vast open plains this winter) and provide seed for one more effort. I expect the threshers after it freezes up, but cannot see any hope of clearing up the amount yet, as to stock for sale, I simply have but 2 Cows (10 Dollars due in trade on one of them) and this years calf, an old beast for beef for the pot, and a team of ponies (one small) barely able to pull me through needed labour.

Later he wrote to the Secretary of Dominion Lands:

. . . I have been most anxious to pay this amount out of this crop but regret to tell you it is utterly impossible. I have only three small stacks of wheat off 75 acres of crop—part of that only fit for feed—having suffered from Drought & Hail & Gophers, so that I cannot expect so much as grist for my large family of ten., after my seed is secured added to which I have not been threshed. I have nothing I can sell having only two cows (one with \$10.00 to pay on) and a calf, and a team of ponies.

The reply from the Secretary of Dominion Lands was to the effect that if both the borrower and his sureties joined in a request for an extension of time, it would be granted until April 1, 1890 but a further extension could not be granted unless a request was sent to the Minister of the Interior. On February 19, 1893 the homesteader wrote to the Minister, outlining the poor crop he had had that year and mentioning that he would have to save from it enough grain to seed 50 acres of wheat and that he would have to purchase oats, barley and potato seed. His letter went on:

I have suffered real hardship and privation for years—you will better understand this if you know what a family of 10 hearty boys and girls consume; 100 lbs. flour and 4 Bushel potatoes—when I have them—barely sufficient for ten days: i am nearly beside myself at times to clothe their dear half naked bodies; which, I solemnly declare to you, have literally with three small lads been staring me in the face through the recent blizzards, I am willing to make affidavit of the truth I utter if you wish it.

I beg to ask for one more trial to get a good crop to pay this debt. . . i pray you therefore to grant me this generous favour and do not push my surety, who is a poor man almost as hardly able to pay as myself. . . .

In reply, the Department of the Interior extended the time of payment until January 1, 1894, and the file contains nothing more about the debts until 1904. By that time the seed grain debt had increased to \$95.00, of which \$50.00 was principal and the balance interest. The debt with the land company had increased to \$550.00. In the intervening years, the homesteader's family had grown up and the homesteader himself had left the farm and entered the real estate, loan and

insurance business. His sons, on whom he had depended to look after the farm for him in his old age, had also left the farm and it was uncultivated. The homesteader had been in the real estate business only two years and was still struggling to make it a paying concern. Part of his reason for leaving the land was that he was fifty years of age and was no longer able to carry on the arduous work on the farm. He was relying upon his land, which he claimed was worth about \$10.00 per acre, to provide for his need in his old age.

In order to get the patent issued, he had to clear the land of debt by borrowing \$550.00 from an investment company. He also paid off the seed grain lien. Thus by 1904 he was able to get clear title to the land on which he had settled in 1884. The experiences of this farmer were typical of many who came to Canada ill-prepared and ill-equipped for farming under Western Canadian conditions. Many farmers incurred larger debts than this farmer, the interest sometimes increasing the debt by three times and well into the thousands of dollars, but few files are readily found having letters as revealing of the homesteaders feelings as this particular file. Unfortunately, the homestead records contain more information about the unsuccessful farmers than about the successful. Records for successful farmers usually contain a few documents, and the success of the farmers is shown by the amount of land cropped and the improvements made. This information usually needed no correspondence to support it.³ On the other hand, unsuccessful farmers, or those facing difficulties wrote many letters to the Department. It must be admitted that the Department generally was as lenient as it could be when the plight of the settlers was made known to it.

Some of the more difficult problems the Department of the Interior had to contend with were those raised by the settlement of Doukhobors on homestead lands. Many files show both the promptness with which the Doukhobors took up their homesteads after the Doukhobor reserves were discontinued and the excellent contribution made by Doukhobors in settling certain areas. Other files show the complications which arose because of factional disputes among the Doukhobors themselves or because of the actions of members of the "Sons of Freedom" sect.

In July, 1904, Schulko⁴ applied for a piece of land claiming that he had been on it since the spring of 1899 and had begun residence in his house on the land in the fall of 1902. His application was opposed by the members of a Doukhobor village who claimed that the land was the site of their village which consisted of 25 houses, a flour mill worth \$3,000.00 and that the members of the community had ploughed an adjoining 100 acres. A telegram was sent to the Commissioner of Dominion Lands on December 10, 1904 by Peter Verigin supporting the members of the village and claiming that "Schulko made entry for this homestead in 1902 with the evil intention of wishing to own ploughed land and make harm to all village. . . ." Prior to the receipt of this, the Commissioner of Immigration, Winnipeg, recommended that the application for patent by Schulko be refused because no Doukhobor could homestead land on which there was a Doukhobor

³ For an account of a successful farmer in this period read "Homestead Venture, 1883-1892." *Saskatchewan History* Vol. XIV, No. 3, p. 98, and Vol. XV, No. 1, p. 30.

