

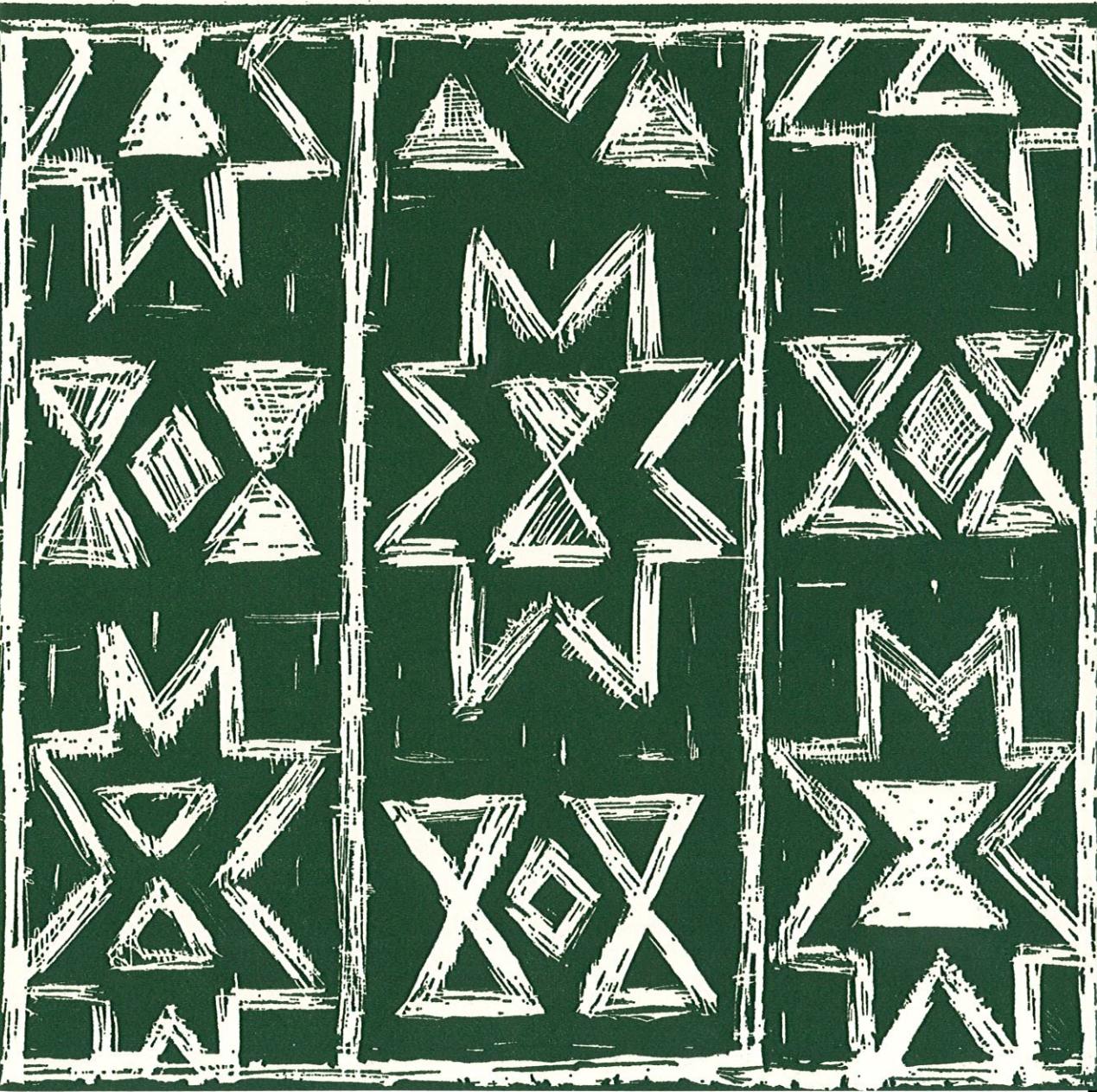
# ASKATCHEWAN HISTORY

Vol. XXI, No. 2

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Spring 1968

**SOLDIER SETTLEMENT IN THE PRAIRIE PROVINCES** *by E. C. Morgan*  
**THE ROWBOTTOM DIARIES** *by S. W. Jackman*  
**LOUIS RIEL'S LETTER TO PRESIDENT GRANT, 1875** *by H. Bowsfield*





# Saskatchewan History

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COVER BY MARY LOU FLORIAN

Based on a design from a Cree Indian fire bag  
collected at Batoche in 1885.



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## Soldier Settlement in the Prairie Provinces

With the passage of the Soldier Settlement Act in 1917,<sup>1</sup> the Canadian government introduced a bold approach to the settlement of land for agricultural purposes. The Act embodied a scheme which offered a partial solution to the problem of re-establishing thousands of service men expected to return shortly from the battlefields in Europe; and, through the opening up of large new areas, it held out the prospect of a substantial addition to primary production, and thereby an increase in the national wealth.

The flood of immigrants which had entered the prairie west after 1900 had begun to ebb shortly before the outbreak of World War I. At this stage in the development of the prairie provinces much of the good land had been taken up by homesteaders, although hundreds of thousands of acres in the hands of corporate and individual speculators remained unsettled. There did remain millions of acres of Dominion lands, which, however, were located largely in the Palliser Triangle, the northern fringes of the park belt, in the Peace River country, amongst the lakes and marshes of northern Manitoba, or in forested areas; but even these lands required capital to purchase the necessary equipment and livestock needed to make farming possible. Under these conditions few opportunities remained for those with limited capital to acquire farms in the settled areas of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, or Alberta.

Accordingly, the 1917 Act provided for the establishment of The Soldier Settlement Board<sup>2</sup> which was empowered to loan veterans an amount of \$2500 for the acquisition of livestock and equipment to begin farming Dominion land under the prevailing homestead regulations, or for the payment of indebtedness on farms already held by them. However, the demand for entry under the scheme exceeded expectations and in 1919, a new act was passed which broadened the scope of the Board's operations.

During 1918, a thorough survey of Dominion lands was undertaken.<sup>3</sup> It was found that while the remaining acreage was large, it was the residue of a much larger area which had been carefully picked over. The increasing demand for soldier entry led to the focussing of attention on lands held vacant by speculators. As a result the Soldier Settlement Act of 1919<sup>4</sup> authorized the Board to designate such lands as "settlement areas", and to purchase them at a figure set by the Exchequer Court should the Board's offer be refused. The Act also authorized the Board to acquire uncultivated Indian Reserves, and school lands, and to withdraw land from Forest Reserves. Soldier entry was facilitated also by various regulations which among other things provided for the reservation of all Dominion lands within a radius of fifteen miles of a railway,<sup>5</sup> and of the first office day,

<sup>1</sup> *Statutes of Canada*, 7-8, George V, Chapter 21.

<sup>2</sup> The Board was established by Order-in-Council passed Jan. 30, 1918. See *Report of the Soldier Settlement Board of Canada*, March 31, 1921, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Canada, *Sessional Papers*, 1919, No. 25a, pp. 7-23.

<sup>4</sup> *Statutes of Canada*, 9-10, George V, Chapter 71.

<sup>5</sup> *Canada Year Book*, 1920, p. 31.

following the close of advertising, at all Dominion Lands Offices, for soldier settlers.<sup>6</sup>

Under the terms of the new Act, members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, all pensioned veterans, members of allied forces who had resided in Canada before the war, and ex-members of any Imperial or Dominion force were eligible to qualify for benefits. Those in the latter group were required to make a twenty per cent investment in purchased land, while those in the other categories were required to pay down ten per cent of the purchase price.