⁴ Pseudonym.

village. Schulko had a champion in Robert Buchanan, a neighbour, who wrote to the Department and stated that Schulko had been present when J. S. Crerar addressed the Doukhobors in the village requesting that they take up their homesteads, and that the Doukhobors would have the choice of any quarter in the Doukhobor Reserve. Schulko had decided to take the quarter he was living on, paid the ten dollar registration fee, and fulfilled his homestead duties. Buchanan even went to the extent of measuring the survey lines and proved that the mill was not on the quarter section which Schulko claimed for a homestead. A homestead inspector's report was requested by the Department. This was made on February 8, 1905 and supported the statements of Buchanan. The inspector pointed out that Schulko had made entry for his quarter section in 1902 and that everything went along smoothly for the Doukhobors until Peter Verigin came among them and started the "company" system. Schulko refused to join the company and most of the trouble arose from this because the company Doukhobors wanted to force him off the land. The inspector also pointed out that half of the houses of the village were erected after Schulko had made entry and in spite of the fact that he had pointed out to the Doukhobors that it was his homestead. The others retaliated by threatening Schulko with violence and throwing his equipment off the land. Of the 16 families in the village, the inspector understood that ten were leaving the village in the spring to locate in other villages nearer their homesteads, and that Schulko would not disturb the remainder of the families. In fact, in June of 1905, Schulko relinquished his claim to thirty acres of the quarter section so that the village would not be disturbed. A special survey was made so that no further dispute would arise over the boundaries of the village. Patent for the remainder was about to be issued to Schulko when he abandoned the land stating he was doing so because the village was situated on it. Another Doukhobor made entry for the land in 1915 and in 1918 received patent for the entire quarter as by then the village had been abandoned for a number of years.

A file of a later period illustrated other difficulties which were created for the Department by the formation of villages under the "company" system. In 1918 a Doukhobor bought 120 acres in the Verigin district at the rate of \$10.00 per acre, to be paid in seven yearly instalments. The first payment was made at the time of the sale, part of the second was made a year later and then failure to pay caused the account to be in arrears. By 1924, interest on the unpaid balance had increased the debt to more than the original sale price. Because of poor crops, the purchaser requested that payment be deferred and his request was granted. By 1928 the purchaser had improvements including a house, stable, granary, fencing and cultivated fields which were valued at more than \$1,000.00 but no payments had been made since 1919 and the debt amounted to \$1,400.00. Although when inspected by the Homestead Inspector in the Spring of 1928, the prospects were for a good crop, by October the Inspector reported that the:

. . . crop was poor and frozen. [The purchaser] threshed 1100 bushels of wheat and 200 bushels of oats. His wheat grades No. 6. He however had a good season's work with his threshing outfit and he promised to pay at least the interest due on the account.

In 1928 another factor entered into the sale of the land. The Department of the Interior was notified by the original purchaser that he had purchased the land not only for his own family of five but also for his brother-in-law's family of three, a fact which was known to the Department. But the Department had not been advised that the land was to be divided with 75 acres belonging to the larger family and 45 acres to the smaller. The brother-in-law made his payments to the purchaser, who then forwarded the money to the Department. This arrangement was only a private family affair, was not registered with the Department, and only came to the notice of the Department when the brother-in-law wanted to get a separate title to his 45 acres. The Department did not cancel the entry of the original purchaser, despite the arrears in payments, because it felt that the entrant had a fair amount of money invested in improvements. Instead, the Department granted the request and divided the farm between them, 75 acres to one family and 45 to the other. The payments were divided on the same ratio and the brother-in-law subsequently made complete payment for his land within two months of being notified of the new terms of sale.

In the meantime, the original purchaser had been described by the other Doukhobors who wanted his land as being unwilling to make payments because of religious conviction. No fewer than four others applied for his land because they had heard rumours to the effect that he was giving it up. The local bank manager stated that the original purchaser was a member of the "Sons of Freedom" sect and that the prospects of payment were not good. In February, 1929, the original purchaser was requested by the Department to make a payment of \$100.00 within 60 days. In May he was given thirty days in which to arrange for the payment of the original purchase price or the entry would be cancelled. He replied that he absolutely refused to make further payments. When the brother-in-law was offered the first chance on the 75 acres, more complications appeared because the brother-in-law claimed that the payments had been made by himself and the original purchaser in equal amounts and instead of being credited with payments on the 75 to 45 basis, they should have been credited on a 50-50 basis. The Department felt that earlier it had acted generously and as a "matter of grace" had recognized the private terms arranged between the two Doukhobors. Actually it had acted more generously than it did with most homesteaders, because usually it did not acknowledge any private arrangements and even used its authority to forbid private arrangements concerning sale of land prior to it being patented. Therefore the Department felt it could not accede to the later request of the brother-in-law. The Department received petitions signed merely "Sons of Freedom" which intimated that if the Department took away the land from the original purchaser, the Sons of Freedom would give all their clothes to the Department and thus get sensational newspaper reports. This was scarcely the type of action which would intimidate the Department and it cancelled the entry of the original purchaser. His 75 acres were sold to his brother-in-law for \$10.00 per acre plus \$530.00, the value placed on the improvements. The brother-in-law paid this sum by borrowing money from the bank and he came into sole possession of the land. Part of the \$530.00 was used by the Department to pay back taxes.

Meanwhile the Department had been receiving more letters from the original purchaser, complaining about his treatment. These letters are of interest as they indicate some of the views held by members of the Sons of Freedom. By the time these letters were written, most of the radical Doukhobors had moved to British Columbia, leaving those who intended settling down to follow their peaceful pursuits. One of the letters was written from Saskatchewan and the other from British Columbia:

I have received an official letter. . . Where it says instructions were received from Department that the land on which I live is cancelled from the record in the letter of Aug. 7th, 1929.

Gentlemen's: We ask you what kind of right you have and from who to cancell land from Sons of God. It is well known to you and also to us that before God created the man he created the Earth and all that is need for the individual, and that he had send the man to the living world and said this is your wealth, given to you free and give away free. On the foundation of this Law we have the same right to live on this Earth. from these people there was born Devil and begin to buy and sell land, this was not enough he thought of taxes to collect.

Gentlemen's: We have told you many things that we are like Sons of God, "Followers of Christ." We cannot serve both Masters God and Satan Therefore we say openly and plain to you Mother earth cannot be bought or sold and taxes cannot be raised on which holds the Alter of Satan. Because Kingdom of God has come on Earth. Down with ones ego, egoism and welcome Peace, Brotherhood, and equality on Earth. . . .

We had sent you a letter of March 23/30 about the money for the improvements on which we had been living in . . . Saskatchewan near Verigin. The land which we owned is taken away for the reason is, for our Religious Belief. The land should become Gods and then it cannot be bought or sold and all the people living on this earth shall have it free. We deeply believe this, that than all the hardships shall pass away from earth, We will not try and settle hard all this stuff in your heads, but soon you will find out for your self. Now thousands are going without any bread and we belong to this group too. The Sons of Freedom all this time been trying to make the people free from slavery and the land free from buying and selling and give free to all the working people but nobody had taken our preachings into their heads. and now people have come up to the doors of suicide. By this we stand in poor condition, because we were ruined to the end . . . we have put enough labour on the farm, that cost more than the improvements. We have cleaned it to the last brush that was on it. There is a well cost more than \$300. From the poor you are taking his last skin and for the rich you fill his belly to the brim. For this we Demand and Immediate Payment for the improvements and for our toil and labour. Don't you hold our money which belong to us for our toil, any longer. We have no power to hold the land. and for our toil you have to pay every cent. else you are making yourself to be judged by our own laws.

It is of interest to note that although the writer stated that land was not to be bought or sold, or that taxes should be paid, he still insisted on getting paid for

the improvements. The Department received another telegram from him demanding that the \$530 be refunded. Possibly the demands were based on reasons other than beliefs for a departmental official wrote to his superior that recently schools and a mill valued at \$73,000 had been burned by the Doukhobors in British Columbia. The official pithily commented that the Doukhobor "may have found out that the chief end of preaching is not dividends but rather one of uncertain finances." The Departmental officials decided that they should act as impartially as they acted in making refunds to any settlers, whether they had caused the Department a great deal of trouble or not, and made a refund of \$225.55 on October 9, 1930.

Not all the files contain accounts which tell a particular episode in a homesteader's life, but in many cases the information recorded about individuals helps to expand the information known about a particular district. This is particularly true of the very early days when squatters occupied land during the pre-survey period. After the survey the squatters had to provide the Department of the Interior with specific information concerning their claims. The value of this information over reminiscences is that it was recorded within a short time after the squatter occupied the land, usually within one to eight years. Although such a period is long enough for forgetfulness to obscure details, such information is better than something which was recorded some 40 or 50 years later, or recorded by a later generation recalling what a participant in the events had stated. Another factor contributing to the authenticity of the material in the homestead records was that the information had to be verified by witnesses. Any discrepancies between the statements of the applicant for land and the witnesses were carefully checked by the Homestead Inspectors. Claims to land in the Métis settlements serve as an illustration of the information which can be obtained about the pre-survey settlements.

In May, 1884, George Duck took statements from the Métis in the St. Laurent Parish in order to establish their claim to certain River Lots along the Saskatchewan River. These applications give the name and age of the Métis, the number in his family, the number of the River Lot he claimed, in some cases the place of birth, the date he came to the North West and the date on which he settled on his claim, and the improvements made by the settler. Very few of the Métis had large cultivated fields, most being about 12-15 acres, but the descriptions of the houses are particularly interesting. Some of the houses were valued as low as \$20.00, others as high as \$400.00. Two Métis had particularly good dwellings. Emmanuel Champagne, who claimed River Lots 43 and 44 in the Settlement stated that he had a two-story frame house, 22 ft. by 28 ft. with a shingle roof, which he valued at \$2,500.00. He also had smaller outbuildings consisting of a stable, trading shop and storehouse which he valued at \$1,000.00. The most affluent member of the community was possibly Xavier Letendre (dit Batoche). He claimed three and a half lots of the St. Laurent Settlement, had settled in the Parish in 1872 and after that time his occupation had been farming and trading. He stated that he had a two-story frame house, 22 ft. by 30 ft. with a shingle roof. Attached to this was a kitchen, 16 ft. by 20 ft. He placed a value of \$5,000.00 on it.

Moreover, on the same lot he had a trading shop, stables and storehouses which he valued at \$3,500.00. It might seem that he placed a rather high value on his buildings but applications of other Métis show that he had previously owned a fair amount of land in or around the Settlement which he had sold. In 1876 he paid Thomas McKay of Prince Albert \$25.00 for one lot. The following year he bought three lots but did not disclose the price he paid for them. He sold them the same year for \$100.00 each. In another application dated May 3, 1884, he claimed certain legal subdivisions in sections 33 and 34, Township 42, Range 1 west of the Third Meridian. In all, these subdivisions amount to 240 acres. He bought this land for \$50.00 in the spring of 1883 from Charles Nolin, who had squatted on it in 1881. Letendre never lived on it but had a man on it as his farmer.