The classes of assistance provided under the Act were as follows:

1. To aid in settlement on lands purchased through the Board.
  - (a) Up to \$4500 for the purchase of land,
  - (b) Up to \$2000 for the purchase of livestock, implements, and other equipment,
  - (c) Up to \$1000 for the erection of buildings and other improvements.
2. To aid in becoming re-established on land already owned by them.
  - (a) Up to \$3500 for the removal of encumbrances, the payment so advanced not to exceed fifty per cent of the appraised value of the land,
  - (b) Up to \$2000 for the purchase of livestock, implements, and other equipment,
  - (c) Up to \$1000 for the erection of buildings or other permanent improvements.
3. To aid in becoming established on Dominion Lands in the prairie provinces.
  - (a) Up to \$3000 for the purchase of livestock and equipment, and the erection of permanent improvements.

With interest set at five per cent per annum, loans for land and buildings were repayable in twenty-five annual instalments, while loans for stock and equipment were payable in four annual instalments beginning in the third year. Under the scheme the settler was expected to make his own selection of land, implements, and livestock, but the Board took steps to help him make wise decisions, and thereby to protect not only the settler, but its own investment.

Policy, while set at Ottawa, was administered by district superintendents who directed a field staff of appraisers, inspectors, and instructors. In the prairie provinces district offices were established at Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Edmonton, and Calgary.<sup>7</sup> To provide the superintendent and the Board with further assistance Qualification and Advisory Loan Committees were appointed. The Qualification Committee was composed of technical agriculturalists and practical farmers. Included on the Regina Committee was F. H. Auld, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, and on the Saskatoon Committee, Dean W. J. Ruther-

<sup>6</sup> Department of the Interior, Dominion Lands Branch, *Regulations*, ed. of April 25, 1927, p. 72.

<sup>7</sup> *Report of the Soldier Settlement Board of Canada*, March 31, 1921, pp. 83, 88, 95, 105, 114, 120.



ford, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Saskatchewan, and Professor John Bracken, President of the Manitoba Agricultural College.<sup>8</sup> The members of the Loan Committees were drawn chiefly from officials of banks and mortgage companies, and included a representative of the soldiers, and in some instances members of agricultural societies, Boards of Trade, and rural municipal officials.<sup>9</sup>

The Act provided for investigation of the applicant as to his physical and agricultural qualifications. He was then classed as: (1) fit and ready for settlement, (2) in need of further training, (3) unfit for farming. Those placed in class 2, were advised to obtain employment with a capable farmer, or to attend one of the Board's training schools, and to reapply at a later date. To enable prospective settlers to attend training schools, the Act provided for the payment of subsistence allowances to trainees and their dependents, and schools were operated for varying periods of time at a number of places including the Dominion Experimental Farms at Agassiz, B.C.,<sup>10</sup> and Kentville, N.S., and the Ontario Agricultural College at Guelph.<sup>11</sup> This work was supplemented by short courses sponsored by provincial departments of agriculture, including that of Saskatchewan, which held a series of meetings in the Soldier Settlement colony which had been established on land withdrawn from the Porcupine Forest Reserve.<sup>12</sup>

Once qualified, the prospective settler was expected to select the land he wished to farm, and if it had to be purchased, to ascertain the price and submit his application for a loan. Following appraisal to determine the fertility and general suitability of the land and its cash value and a review of the Loan Committee's recommendations the Board decided whether or not a loan should be granted.<sup>13</sup> The procedure for purchasing stock and equipment was much the same, and here through arrangements with the manufacturers of farm machinery, and other equipment, the Board was able to make substantial savings for the settler,<sup>14</sup> and while the Act required the settler to make a modest investment in purchased land, livestock and equipment were available on lien agreements for the total amount.

From the foregoing the Board's policies can be defined as follows:

- (1) Settlement on the land of veterans whose best interests would be served by engaging in agriculture,
- (2) Settlement only where land was well located, and of reasonable price and fertility,
- (3) The securing of the best values possible in land, livestock and equipment,
- (4) The development and filling in of settlements contiguous to rail facilities, and the extension of the agricultural frontier by encouraging settlement on Dominion land,

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>10</sup> Canada, *Sessional Papers*, 1921, No. 16, p. 193.

<sup>11</sup> O. C. White, "Soldier Settlement and Some Lessons to be Learned Therefrom", *Land Settlement* (Ottawa: Canadian Society of Technical Agriculturalists, n.d.).

<sup>12</sup> Saskatchewan, *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture*, 1920-21, p. 178.

<sup>13</sup> *Canada Year Book*, 1920, p. 32.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

- (5) Guidance and assistance for the settlers by instructors and inspectors.

The Board also provided assistance to the wives and daughters of settlers by establishing a Home Service Branch which, through the co-operation of the Red Cross, women's institutes, extension departments of universities, and government agencies, provided instruction in such areas as home economics, dairying, and poultry raising.<sup>15</sup>

In the early years of the scheme, those who settled in the prairie provinces made good progress. Up to November 30, 1920, a total of 59,331 men had applied throughout Canada for benefits under the Act. Of this number, 43,063 had been qualified, and 19,771 had settled on farms. Of those located 14,072 were on purchased lands, 1,964 on encumbered lands, and 3,735 on Dominion lands.<sup>16</sup> Approximately seventy per cent of those who had made entry were to be found in the prairie provinces where, Dominion lands being available, the soldier settler was entitled to exercise his civilian right to a 160 acre homestead, in addition to a soldier grant of the same acreage.<sup>17</sup> The following table shows some of the results of soldier settlement in the prairie provinces up to November 30, 1920:<sup>18</sup>

Province	No. of settlers	Amount loaned in \$	Average acreage	Av. cost per acre
Manitoba.....	3,231	13,445,460.47	220	\$17.00
Saskatchewan.....	4,927	19,425,238.05	223	\$17.20
Alberta.....	5,785	23,048,972.16	232	\$16.80

By 1920 serious problems already confronted soldier settlers. In the early rush it was not always possible to avoid approval of unsuitable applicants, and the liberal provisions of the Act involved the waiving of many ordinary business practices.<sup>19</sup> Most significant was the post-war deflation which began in 1920. The bulk of settlement took place in 1919 and 1920,<sup>20</sup> while the prices of land, stock, and equipment were high. However, by the time the average settler was able to bring many acres into cultivation or to build up a herd of cattle, deflation brought a sharp drop in the prices he received for his produce. One constant remained, and that was his indebtedness to the Board. Under these circumstances few managed to meet their payments.

The situation described by Thomas MacNutt, Member of Parliament for the Saskatchewan constituency of Saltcoats, was common throughout the prairies. In his district, MacNutt said, oats and barley had been purchased for seed in the spring of 1920 at \$1.10 per bushel but sold in 1921 at prices ranging from forty-five to seventy-five cents, while cows which cost one hundred dollars the previous year now brought only forty dollars a head. He then referred to a meeting of settlers in his district which had passed resolutions calling for the post-dating of all contracts for a period of up to three years, and for the refunding of their ten

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 31-35.

<sup>19</sup> W. S. Woods, *Rehabilitation* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1953), pp. 139-140.

<sup>20</sup> *Report of the Soldier Settlement Board of Canada*, Dec. 31, 1926, p. 16.



per cent payment on land. He himself suggested a suspension of payments, and the waiving of interest for a two year period.<sup>21</sup>

Andrew Knox, Member of Parliament for Prince Albert, was mildly optimistic. In his opinion the scheme had been largely successful in its aims, and he believed that the twelve hundred people settled under the supervision of the Prince Albert office, from that district through the Carrot River valley, were making satisfactory progress. However, he decried the lack of educational facilities in the Porcupine Forest Reserve settlement, which was due, he said, to the fact that the government retained title to the land, thus preventing the sale of debentures for school purposes. There were, Knox said, over one hundred children in the settlement, of whom more than sixty of school age were without a school. But, he continued, "the one big want most keenly felt is the lack of transport facilities,"<sup>22</sup> a condition which, he said, made the grievance over heavy freight rates sink into insignificance.