Land values in the St. Laurent Settlement varied as widely as did the values of houses. One of the Métis gave a steer to the previous squatter for the right to 160 acres. Philip Garnot paid Charles Nolin \$500.00 for 160 acres. One interesting claim of purchase was that made by Louison Letendre who made a statement on January 16, 1886 that he had purchased River Lot 69 "from Isidore Dumas in the Spring of 1885. . . [for] one good mare and colt. . ." A letter written from Dakota on October 8, 1885, by Dumas, who had fled there after the rebellion, explains how Letendre came into possession of the land:

I write you these few words in answer to your letter which was sent here by my mother. I was sorry to hear that you felt uneasy about your mare. I could not do otherwise than keep her here. I could not even go to St. Vital fearing less I should be arrested, and I thought I would keep the mare with me and bring her up. But if you want to take my land I will keep your mare and we will be quit for I cannot go this autumn. Before taking the land you will show this letter to George Ness, who is in charge of the same, and tell him that it belongs to you

The Department of the Interior offered to grant Lot 69 to Letendre as a second entry upon the receipt of a recommendation for patent for his own homestead, but Isidore Dumas returned from the United States in June 1886, and applied for the same river lot in October 1887. He received patent for it in September 1888, the delay being caused by conflicting evidence between his statement and that of his witness who said that Dumas had been in Dakota from July 1885 to June 1886. Dumas had not mentioned this absence in the application. R. S. Cook, the Dominion Lands Agent, noted the discrepancy and reported, when submitting the application for patent in 1887, that Isidore Dumas ". . . is one of the best settlers in the French Settlement but his statement as to residence is incorrect, shortly after the rebellion he went to Montana where he remained about a year. . ." Obviously Dumas took part in the rebellion but his patent had been delayed because he had not explained fully where he had been, rather than because of his participation in the rebellion. As soon as he made a statement as to the period of absence from his claim, the patent was issued to him.

One interesting letter from squatters was written to the Department of the Interior by James MacDougall Macfarlane and Thomas Fleming Macfarlane, two brothers who claimed they were the earliest settlers in the Battleford district:

We settled here in August 1876, being the first to settle, as farmers, in this part of the country.

We took up 640 acres. . . fenced it in, built house and Stables, and have since farmed every year.

Having taken up before survey, we thought it advisable to put in crops in a block, and being single men it would have been a hardship to have farmed separately.—However the balance of the claim has been used steadily for pasture and as an absolute necessity in connection with the farming operations. . . .

We also beg to state that we took up the land altogether for farming and stock purposes, and from the first had no idea of holding it for speculative purposes.

Our stock now amounts to 80 head of horned stock and horses, which will be increased by about 35 next year.

We venture to say that the fact of being the first farmers here and our success in cultivating the soil, has been of benefit to the place, inasmuch as many who came afterwards, took up land and became farmers, as a consequence. . . .

It is not always possible to locate a definite lead such as this in obtaining information on the earliest settlers in a district. Some of the early settlers might have settled on purchased land and there is no record of these transactions in the homestead files. The huge quantity of the records, and the fact that certain files have been abstracted for other government business, also tend to make the search for the first settler almost an impossibility. Such a search would not produce the most useful type of information available in the files. A far greater value lies in the details which can be obtained about the pioneer society and the progress of that society from its earliest days.

Only a few of the episodes in the homesteaders lives which are available in the homestead records have been mentioned in this article. Many more will be revealed when further research is done. In conjunction with the available accounts of homestead life, these authentic details will show that the difficulties faced by the pioneers were greater in variety than is often thought. They will also aid in creating a more complete picture of Saskatchewan's interesting past.

LLOYD RODWELL

Politics and Patronage, 1894

The political broadside published on the opposite page was written against a background of rumours of irregularities in the expenditure of Assembly funds for public works in the North Qu'Appelle electoral district.

Until 1896 the money spent by the Territorial government on public works such as roads and bridges was allotted to each electoral district and its expenditure was controlled by the Member for the district. Patronage was an important consideration at election time.

William Sutherland, the sitting member, won the 1894 election with 312 votes, Guernsey came second with 183 votes, while W. R. Motherwell, the third candidate, only received 71 votes. A few months after the election, definite complaints were made about the way contracts for public works were being carried out and a Commission was appointed to investigate the charges. F. W. G. Haultain was appointed Commissioner and George Guernsey aided him in drawing up the charges. These were considered well founded and borne out by the evidence taken by the Commission when its report was made in October, 1896. The report described how public works had been handled in the constituency.

The usual plan seems to have been to give a specified, and in some cases an unspecified, amount of work, in unspecified localities, upon unspecified jobs, by word of mouth, to individuals, without any particular inquiry with regard to the details mentioned. . . . There is no evidence that in the majority of cases any inspection of work purporting to have been done was made. The day labour sheets. . . in nearly every instance, contained the names of individuals who state, or upon whose behalf it is stated, that they did the amount of work mentioned in places on totally different jobs. . . . in some instances there was no evidence to show that the work described was done at all by any of the persons named in the time sheet. The evidence of the foreman is almost unanimously to the effect that they signed the sheets as foreman, usually in blank, for the purpose of obtaining payment of their individual accounts, and that the names on the sheets were subsequently added without their knowledge. The names, dates, prices and description of work are in all cases filled in in the hand writing of the Member for the District. The Member, Mr. Sutherland, in his evidence, explains that these forms were used and filled in for "office purposes" only. . . .