"The one big want" of most settlers was a solution to the cost-price squeeze. The need for remedial legislation, which MacNutt had voiced, was echoed by many Members of Parliament, and veterans, soldier settlers, and other farm organizations. In response to these demands legislation was passed, in 1922, which provided a measure of relief. An amendment to the Act enabled the Board to consolidate all indebtedness into one loan, to extend the new loan over twenty-five years, and to grant an interest exemption of from two to four years, with those settled prior to October 1, 1919 receiving the four year exemption.<sup>23</sup>

The economic plight of many settlers did not deter others from becoming established under the Act, but they tended to be outnumbered by those who abandoned their holdings, which then were sold to other soldiers, or to civilians. By the end of the fiscal year 1922-23, 14.5 percent of the settlers had abandoned their holdings,<sup>24</sup> necessitating the resale of the land, livestock, and equipment by the Board. Termed "salvage" or "adjustment" cases, the majority of failures was credited to the unsuitability of either the land or the individual.<sup>25</sup> Surprisingly, the prices received for the parcels of land resold generally showed an increase over the original purchase price,<sup>26</sup> which reflected favorably on the Board's efforts to secure land for its soldier entrants at reasonable prices.

That the concessions made in 1922 had failed to remedy the situation was soon apparent. In 1923, the numbers of salvage cases in the prairie provinces were reported as 549 in Saskatchewan, 575 in Manitoba, and 944 in Alberta, while in the three year period beginning December 1, 1920, the number of entrants in those provinces had risen by only, 604, 838, and 277 respectively.<sup>27</sup> By December 31, 1924, the number of veterans established through loans had

<sup>21</sup> Canada, *Debates of the House of Commons*, 1921, Vol. I, pp. 529-530.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 538.

<sup>23</sup> *Statutes of Canada*, 12-13, George V, Chapter 46.

<sup>24</sup> *Canada Year Book*, 1922-23, p. 939.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Canada, *Debates of the House of Commons*, 1923, Vol. II, p. 2027.

risen to 24,148,<sup>28</sup> as compared to the total of 19,771 at November 30, 1920, but the number of abandonments had climbed also to twenty-one per cent.<sup>29</sup> In answer to objections against the continuation of the scheme the Minister of Immigration and Colonization told the House that no further applications were being accepted, and that benefits under the Act had been limited to those who had made application prior to March 31, 1924.<sup>30</sup>

The increase in the number of abandonments was an indication that further steps were needed to ease the burden on the settlers, and many members, led by those from the prairies, called for new measures, with the one most frequently suggested being the revaluation of lands. In discussing the question of revaluation, Milton Campbell, whose Saskatchewan constituency of Mackenzie contained the Porcupine Forest Reserve settlement as well as many other soldier settlers, expressed a view that was at variance to that of most prairie Members of Parliament. Campbell stated that the average soldier in his constituency was faring better than most other farmers. This he attributed to the fact that few soldiers had settled there before the drop in prices, because their purchases of stock and equipment had been made at lower than the prevailing rate of interest, and were limited by the Board, and because his district was blessed with good soil and abundant rainfall.<sup>31</sup> The views expressed by many other Members would indicate that his settlers were a privileged minority, which indeed they were not.<sup>32</sup>

Member after Member pressed for revaluation, and they were supported by the resolutions of various organizations, including those of the Great War Veterans Association of Saskatchewan.<sup>33</sup> However, a Royal Commission on Pensions and Re-establishment concluded, "If the subsequent fluctuations in value are to be looked at to see whether the bargain was a good one, then the date which is at least as important as any other is the date when the farm is to be actually and finally paid for, twenty-five years hence."<sup>34</sup> This gave little consolation to those seeking a measure for revaluation.

In 1925 the settlers were granted further assistance through a substantial reduction of the original liens on livestock. On stock purchased prior to October 1, 1920, a forty per cent reduction was provided, and a twenty per cent reduction was made on purchases during the succeeding twelve months.<sup>35</sup> In the same session the proponents of revaluation continued to fight for the desired legislation. Charles Bothwell, Member of Parliament for Swift Current referred to resolutions favoring revaluation which had been adopted unanimously by the Saskatchewan

<sup>28</sup> *Canada Year Book*, 1924, p. 925. Infrequently a figure of over 30,000 was cited, but those not receiving loans but who received soldier grants under the Act were considered second homesteaders. See Barnett, *Royal Commission on Immigration and Settlement (Saskatchewan)*, 1930, *Record of Proceedings*, Vol. 23, p. 33.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>30</sup> *Canada, Debates of the House of Commons*, 1924, Vol. V, p. 4792.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4781.

<sup>32</sup> H. R. Harris, *Book of Memories and a History of the Porcupine Soldier Settlement, 1919-1967* (Shand Agricultural Society, 1967).

<sup>33</sup> *Canada, Debates of the House of Commons*, 1925, Vol. IV, p. 3569.

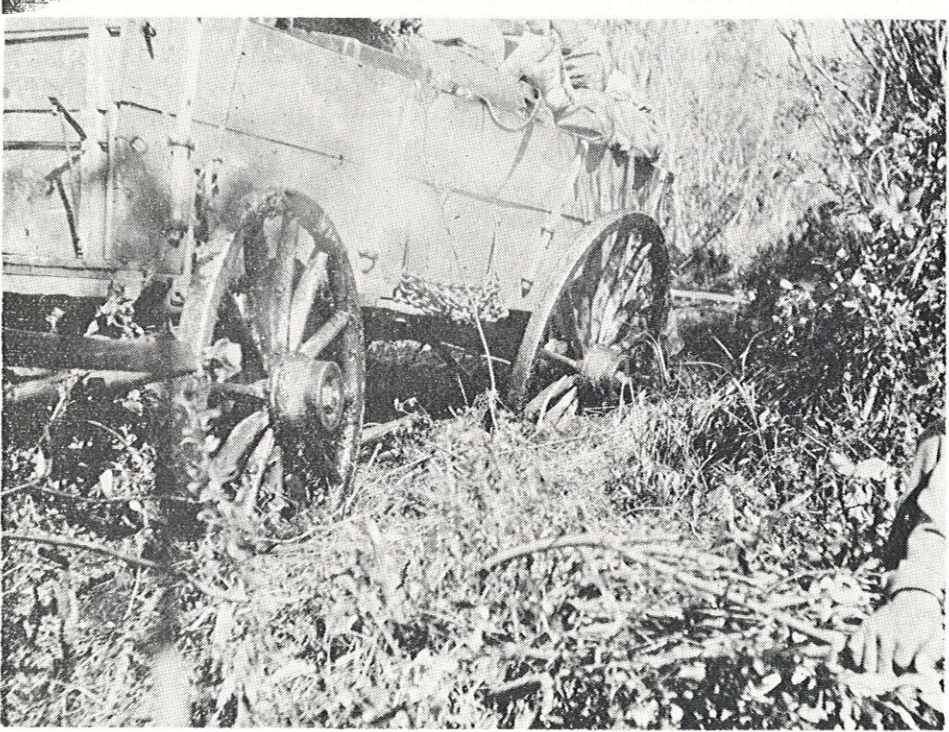
<sup>34</sup> *Canada, Sessional Papers*, 1924, No. 203, p. 56.

<sup>35</sup> *Canada Year Book*, 1925, p. 963.





Porcupine Soldier Settlement, Settlers Cabin, 1919.



Porcupine Soldier Settlement Survey, 1919.  
Surveyor wagon stuck in the mud on a trail.



legislature,<sup>36</sup> and then continued by quoting from a letter he had received from a constituent:

I owed the Board at the start \$7,300. On a quarter section of school land with but 100 acres of arable land, the remainder being alkali and unfit for cultivation but for which the Board paid \$22 an acre from the Department of the Interior. I am endeavoring to pay for a similar quarter from the department, with the same proportion of inarable at the same price, allowing the usual third each year for summer fallow. What hope have I from the balance, of suitably providing for my family, meeting my increased payments to the Board, and my overdue payments to the Department of the Interior from a farm which is penalized with a valuation of three times its worth today? I will gladly welcome investigation by the opponents of the revaluation plan which has already been before the House, but was sidetracked in 1924.<sup>37</sup>

Notwithstanding the fact that this settler had been a willing party to the original purchase price, it would appear that the Board's appraisers were not infallible. Cases such as this led to charges that some appraisers had received kickbacks through land sales,<sup>38</sup> but these charges were not widely supported and since the 1919 Act had made it a criminal offence to receive a commission on such sales it is highly unlikely that many, if any, such charges were proven.

The demand for revaluation continued through 1926, and finally bore fruit with the passage, in 1927, of an amendment to the Act which provided the long-sought measure. In presenting the motion, the Hon. Robert Forke told the House that a total of 24,428 returned men had settled under the provisions of the Act, and that of that number 4,250 had settled on Dominion lands, that 2,521 had borrowed money to pay off encumbrances against their own property, that 440 had paid off their loans, and that a further 6,098 had assigned their interest to others, had abandoned their property, or had been foreclosed. There remained, he said, 11,119 soldier settlers in active occupancy of their farms, and it was these who would be eligible to apply for revaluation.<sup>39</sup> As amended by the Senate, the bill provided that where the settler and the Board failed to reach agreement, the decision of the Exchequer Court would be final. The revaluation of lands was completed in 1930, with the Board having revalued a total of 8,047 farms. Final awards have been made in 7,672 cases for an average reduction of about 24 per cent of the original purchase price, which was then deducted from the settler's total indebtedness to the Board.<sup>40</sup>

Revaluation brought new hope to the beleaguered settlers; however, the great depression soon aggravated their already difficult situation. Parliament again was sympathetic and, in 1930, in response to the recommendations of a Special Committee on Veterans and Returned Soldiers,<sup>41</sup> passed measures providing for additional concessions. The chief of these were an across-the-board

<sup>36</sup> Saskatchewan, *Journals and Sessional Papers*, 1924, p. 113; 1924-25, p. 43; 1925-26, p. 59.

<sup>37</sup> Canada, *Debates of the House of Commons*, 1926, Vol. I, pp. 616.

<sup>38</sup> For example see charge made by John Millar, M.P., *Ibid.*, 1922, Vol. II, p. 2139.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 1927, Vol. I, p. 903.

<sup>40</sup> *Canadian Annual Review*, 1930-31, p. 572.

<sup>41</sup> Canada, *Debates of the House of Commons*, 1930, Vol. III, p. 2639.



reduction of thirty per cent of the outstanding indebtedness and the release of liens against livestock.<sup>42</sup> These measures, plus the waiving of interest, and re-valuation had reduced the settlers indebtedness by about thirty-two million dollars,<sup>43</sup> and amendments in ensuing years brought further reductions.

In 1932 and 1933, new concessions provided for the remission of interest charges for the year immediately preceding the standard date of payment in 1932. A "dollar-for-dollar bonus scheme" through which payments on arrears or instalments falling due between April 1, 1933, and March 31, 1937, resulted in the credit of an additional dollar for each dollar paid, and the cancellation of liens on equipment.<sup>44</sup> In addition, the privilege of applying for benefits under the Farmers Creditors Arrangement Act gave the settlers an additional chance to retain their holdings.<sup>45</sup>

At March 31, 1938, 9,902, or less than fifty per cent of the 20,042 farms still administered by the Director of Soldier Settlement, were occupied by soldier settlers.<sup>46</sup> The other farms had been sold to civilians or were vacant. From 1938 on, better crops and rising prices, plus the various measures which had been passed to alleviate their situation, combined to present the settlers with a much brighter picture than ever before.

In the 1942 Session, the Minister of Immigration and Colonization reported that \$109,034,331 had been advanced to establish a total of 25,017 soldier settlers, and that as of March 31, 1942, 8,118 remained on the land, that 884 had sold their equities, and 13,041 had abandoned their holdings either voluntarily or by foreclosure.<sup>47</sup> The Minister also stated that of the 6,164 original settlers in Saskatchewan, 2,308 remained on the land.<sup>48</sup> From then on, each year saw a considerable reduction in the number still in debt to the Board. But the settlers' spokesmen were not yet satisfied with the treatment they had received.

As early as 1937, the cancellation of all remaining indebtedness had been suggested in the House of Commons, and with the outbreak of World War II the demand for such a measure increased. Parliament's refusal to provide the necessary legislation was a source of displeasure to many prairie members, and an Order-in-Council, which, in 1942, empowered the Director of Soldier Settlement to deduct up to twenty dollars a month from the pay and allowances of dependents of soldier settlers serving in the war, to be applied against his indebtedness, proved a particular aggravation.<sup>49</sup>

One of the most articulate and persistent champions of the settlers' cause was Robert Fair, Member of Parliament for the Alberta constituency of Battle

<sup>42</sup> *Canada Year Book*, 1931, p. 1048.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 1932, pp. 948, 1052.

<sup>44</sup> *Canadian Annual Review*, 1933, p. 467.

<sup>45</sup> *Statutes of Canada*, 24-25, George V, Chapter 53. An Act which established procedures for voluntary, or compulsory debt adjustment for prairie farmers.

<sup>46</sup> *Canadian Annual Review*, 1937-38, p. 126.

<sup>47</sup> *Canada, Debates of the House of Commons*, 1942, Vol. II, pp. 1768-69.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1020.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1780.

River. Through Mr. Fair, the cancellation of indebtedness became an almost perennial suggestion, and his views were supported by other members as well as many organizations.

The resolutions of the Saskatchewan Soldier Settlers' Conference held in the Canadian Legion Hall in Saskatoon on April 9, 1943,<sup>50</sup> were typical of those submitted by a number of other groups. Attended by soldier settlers from all parts of Saskatchewan, the proceedings at the Conference, chaired by H. C. Baker of Fielding, reflected the antipathy of many of the settlers to the Soldier Settlement Board. In calling for cancellation of all remaining indebtedness one delegate, referring to the Board as "a glorified collection agency", and "the biggest mortgage company on earth", claimed the government would save more than a million dollars annually in the salaries and expenses of "office staff, inspectors, and heelers". The grievances set out in letters read to the Conference encouraged resentment against the Board. An Indian Head settler wrote that "whether the new agreement covered a period of 20, 25, or even 2,500 years, it would not matter anyway, for they would all be dead before their land was clear of encumbrances"; and the wife of a settler wrote that she and her husband, who had rejoined the army, were "victims of the Soldier Settlement Board", and that "during the eighteen months her husband had been in the army during the present war, the Board had taken \$324 from her dependents allowances cheques, and \$312 of this amount had been applied on account of interest". These complaints, and the charge that nearly 50 per cent of all monies paid back to the Board had been used to pay salaries and expenses in connection with the administration of the scheme added fuel to the fire. The fact that a person believed to be a representative of the Board was requested to leave the Conference reflects the temper of the settlers in attendance. The resolutions of the Conference called for the cancellation of debts, the substitution of a cash bonus, rather than a land settlement scheme for veterans of World War II, and the rescinding of the above mentioned Order-in-Council.<sup>51</sup>

From 1943, until his death in 1955, Fair moved in almost every Session a resolution calling for cancellation, and he frequently quoted Prime Minister Borden's promise to the Canadian Expeditionary Force on the eve of battle, in which Borden said:

The government and the country will consider it their first duty to see that a proper appreciation of your effort and of your courage is brought to the notice of the people at home. . . . No man, whether he goes back or whether he remains in Flanders, will have just cause to reproach the government for having broken with the men who won and the men who died.<sup>52</sup>

On one occasion, Fair continued:

We love our nations heroes dead,  
We very much adore em,  
And since they haven't to be fed,  
We build grand tombstones o'er them.