Despite this and other indictments of Sutherland's methods, Haultain exonerated him personally of any wrong doing:

While feeling constrained to make very severe strictures with regard to the abuse of forms, disregard of rules and general gross negligence of the Member for the District with regard to the cases enquired into, I am also bound to report that there is not throughout the evidence a well founded imputation against his personal integrity.

Amid expressions of regret, William Sutherland resigned his seat in the Territorial Assembly on October 27, 1896.

TO THE ELECTORS OF North Qu'Appelle:

Having decided to contest the district at the approaching election for the Local Legislature, I take this opportunity of placing before you my qualifications and the motive by which I will be guided if you elect me as your representative. My object in entering public life is to make money without physical exertion and having no conviction and less principle I will stand in with the majority in the House when I find it will be to my pecuniary interest to do so. My first object will be to look out for myself and after my mercenary appetite is satiated I will exert myself on behalf of those who support me at the poll. As the successful candidate, in a contested election, is under no obligation to his opponents, I will confer all favors upon those who vote for me.

I will build dams, wherever possible, adjacent to every farmer who aids me in this election.

I will give contracts on dams, bridges, and trails to those only who support me and will stipulate that all laboring men who vote for me shall be employed on those works.

If those in favor of French language and Separate Schools exert themselves in my behalf, I will introduce legislation in sympathy with their views.

I will support a bill in favour of Prohibition, or one giving greater latitude to hotel keepers, as I find one or the other most to my interest.

I am in favor of all things for my supporters and everything for myself.

My enemies (and they are legion) assert that I am a sneak and a cynic; and charge me with having been guilty of cowardice, speculation, and other shady transactions when in the police, of heartlessness as a bailiff, and of unscrupulousness as Clerk of the Municipality. These accusations I will neither palliate nor deny.

Admitting those charges to be true I am but following in the footsteps of many other great men who have entered public life.

My qualifications and my views are now fully before you. Trusting that they will meet with your approval and entitle me to your support.

I am, gentleman,

Yours, Respectfully,

GEORGE F. GUERNSEY.

Fort Qu'Appelle, October, 1894.

PRAIRIE PEOPLE

The Honourable G. W. Brown, 1860-1919

By Z. M. HAMILTON

This article was originally published in *The Morning Leader* of February 18, 1919 on the occasion of the death of G. W. Brown who was Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan from 1910-1915. This is a particularly fine example of an obituary and because it was written to the memory of a man who made a significant contribution to the early history of this province, it warrants republication here. The title of the article has been changed and certain sections have been deleted from the original.

THE EDITOR

George W. Brown has been a great figure in the western country. There have been other men who have loomed larger in the public eye—who have possessed qualities which appealed more to the imagination—but none whose growth and achievements have been so characteristic of the great wheat plains of Saskatchewan.

He came here with the very beginnings, toiled amid harsh and forbidding surroundings, during a season of hardship and discouragements, and progressed step by step from the humble shack of the homesteader till he reached the position of governor of this rich and prosperous province. His career has been one continual record of achievement. He was one of the earliest to obtain political success, and his business acumen and foresight brought him affluence long before his contemporaries. His adult life has been spent on the western plains, and his habits, his interests, and his very success itself was characteristic of the country. Its atmosphere had permeated him, and he knew it and its people as did no other man.

The Browns were of the sturdy north of Ireland stock, which had gained its persistence and its Protestantism from Scottish forbears, and its ready speech and eager vision from the Celtic blood of the Emerald Isle. They settled in Ontario long ago when the stubborn forests had to be subdued, before the first meagre crops of grain were grown among the tree stumps. The family home was at Holstein, and George Brown was born on one of the best farms of the district in May of the year 1860, the eldest of a family of stalwart lads and winsome girls. Although the interests which made him an unusually rich man were, to a great extent, those which had to do with farming and land, he had no natural turn for agriculture. He did not like it, and never hesitated to say so. In common with all other Ontario farm bred boys he put in the inevitable apprenticeship at splitting rails and harrowing summerfallow, but he felt it was not his metier, and he contrived to obtain a very much better education than usually fell to the lot of other lads similarly situated.

In 1882 the glamour of the west was stirring the hearts of the adventurous young blood of Ontario. A new country was coming in and young Ontario was wild to go adventuring, and penetrate the mysteries which lay beyond the rim of the western horizon. Accordingly George Brown with two of his neighbours made a party with some neighbours and joined the western movement. Early in the spring they reached Brandon which was then the western headquarters of the railway,

and finding that the locomotive could bear them no further, they outfitted for an overland journey, boldly started out across the unknown solitudes of the prairies. Day after day they travelled to the westward walking beside the slow gaited oxen, which hauled their wagons, and keeping as closely as possible to the straight line of the survey of the main line of the railway.

The country was new and strange to the argonauts who, long accustomed to the landscape of Ontario with its forests, its rocks and rivers, and cultivated farms, found the great stretches of level plain reaching away to the rim of the horizon novel and wonderful. A careful survey was made of the country, and they eventually picked a location, and set up their tents on a rich and alluvial prairie land a short distance north of Boggy Creek, about eleven miles from the present site of Regina. How good their judgement was, has been vindicated by the years; for the district they selected has been proven to be one of the most fertile in all the wide Saskatchewan country.