<sup>50</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, April 10, 1943, p. 10.

<sup>51</sup> Canada, *Debates of the House of Commons*, 1943, Vol. V, pp. 5373-74.

<sup>52</sup> See, for example, *Ibid.*, p. 5379.



"These lines," he concluded, "are not funny; they are incredibly, bitterly, damnably true. Let us clean up this mess."<sup>53</sup>

The government's position on the question was not without some logic; but it could have been taken with regard to earlier concessions. Crerar, the Minister of Mines and Resources, stated that cancellation would be "a gross injustice" to those settlers who had acquired title to their land or had kept up their payments.<sup>54</sup> Fair continued to lead the fight, but Parliament continued to defeat his resolutions. However, new incentives were provided. In 1946 the interest rate was reduced from five to three and one-half per cent per annum,<sup>55</sup> and beginning in 1948 sub-votes of \$150,000 for application against the indebtedness of the most destitute settlers became an annual feature for a number of years.<sup>56</sup> The 1948 Session found the redoubtable Mr. Fair saying, "I do not want the House of Commons to have to rise and sing God save our old soldier settlers of Great War I. Let us give them clear titles instead."<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, despite the recommendation of the Veterans Affairs Committee that this step be taken,<sup>58</sup> Parliament continued to vote against Fair's proposal. The following table reflects the situation which prevailed in the prairie provinces on March 31, 1950:<sup>59</sup>

Province	Applica- tions for loans	Persons estab- lished	Persons now in scheme	Repaid in cash	Repaid by time sale	Adjust- ment cases
Manitoba.....	10,123	3,715	164	712	61	2,778
Saskatchewan.....	15,165	6,164	524	2,203	251	3,186
Alberta.....	15,285	7,158	471	2,507	386	3,794
Totals .....	40,573	17,037	1,159	5,422	698	9,758
Totals for Canada .....	67,515	25,017	1,493	8,353	1,188	13,759

With the end of the depression, the post-war demand for agricultural products at higher prices, and the distribution of the annual sub-vote of \$150,000, the total of loans outstanding dropped more quickly than ever before, so that the 1,272 active accounts throughout Canada on January 1, 1951 had dropped to 862 by the same date in 1952.<sup>60</sup> This rate of progress continued. By July 2, 1956 all but sixty-nine accounts had been settled,<sup>61</sup> and in 1957, for the first time in almost forty years, the index to the House of Commons Debates did not include an entry under soldier settlement. For those who had stuck it out a long struggle had come to an end.

For thousands of settlers, and for their families, farming had been an unpleasant, and unrewarding experience, but for the Dominion and the prairie provinces it cannot be termed a failure. The settlers' entry on the land opened up many new areas to agricultural pursuits. Portions of at least eight Indian

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5377.

<sup>55</sup> *Statutes of Canada*, 10, George VI, Chapter 33.

<sup>56</sup> Canada, *Debates of the House of Commons*, 1949, Vol. I, p. 377.

<sup>57</sup> Canada, *Debates of the House of Commons*, 1948, Vol. III, p. 3310.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 1949, Vol. I, p. 608.

<sup>59</sup> *Canada Year Book*, 1950, p. 1145.

<sup>60</sup> Canada, *Debates of the House of Commons*, 1952, Vol. I, p. 346.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 1956, Vol. V, p. 5924.

Reserves,<sup>62</sup> including in Saskatchewan, the Mistawasis near Shellbrook,<sup>63</sup> the Poorman near Punnichy,<sup>64</sup> the Piapot near Zehner,<sup>65</sup> and the Ochapowace near Broadview,<sup>66</sup> and in Alberta, the Bobtail near Ponoka,<sup>67</sup> were brought into cultivation; thousands of acres of school lands,<sup>68</sup> 100,000 acres of Hudson's Bay Company land,<sup>69</sup> and 10,000 acres of Doukhobor lands near Kamsack<sup>70</sup> were purchased and resold by the Board; and entry was made on portions of the Porcupine<sup>71</sup> and Riding Mountain Forest Reserves.<sup>72</sup> Near Calgary, land formerly leased to the Pope Ranch was settled,<sup>73</sup> and in the Dauphin area of Manitoba,<sup>74</sup> and the Peace River district of Alberta,<sup>75</sup> the number of farmsteads multiplied rapidly.

In Manitoba settlers were concentrated between Lakes Manitoba and Winnipeg, west of Lake Manitoba, north and east of Dauphin, the outskirts of the Swan River district and to the south near Virden, Neepawa, Stonewall, and Portage la Prairie;<sup>76</sup> and in Saskatchewan, settlers were found in many districts including those of: Bjorkdale, Arborfield, Moose Range and Tisdale;<sup>77</sup> Preeceville;<sup>78</sup> Naicam, and Lake Lenore;<sup>79</sup> Lloydminster and Frenchman Butte;<sup>80</sup> Swift Current and Gull Lake;<sup>81</sup> Paddockwood, and Turtleford;<sup>82</sup> Yorkton, Saskatoon, and Battleford;<sup>83</sup> and Manor, Stoughton, Ogema, Assiniboia, Meyronne, Shaunavon, Morse, Sinaluta, Moosomin, and Melville.<sup>84</sup>

One of the most distinctive and the largest of the soldier settlements in Saskatchewan was located, as noted, on part of the Porcupine Forest Reserve near Prairie River. In 1919 surveys had begun, and on June 25th, 1919, an Order-in-Council authorized the Soldier Settlement Board to withdraw land from the Reserve for settlement. On July 2, 1919, the area, approximating 200,000 acres, was thrown open for entry. In his report for 1919, J. E. Jackson, D.L.S., described

<sup>62</sup> *Canadian Annual Review*, 1920, p. 460.

<sup>63</sup> *Report of the Soldier Settlement Board of Canada*, March 31, 1921, p. 93.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>69</sup> *Canadian Annual Review*, 1920, p. 460.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Report of the Soldier Settlement Board of Canada*, March 31, 1921, p. 94.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>77</sup> A.S., Department of the Interior, Dominion Lands Surveys File No. 117, Report of Wm. Christie, 1920.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, File No. 292, Report of M. D. McCloskey, 1924.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, File No. 291, Report of M. D. McCloskey, 1923.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, File No. 290, Report of M. D. McCloskey, 1921.

<sup>81</sup> Papers of N. McTaggart, M.P., microfilm copy in Sask. Archives.

<sup>82</sup> *Report of the Soldier Settlement Board of Canada*, March 31, 1921, p. 93.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.



the allotment of quarter sections as follows: "Tickets with the names of prospective settlers were put in a churn which was revolved and one man, a fire ranger of the district, was given the task of drawing. The man whose name appeared on the first card drawn received first choice of quarter section and each of the others received his choice in accordance with when his name was drawn. This method proved generally satisfactory, most of the settlers being able to choose fairly good quarter sections. In this way about 130 quarter sections were allotted that day. After that most of the men went to look over their land again. A few of them changed their quarter sections for others not yet taken up, but most of them kept the original ones."<sup>85</sup>

During 1919 the area was the scene of great activity. At Prairie River,<sup>86</sup> Jackson was able to report the existence of two stores, three boarding houses, a feed barn, blacksmith shop, a large number of houses, and a temporary railway station. In 1919 also, the Dominion and Saskatchewan governments co-operated in efforts to facilitate settlement. On June 2, the cutting of a twelve mile wagon road through heavy timber from Prairie River to the settlement situated south of that community was commenced under Saskatchewan government auspices, and branch roads and bridges were also provided. The main road was completed on June 27.<sup>87</sup> By the end of 1919 a substantial number of settlers who had built shacks and purchased horses, wagons, machinery and implements were established on the land. The Soldier Settlement Board reported that "there were 101 established settlers, 56 of whom were married—150 children. Settlers not under the Board number 254, a total of 355 as of December 1920."<sup>88</sup>

To facilitate settlement, the survey of the townsite of Prairie River was undertaken in 1919 by T. A. McElhanney, D.L.S. on land obtained by the Board from the Hudson's Bay Company.<sup>89</sup> With the approval of the Director of Town Planning for the Saskatchewan government, the Board's resident administrator was authorized to enforce the building regulations issued under the Saskatchewan Town Planning and Rural Development Act of 1919 until such time as a rural municipality or village was organized. In 1920, the townsite was resurveyed to enable the adoption of a plan approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs.<sup>90</sup> Involving approximately 162 acres, the proposed scheme provided for future development including a hospital, schools, library, church, hotel, parks, business, industrial and residential districts. Under the caption "The New Town of Lens", the *Winnipeg Tribune* commented:

The new town of Lens . . . promises to be one of the most interesting and significant memorials on this continent of the great war. It is being

<sup>85</sup> A.S., Department of the Interior, Dominion Lands Surveys File No. 241, Report of J. E. Jackson, 1919.

<sup>86</sup> Located in Section 8, Tp. 45, Rg. 7, W2nd meridian.

<sup>87</sup> A.S., Department of the Interior, Dominion Lands Surveys File No. 61, Report of E. P. Bowman, 1919.

<sup>88</sup> *Report of the Soldier Settlement Board of Canada*, March 31, 1921, p. 94.

<sup>89</sup> A.S., Saskatchewan, Department of Natural Resources, Surveys Branch File, Tp. 47, Rg. 7, W2nd meridian.

<sup>90</sup> Canada, *Sessional Papers*, 1921, No. 25A, p. 27.

laid out under the jurisdiction of the Soldier Settlement Board on the most modern town planning lines according to a plan prepared in the office of the surveyor-general. . . .

The plan of the townsite shows a thorough study of all the factors that enter into communal life. . . . Public reserves are . . . set aside from the outset and one group of these open spaces should in time make an effective and beautiful civic centre. . . . In addition there will be a river drive . . . , which will . . . preserve for all time uninterrupted public access to the Prairie River.

Two acres have been set aside for industries, adjoining the railway and thus cutting off the need for trans-urban traffic and economizing in the wear and tear of pavement. They will also provide cheap and easily negotiable sites for manufacturing plants and prevent the encroachment of industry on residential districts.

The town of Lens, Saskatchewan, will be a notable experiment in the better building of the new towns of Canada.<sup>91</sup>

Much of the development envisaged in the proposed scheme did not materialize and the name *Lens*, adopted by government officials upon local advice,<sup>92</sup> never came into popular use. The community continued to be known as *Prairie River*.

The original settlers, both soldiers and neighboring civilians, faced a formidable task. The burning of brush, the breaking of land, and the drainage of swamps had to be undertaken before their holdings could yield cash crops, and hordes of mosquitoes and various strains of flies, together with a feeling of isolation had to be coped with. Despite those hazards, the Board's report for 1921 stated: "The community spirit is good as is shown in the organization of a Local Improvement Association, a Woman's Institute, and a Legislative Library."<sup>93</sup> A community hall has been built, 40 by 32, to meet the social needs of the district. School districts have been formed, and a hospital scheme is under way."<sup>94</sup> The first school district, Blighty No. 4308 was organized in 1921 and others, notably Green View S.D. No. 4375, Copeau S.D. No. 4028, and Carragana S.D. No. 4395 were organized in the same year.<sup>95</sup> At Carragana, a Red Cross Outpost Hospital opened on August 1, 1921, and the first church building was constructed in 1924 when St. Andrew's Anglican Church became the first church erected in the reserve. Mail, at first delivered only to *Prairie River* where a post office had been opened before the war on December 1, 1913,<sup>96</sup> was shortly distributed through new post offices at Copeau, Carragana, and McElhanney. Detailed accounts of subsequent development of the Porcupine settlement and reminiscences of its pioneers have recently been published in a local history compiled by Herbert

<sup>91</sup> *Winnipeg Tribune*, August 30, 1921.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. E. Deville, Surveyor General to Secretary, Soldier Settlement Board, November 1, 1920 (Surveys Branch File, Tp. 47, Rg. 7, W2nd, *loc. cit.*).

<sup>93</sup> Presumably one of the "travelling libraries" whose circulation at that time was administered by the Legislative Library.

<sup>94</sup> *Report of the Soldier Settlement Board of Canada*, March 31, 1921, p. 94.

<sup>95</sup> A.S., Saskatchewan Department of Education, S.D. File No. 4308, Report of Inspector A. W. Cocks on School Districts of the Porcupine Soldier Settlement, Oct. 25, 1921.

<sup>96</sup> Canada, *Sessional Papers*, 1915, No. 24, p. D-140.



R. Harris.<sup>97</sup> While this settlement had a distinct identity, as a pioneer community in the parklands, peopled initially only by veterans, its settlers apparently experienced the difficulties common across the prairies in retiring their indebtedness to the Soldier Settlement Board.<sup>98</sup>

Though not an unqualified success, soldier settlement on the prairies saw the attainment of some of the Board's original aims. Hundreds of thousands of uncultivated acres in the fertile belt had been brought into cultivation, there had, indeed, been a substantial increase in primary production, and the agricultural frontier had been extended further to the north in each of the prairie provinces. Finally, the difficulties encountered by the settlers and the Board served as an object lesson to those who framed the Veterans Land Act of World War II, which avoided many of the problems inherent in the 1919 legislation.<sup>99</sup>

E. C. MORGAN

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<sup>97</sup> H. R. Harris, *op. cit.*

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. W. S. Woods, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-143.

## The Rowbottom Diaries

The two short diaries of Frank Edward Kirby Rowbottom describe Saskatchewan in 1906-1907 as seen by a perceptive young English settler. Frank Rowbottom was born in England on 11 November 1869, and he lived in Huddersfield prior to moving to Canada. He was a designer of cloth and woolen goods and was part owner of 'Walker, Pontefract & Rowbottom', a woolen mill. Upon the advice of the family physician he decided to come to Saskatchewan where the cold, dry air would be efficacious in improving the health of one of his children. Unlike many emigrants he was able to make an exploratory visit without his family in order to ascertain conditions of life on the prairies. The first of these narratives gives an account of his experiences covering the period from 30 November 1906 to 13 January 1907. He then returned to England; the second account tells of the actual emigration of the entire family and covers the period 19 April 1907 to 27 May 1907. Both journals end somewhat abruptly, the last pages in both instances are in a very worn state, and there is every reason to believe that each journal contained at least one more page—now lost—but probably not much more.

The journals are written with a real sense of style and verve; they indicate that the author was a perceptive and aware young man. It is true that they are both written *con amore* and they present the situations described in as favourable a manner as possible. They show quite clearly the many difficulties of settlement and the problems to be faced by settlers from the old world. The diaries indicate that Frank Rowbottom was eager to learn, an apt pupil with much common sense. His experiences in the winter of 1906-1907 made him appreciate more fully the difficulties and potential problems of his new life. Certainly, without the initial trip the whole project would have been infinitely more difficult. Of course, Frank Rowbottom was in a more fortunate position than many settlers in that he had adequate funds to purchase supplies, domestic animals, farm equipment and to buy a team. He was also able to have a house at least partially completed for the family to live in when they reached Saskatchewan.

Frank Rowbottom remained in Saskatchewan until 1928. He then moved to British Columbia. He died in Victoria on 5 January 1955.