A start was soon made in breaking up the prairie and it was not long before the farm of the Brown Brothers became known as one of the most successful on the Regina plains. Their first modest shanty was situated on a lonely expanse of level prairie, close to the trail which ran from Regina northward to the Qu'Appelle Valley, Long Lake and Saskatoon. The hospitality of their establishment was proverbial, even in those open-handed days, when the humble homes of the settlers were kept open for each wayfarer who came along on the winds of chance, business or adventure. Many a winter traveller plodding behind his slow-moving oxen regarded the Brown home as the first stop in their dreary journey, where warmth, shelter, and unstinted hospitality was always to be had.

Those first years on the plains were hard ones. The soil was stiff and stubborn; in the summer hot winds often sweeping over great areas of burnt and parched prairie seemed to shrivel up everything like the breath from the mouth of some arid Hell; early frosts blighted many a promising crop; and altogether conditions were hard and unfamiliar. The truth was that the new country required different treatment from the land back in Ontario, and it was a little difficult for the young men to adjust themselves to the new conditions.

His character and education early turned George Brown's life into public channels. Even when the exacting duties of the farm took most of his attention, he found time to study many of the matters of policy which were of vital importance to the new settlers, and his neighbours always listened with respect to his opinions and went to him for advice. He was a young man of mighty physique and would have made a doughty tiller of the soil, but his heart was never in following the plodding oxen down the long prairie furrow, and after one bitter winter's work of teaming grain to the Regina elevator, he abandoned agricultural pursuits for the time and entered the office of a firm of lawyers in Regina to become learned in law. During his student days, he was prevailed upon to run for the North-West Assembly; but his opponent was well entrenched, the time was unpropitious, and he was defeated.

In 1894 however—that black year of no rain and no crops, there came another election and he was easily elected. The story of the work that he did for the

stricken settlers of his constituency, during his first session of the legislature, has never been properly told. Hardly anything had grown on the Regina plains that year and the settlers saw winter approaching with forboding and dismay. The granaries were empty, there was little fodder to be had, and in many cases the cupboards of the farm kitchens were empty and there was nothing in sight with which to refill them. George Brown was thoroughly alive to the situation, and it is well understood that it was the strong and incessant representation which he made to Premier Haultain and his colleague the Hon. J. H. Ross, that induced these gentlemen to take an extreme step to relieve the situation. They devoted most of the federal grant for roads and bridges to establishing relief work for the farmers of the Regina and Moose Jaw districts. The funds at their disposal were very limited and had to be parceled out in very small sums amongst the farmers. Road work was instituted and each head of the family was allowed to earn approximately \$30, and unmarried farmers about half that sum. In view of the present costs of living it does not appear very much upon which to pass a winter, but there was no money in the country, and it helped to relieve the necessities of many a needy household.

Shortly before his election to the assembly, Mr. Brown had formed a law partnership with Norman Mackenzie, which was the nucleus of one of the most extensive and lucrative law practices in Western Canada. The combination was a good one. Mr. Brown knew every farmer in the country and all about him and his family, his acres and livestock. They trusted him and relied upon his judgement in all their affairs.

In these latter days of land values, it is hard to believe that when the firm of Mackenzie and Brown was first established a farmer could not borrow a dollar on the best section in the Regina district. Some of the loan corporations would advance money, although somewhat sparingly, on urban property but farmlands were absolutely out of the question. Mr. Brown realized that if this were to be an agricultural country such conditions were entirely unjustified, and he made a strenuous effort to induce some eastern and Old Country capital to engage in the business of farm loans in the west. Some loans were made cautiously and timidly at first, on Mr. Brown's personal recommendation. Then as the country developed and crops became the rule and not the exception, values became stabilized and money for this class of business became fairly plentiful. He was unsparing in his efforts to bring money into the country for the benefit of the farmers who had for years been suffering for want of the cash with which to carry on their business. In those days when money was obtained on a farm mortgage, it was very seldom that the money was forthcoming when the papers were signed. There were all sorts of formalities to be completed and usually the documents had to be sent east and it might be three months before the actual cash was available. In many such cases when the need was urgent Mr. Brown pledged his own personal credit to afford the borrower immediate relief.

The law business continued to increase. Mr. Brown's knowledge of the country and his good, sound judgement made him an invaluable adviser, while Mr. Mackenzie's ability before a judge or jury served to increase the reputation

and prosperity of the firm. Mr. Brown was a good, sound lawyer, but his gifts were more in the field of business than in law courts or among musty volumes, and he was early interested in some of the big business that came with the development of the country.

As his business interests widened, he devoted increasing attention to politics. Previous to 1896 he had inclined to the Conservative party in federal politics, but he drifted away from them on the Manitoba school question. His personal friendship with Honourable J. H. Ross may have had something to do with the fact that like many others he did not return to the fold after the settlement of that contentious question. He admired Mr. Ross very much, as indeed did everyone, irrespective of political affiliations, who knew him, and there is no doubt that, apart altogether from the warm personal feeling which existed between the two men, Mr. Ross realized that George Brown with his strong following among the farmers, his inflexible memory and his unique personality was of the greatest use to the Liberal party. Mr. Brown was always sure of his constituency, and was returned election after election. Only once was he menaced and that was by the doughty J. K. McInnis, and there is little question that gentleman gave Mr. Brown some uneasy moments. Mr. McInnis had fought a tremendous campaign in 1896 against the veteran campaigner, Nicholas Flood Davin for the federal seat. Davin, a man of great brilliance, was thought to be impregnable, but Mr. McInnis came within one vote of beating him. Mr. McInnis had developed considerable strength during the federal campaign in the North Regina district, and being so narrowly defeated by the House of Commons, he fixed his eye on the seat in the legislature occupied by Mr. Brown. Accordingly he secured an opposition nomination and stepped into the local arena with all his customary vigor and aggressiveness. It was a three-cornered battle. George Brown was running as the candidate of the Haultain-Ross administration, while J. K. McInnis and Dr. Willoughby both took the side of the opposition. Dr. Willoughby, although very popular, was never in the running, and it was apparent at the outset that the fight was between the sitting member and McInnis. The latter held meetings all over the constituency; told the farmers all about their wrongs, and the autocratic reign of the Territorial administration, and found them most ready to listen to him. There was no question but that Mr. Brown, who had hitherto been very strong in his own constituency, was in some considerable danger of losing his seat.