These journals are copied from the manuscripts written by Frank Rowbottom; it is quite true that they are not literary masterpieces. However, they do catch the spirit of the time and place. As sources for Canadian history they give a further illustration of Canadian life in an earlier age. These narratives have been made available to me through the kindness of Mr. Brian Rowbottom. I am most appreciative of his great kindness in allowing them to be printed.

S. W. JACKMAN

### TRIP TO SASKATCHEWAN

**N**ov. 30.06. Started from home (Halifax, England) on the morning of the 30th November 1906, travelling by Huddersfield to Liverpool to pick up Mother on the way. . . .

The boat taken on the outward journey was the "Empress of Britain" belonging to the C.P.R. Co. She is 14,500 tons, 18 to 19 knots, and very well appointed but is not considered a good sea boat. The catering is good and varied and the comfort of passengers is well looked after. Breakfast 8.00 a.m. Beeftea and biscuits for the invalids on deck in the "social room" about 10.30, followed soon after by jelly and lemons. Dinner 12.30. Afternoon tea 3.30. Tea 5.30. Supper 8.30.

There is a Marconi telegraphic installation aboard, and an operator in charge. Also a Railway Passenger agent who exchanges your tickets, books your berths on the trains, and wires by wireless telegraphs in connection with the installation at Rimouski. Tickets can also be procured from him by passengers who have not previously booked, at the European rate. The boat carried one or two barbers, a doctor, and there is a circulating library in the Social Room. . . .

**DEC. 2. SUNDAY.** Heavy sea running and passengers mostly in their bunks. Only 3 or 4 up at each table for meals, and certainly with a head wind and a heavy sea the motion of the boat was horrible, and even passengers on board who had



been in most parts of the world in all weathers agreed that it was most unpleasant. Whilst we were anywhere near land all was well, but things altered when the open sea was reached. . . .

DEC. 7. FRIDAY. Reached Halifax about 2 o'clock in the morning, but being asleep in my bunk did not so much as hear the engine stop. The customs officers came on board here, along with the Emigration Doctor. There were some considerable seas but no actual storm. In the afternoon we went to the forward deck and had the baggage from the hold examined by the customs officials. There was much confusion identifying the articles and getting the officer to the spot, but no baggage of any description was opened, it being sufficient simply to declare that there was nothing dutiable. As soon as the officer had put his mark on the articles a C.P.R. baggage checker checked them to destination, and nothing further was seen of luggage from the hold. Afterwards the articles from the cabins were passed, and those that required it checked through. *Small* parcels were left in the cabin unnoticed. Later in the afternoon we were required to attend in the saloon to pass the Emigration Doctor, which appeared to be very much a matter of form.

We lay off St. John all night, having missed the tide.

DEC. 8. SATURDAY. The morning was frightfully cold, 5° to 8° below zero, and with a seamist driving up the river it was not possible to face the breeze for a minute at a stretch. The effect of the mist driving over the large waves and lying thick in the troughs of the seas were very fine, and was like nothing so much as standing upon a mountain, above the clouds, with the lesser peaks standing out of the mist, and the valleys obscured by it.

It was 4 or 5 o'clock in the afternoon before we could draw up to the landing stage, and march into the train, which operation took some considerable time. Was in a "Tourist" sleeper without sleeping accommodation all night, with the train unbearable hot. . . .

DEC. 12. WED. Rambled round Winnipeg for an hour or two. It is a rapidly growing place, with huge American "sky-scrapers" of 10 or 12 stories, and close to them the small insignificant buildings of a few years ago. The streets are wide, and there is the making of a really good town. There are stores of huge dimensions, after the style of Whitstys(?). . . .

DEC. 13. THURSDAY. Boarded train at C.N. station just after 8.30, but she did not move out until about 11.30. The country from this point was just level prairie, apparently almost uninhabited. The track is very bad, making the carriages roll about a good deal. We lose time every mile, until by the time we had got half way to Marshall we were about 7 hours late. This was comparatively a trifling matter when one considers that the train two stations ahead of us was at one time 32 hours behind time. The engines on this line are continually "drying" as they call it out here, that is, the steam gives out and then the whole affair freezes up, causing a delay of something like 8 hours until fires are again lighted and everything thawed. Fortunately our engine did not die this journey, but the

one in front had died two or three times in a 24 hour journey. The distance between Winnipeg and Marshall is supposed to be run in 27 or 28 hours. Instead of reaching Marshall at noon it was after midnight when we drew up. There was no one at the station and the little hamlet of perhaps a dozen houses was in darkness. Was directed by the conductor to what he said was the Hotel, but apparently I was off the track, for was wading knee deep in snow, and after being brought up by a wire fence and wandering along it in the deep snow for a distance without finding an opening I cut across towards the train, which had not left the platform, and went on to Lloydminster. Was then told there was no hotel in Marshall, so it was fortunate that I did board the train again. The thermometer was many degrees below zero and there was no moon.

DEC. 15. SAT. Arrived at Lloydminster I found a man from the hotel at the station, and was soon in bed. The hotel was a frame building, and the accommodation somewhat primitive, but as they only charged a dollar for bed and breakfast there was nothing to grumble about. After breakfast went to the bank, and my business there finished and the 8.30 a.m. train for Marshall not likely to arrive before 5 p.m. I hired a team and sley [sic] and drove to Marshall. Got a meal there (LV cents), and after waiting about the store some little time a neighbor of Mr. Walker's offered to take me up, although he had not otherwise to go within two miles of my destination. We had a pair of horses in a "Bob-sleigh", and with my luggage, 3 quarters of frozen beef, and four or five other fellows, besides a lot of miscellaneous parcels, we were pretty well loaded for the 6 miles journey. Stayed a few minutes at the "shack" (house) of some members of the party, and after dropping most of the luggage there the owner of the team (Mr. Hodgson) and myself finished the ride together. By this time it was getting dark, and could see little of the house in which I was to spend the next few weeks, but inside was very much surprised to find the room little less comfortable than home. To be sure the sides of the room were plain deal or pine, but the rooms were carpeted, the windows curtained, and the walls hung with knick-nacks and photographs.

I slept in the living room and although the fire was packed to burn some hours, the liquid in the thermometer was all in the bulb in the morning; how much below zero it fell to we do not know, but my shaving brush in my bag under the bed was frozen stiff. Cannot say that a temperature of below 0° is anything but unpleasant in one's bedroom, though it does not perhaps chill one through as it would in England. The cold causes much inconvenience to the domestic arrangements, as any food not taken into the cellar is frozen during the night. Mrs. Walker broke a knife in trying to cut the butter. Apples and other fruit are difficult to bring out from the town without getting damaged by frost, and food taken in the waggon when on a journey generally gets frozen hard. On the other hand it has certain advantages. For instance, milk can be allowed to freeze and will then keep some time, and meat can be got in and kept in the cold with no fear of deterioration. The flavour is altered for the worse, though. The animals which stand the cold best are the oxen, which are used for agricultural work and also for drawing the waggon, they needing no shelter in the most severe weather



beyond shelter from the winds. They are not so slow as one might think, and their endurance and strength is great. . . .

DEC. 18. TUESDAY. Set off for Lloydminster, the nearest town of any importance, distant 16 miles. The going was heavy through the snow and it was getting dark when we arrived. . . .

Stayed at the same Hotel as on the night of my arrival—"The Alberta"—and discovered that at dinner out here at hotels it is customary to order all the meats one requires from the menu at one time. This is a *very* democratic country, and alike in the first-class railway carriages and in the hotels—or many of them—the waiters and attendants sit down to have their meals in the same room and at the same time as the guests. And the more one gets westward into the newer parts of the country the more noticeable is this neglect of social distinctive, and the barber who shaves you—in our case it was the barber's assistant—dines with you at the best hotel in town. Tips are not looked for—they would be an insult. Of course this is not so in the large towns, where tipping is even more of a nuisance than in England, and perhaps on the trains it is worse still. . . .