No one knows exactly what happened, but Mr. Ross, who was a prince of diplomats, is reported to have had an interview with Mr. McInnis, and that gentleman at a meeting held in Lumsden made a graceful retirement, announcing that he had experienced a change of heart, and that after all George Brown was the only suitable man to represent the constituency. He called upon all his friends to support Mr. Brown. This, of course, cut the feet from under Dr. Willoughby, and on election day, George Brown was again at the head of the polls with a good handsome majority. He continued to do good useful work in the legislature. He enjoyed a measure of consideration at the hands of the administration seldom accorded to a private member, and owing to that circumstance and his wonderful knowledge of the country, he had a very pronounced effect upon legislation. He

was always ready and willing to champion the cause of the farmer and his contribution to the debates were pertinent and interesting.

Mr. Brown with canny foresight had made many personal investments in farm lands when the price was still very low, and he accordingly reaped handsome profits. He was one of the first to realize the possibilities of half breed scrip. This scrip was a warrant issued by the Dominion government to members of native families which called for a crown title to 240 acres of government land wherever it might be open for entry. At that time there were vast areas of land still open for homesteading, and the government was willing to sell land to all and sundry at the price of two and a half to five dollars per acre. Consequently scrip had not much market value when it was first issued. It could be bought for a song. Incredible as it may seem today these warrants entitling the holder to 240 acres of perfectly good land nearly anywhere he wanted to take it, were peddled around for from fifty to a hundred dollars each; and even at that figure found few takers. Mr. Brown early recognized the value and at one time was perhaps the largest individual holder of scrip in the west. Of course as settlement flowed into the country and the lands were taken, it became of more value. The government passed a regulation withdrawing all crown land from purchase and that gave the price of scrip another boost. Mr Brown must have realized a comfortable little fortune from his scrip holdings alone.

Back in 1895 Mr. Brown had married Miss Annie Barr of Norwich, Ontario and ever since then Mrs. Brown had been one of the most estimable figures in western society. During the last session of the Territorial Legislature, Mr. Brown was attacked by a severe sickness and after the busy years which he had spent, it was considered advisable that he take a rest. He accordingly was not a candidate for the provincial legislature. His old seat, which was always an important one, was represented by the Premier, the Honourable Walter Scott, and Mr. Brown made an extended visit to Europe. He visited many places of historic interest and owing to his habits of close observation and wonderful memory, he stored up a mass of varied and interesting information. He returned to Regina with his health restored and again engaged actively in the public and private matters in which he was interested.

In 1910 the term of office of Honourable A. E. Forget expired and Mr. Brown was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of the province. The appointment was a splendid one. It was the first time that a characteristic westerner had been given this position of honor and dignity. Previous to the regime of Mr. Forget the occupants of Government House at Regina had been outsiders who had been appointed as a reward for party services. It is true that Mr. Forget had lived in the west for many years, but he had been a civil servant all that time and was very little identified with the intimate life of the country. With Mr. Brown it was quite different. He was an outstanding figure and was known to everyone. The people felt that the compliment paid to him was to one of themselves. The aloofness that had previously hedged the office had gone and there was at last some familiar qualities about the Governor of this most puissant province. The

health of his predecessor had curtailed to a considerable extent the functions of the Government House. But a new era dawned with Mr. Brown's appointment. He had a very fine sense of the obligation of the position and the gubernatorial establishment on the outskirts of the city soon became known for its hospitality and entertainment. Mr. Brown, with excellent tact, managed to combine a democratic friendliness with the dignity compatible with the high position he occupied.

On the expiry of his term as Governor, he again applied himself to his business affairs and there was some indications that he might again go into active politics. Had the old party system, which gave way for the time to Union government, remained he would have been a logical Liberal candidate for the federal seat; and his election would have been sure. With his party in power at Ottawa he would have had the right to expect cabinet rank. However, Union Government changed many things and his personal business was of such magnitude that it required a great deal of his attention.

It is no truism to say that the death of George Brown removes a landmark of the country. No one was ever more closely identified with it and none better known. His career typified that portion of Canada with which he was so long identified. He rose from the humblest beginnings to affluence and high station.

Book Reviews

THE WESTERN INTERIOR OF CANADA. By J. Warkentin. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd. The Carleton Library No. 15. 1964. pp. 304. Maps. \$2.95.

A casual approach to Professor Warkentin's compilation *The Western Interior of Canada* will easily lead readers to misleading conclusions for this volume is more than an indiscriminate collection of extracts drawn from journals and reports of explorers in the western interior of Canada from 1612 to 1917. It is not, as one might suspect, at a casual glance, a chronological record of what explorers saw as they advanced from one area of the country to another. It is not merely a description of the changing landscape and the measurement of rivers, hills and valleys. On the contrary, the context in which passages were chosen is specific and purposeful. The compiler has guided himself by a very rigid and meaningful framework. Passages were chosen, he says in his introduction, to show how our knowledge of the terrain developed; how we attained a knowledge of the major geological eras; and how the nature of field research changed.

From the voluminous record of exploration and travel—what Professor Warkentin calls the "received body of knowledge"—he has selected judiciously. The selections, with editorial comment, provide a history of the scientific exploration of western Canada from the early stages of elementary description, through the period of classification, and finally interpretation and explanation.

Descriptions of the landscape show a development from the simple observations of Sir George Simpson to Sir James Hector's more refined statement of the three prairie levels. Attitudes towards variations in climate and vegetation are presented as part of the continuing debate over arid and fertile belts from the first opinions as to agricultural potential to the later re-interpretation and revision. Speculations and theoretical problems take shape throughout the selections—questions as to the processes that shaped the surface of the land, the existence of a continental ice sheet or the effect of glacial action.

In total the book presents the unfolding development of man's reaction to the western environment and the story that environment revealed to him as he approached it with changing purposes and broadening research techniques. Prior to the 19th century geographical observations had been confined by the purposes of the fur trade. During the first half of that century the systematic collection of detailed information was sought for the purpose of extending scientific knowledge. Beginning in the 1850's exploration was directed toward the gathering of information related to agricultural settlement and railway communication. During the last period under consideration down to 1917 an intensive study was made on particular problems in geology and continuing interpretive descriptions undertaken.

Professor Warkentin's selections and comments illustrate this development. What he has accomplished is a study which, by its conception and its focus, provides a dimensional approach to the landscape of the western interior—an

approach in depth beyond the traditional political, economic or historical limits by which we have known the area. It foreshadows, it is hoped, further studies by Professor Warkentin in this field.

Disappointment must, nevertheless, be registered at the physical arrangement of explorer's narrative and editor's comment in the publication. It is unfortunate that the publisher did not employ some method of type variation or insert to distinguish clearly these sections. No doubt space and cost were deciding factors but the arrangement is both disconcerting and annoying. Professor Warkentin's remarkable analysis of his material deserves better treatment than this.

H. BOWSFIELD

DAVID THOMPSON'S NARRATIVE, 1874-1812. Edited by Richard Glover. Toronto: *The Champlain Society*, 1962. pp. cii, 398. map.

The writer is not qualified to comment on many of the criticisms of David Thompson that Doctor Glover makes in his introduction. There are, however, references made to Thompson's place in history as a surveyor that should not go unchallenged. Any practicing surveyor who has had the opportunity to travel and work over a portion of the vast area that was first mapped by Thompson would find himself unable to agree with Doctor Glover's statement that "It was certain that North America would some day be mapped, and any competent, adequately financed surveyor or team of surveyors, could have done it." The statement infers that Thompson's work was routine and could have been duplicated by any "competent" surveyor.

When the professional surveyor has the opportunity to study Thompson's journals and field notes he realizes that Thompson was much more than merely a "competent" surveyor. Even though they were made 175 years ago, his field notes recording his observations to determine the latitude and longitude of Cumberland House are clear and legible. The results of these observations demonstrate a skill as an observer that the ordinary surveyor of today would have difficulty in matching, even with modern equipment and methods. Between February 1st and May 5th, 1790 Thompson took six astronomical observations to determine the latitude of Cumberland House and 35 observations to determine its longitude. All his observations were of a high order of accuracy when one considers the methods then employed and the equipment available. The means of his observations placed the location of Cumberland House within a relatively short distance of the position determined by modern methods in recent years. Similar results were obtained at other stations which he was able to occupy for a reasonable period of time.

Thompson realized that a great deal of his traversing would, of necessity, have to be of a low order of precision. He was required to map the course of rivers, the locations of passes and trails and the outlines of lakes in the course of his normal travels. He, therefore, established a network of widely-spaced but carefully determined control points as the framework for what later became

his 'Map of the North-West Territory of the Province of Canada.' Between these geographical control points, which were determined by a long series of careful astronomical observations, he fitted the details of his many surveys to produce the first good map of the Canadian West and adjacent American territory. It is true that, "North America would some day be mapped." The important point is that it was done by Thompson. His great map, combining the results of his surveys with those of Mackenzie, Stewart and Turnor, is an enduring monument to the skill and dedication of this great surveyor.

When Thompson arrived at Churchill in 1784 much of the great North-West was unknown. When he left the West in 1812 he was able to prepare the map which, for the first time, delineated most of the main topographic features of this vast area. Most of the information had been observed and recorded by Thompson himself. Thompson left school at the age of 14. He had completed his western surveys at the age of 43. This was not the accomplishment of a "competent" surveyor. It was the work of a skilled and extremely dedicated professional, a man who has probably never been equalled in the annals of Canadian surveying.

I. W. TWEDDELL.

Notes and Correspondence

Dr. L. V. Xhignesse, Special Lecturer in the Social Sciences at the Regina Campus of the University of Saskatchewan, has been appointed a member of the Saskatchewan Archives Board.

Mr. Mervin K. Baker, Supervisor of Historic Sites, Department of Natural Resources, has been appointed a member of the Advisory Board for *Saskatchewan History*.

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