Set off for home between 12 and 1 o'clock and reached our destination as darkness was coming on. The weather was really enjoyable, bright sunshine and clear bracing air. No doubt the thermometer would be down somewhere near zero, but it did not feel particularly cold.

DEC. 20. THURSDAY. Made arrangements for going "logging" the following day.

DEC. 21. FRIDAY. Set off with the oxen and waggon to get tree trunks for cutting up for firewood. There were three of us—Mr. Geo. Firth, Mr. Walker and myself. The wooding ground was 6 miles or 7 miles distant, so we took some provisions and just a wee drop of whisky—in a pint bottle. My wooding soon came to an end, as I broke my axe shaft at the first attempt. Coming back we called at bachelors "shack" and had a cup of tea. Two young fellows live in this log hut, which consists of one small room, with bunks at one side as on board ship. Whilst in this hut the oxen set off for home and were no where to be seen when we looked out, but managed to overtake them after walking about two miles through the snow.

The oxen had kept the trail all right but had there been water about they would have made for it despite all obstacles. The weather was cold, and the wind was hard to face, so we sat most of the time with our backs to it. We had all sheepskin coats on, so did not take much hard.

DEC. 24. MONDAY. Went to Marshall in the ox-waggon to fetch meat for the house and also for some neighbours. Saw a coyote, which was frightened away by a small dog. Also saw a huge owl, apparently as large as an eagle. In the evening, being Xmas eve, we went up to Mr. Geo. Firths. In all there were about 19 persons present, including all Mr. W. Walker's family and Mr. W. Firth also about half a dozen bachelors whom we brought out in the ox-waggon. After spending the evening playing chess and bridge the ladies retired and the rest, Mr. W. Walker and myself excepted, lay down on the floor to sleep. This would be between 3 or 4 o'clock on Xmas morning. We two lit a lantern and set off for

home, about half a mile distant, in deep snow and with snow still falling, and blowing a good deal. After walking about half an hour or less in the untracked snow we came to the conclusion that we were on the wrong track, and as nothing was to be seen more than a few yards distant we thought it best to retrace our steps by the aid of the footprints we had made. These were soon undecipherable [sic] owing to the snow which was falling fast, and in turning round to search for them we lost our bearings and were lost completely. However, we remembered that at the start the wind was behind us, so facing the storm we trudged on for some time, expecting to be obliged to spend the rest of the night out of doors, but were very pleased to see in front of us a light which proved to be in the house we had left. We lay down on the floor above with the rest, and glad to do so. There is nothing on the prairie to determine one's whereabouts except patches of scrub, and the appearances of these alter very much according to the amount of snow there is about. At about half past seven we set off again and there being a little daylight found the house all right. Went to bed after finding something to eat, and slept till 1 o'clock. Then got something else to eat, and by the time various little things about the farm had been done it was getting dusk. Went to the other Mr. Firths this time, having missed our Xmas dinner. The same company was present as on the previous evening, but this time we elected to sleep on the floor along with the others, rather than return out again in the darkness. This made the second time the majority of them men had spent the night on the floor without taking off their clothes. There was not much softness about the boards, and it required almost continuous stoking to keep at all warm.

DEC. 26. BOXING DAY. Came home after breakfast. As the snow was deep the youngsters had to come in the sleigh. . . .

DEC. 31. MON. NEW YEARS EVE. A light home-made sleigh pulled by two huge oxen drew up the morning. They had taken two hours to do the two miles which separate their house from ours, and the hocks of the oxen were much cut by the snow. There was some haze about, causing them to get off their track.

We had all the visitors here in the evening who were present at the Firths at Christmas—nineteen in all, including ourselves, and spent the night in much the same way, except that a whist drive was arranged. Slept on the floor as before, and the visitors did not leave until they had been in the house 24 hours—that is, in the afternoon of New Year's Day. . . .

JAN. 9. WED. Ruttan, a Canadian who lives near by, brought a sleigh drawn by two good horses in the morning, and we made off with my luggage for Lloydminster, a distance of 16 miles. He did not know the way, and I had only been over the ground on one day, but considering that the trail was pretty well blown over we managed very well. It was impossible to find the trail for a good part of the way, as although we occasionally struck it, it was only to lose it again in a short time. Consequently we had a pretty rough time going through places where the snow was deep—in fact one particular drift was so deep that it reached very nearly to the saddles of the horses, and the driver said that even then the horses did not touch ground, and they only got through by a series of leaps and springs.



My Canadian took the matter very coolly, and in one case where the drift had a side-ways slope he muttered "Guess we'll upset here." However we did not do so. Got to Lloydminster in about 5 hours, and fortunately it was not such a very cold day, and did not get chilled till we were on the last half-dozen miles, then it took me some time to get thawed out when we arrived at the hotel.

JAN. 10. THURSDAY. My driver set off for home pretty early in the morning, and have not yet heard how he got on. I called at the Dominion Land office to put in an abandonment form (on S.E. Sec.2. T48. R.27 W of 3rd Meridian) and found from the manner of the agent that something was wrong. I had put in a cancellation of the  $\frac{1}{4}$  on Dec. 15, but did not know for certain whether I had not been fore-stalled at Battleford, which is the Head Office. Fearing trucking—I had heard a good deal of the way things are done here—I determined to go to the Head Office at Battleford.

JAN. 11. FRIDAY. Took train for Battleford. That the train was some 28 hours late was nothing out of the common—they have to cancel a train about once a week to bring things round. What was remarkable was the fact that we did the journey of 80 miles to *North Battleford* in 4 hours. Arrived there about 4 o'clock in the afternoon (16 o'clock according to this company's time tables) I got on a "rig" (kind of sleigh) drawn by two horses, and no other passengers turning up, we went off at a great pace over very hilly and pretty country until we came to the Battle River. This being frozen over we went perhaps between one and two miles on the ice. It was a most enjoyable 5 mile ride (To Battleford) and the driver was not overpaid with 75c.

The country round here is very pretty, the banks of the river being high and well wooded, a pleasant change from the eternal prairie. Having found a hotel—The Windsor—I went to the head Land Office and found that my cancellation of nearly a month before had not arrived. However, I put in another, and also obtained another abandonment form and sent it to Winnipeg to be filled in by the man—S. L. Woods—who at present holds the land, to be sent by him to Ottawa, in case the previous abandonment met the same fate as the first cancellation. So I found that either by blunder of the officials or something worse I had had a good 3 weeks clear wasted, and instead of being able to set off for England immediately, as I expected when I drove into Lloydminster, I shall be at the very least three weeks, and at the most—well, I do not know. . . .

## EMIGRATION TO SASKATCHEWAN

AP. 19. 1907 Left mother's house at about 9 o'clock in the morning to catch the 9.36 for Liverpool. Mother and Aunt accompanied us to the station, and Mrs. Ben Pontefract very kindly went with us to Liverpool and helped us with the children until we got to the tender at the landing stage. . . . There was so much confusion on board the first evening that it was half past seven before the youngsters could get anything to eat, and the luggage had none of it been put into the cabins at 8 o'clock. The actual time of sailing was, I believe, a few minutes after 5 o'clock. The route taken was past the South coast of Ireland,

as on my previous trip. Should have mentioned that on arrival at the station at Liverpool a C.P.R. agent met the train and took charge of the baggage, and we saw nothing more of it until we arrived on board the steamer. . . .

AP. 25 THURSDAY. Sea calmer, and all in better spirits. A concert was held in the evening, but the talent was so poor that it really made me laugh to listen to the attempts of the performances. We made Halifax very late in the evening, and the sail up the river with light on either shore was well worth waiting up for.

AP. 26. FRIDAY What time in the early morning we left Halifax I do not know, but in calm weather we reached our anchorage off St. John at 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

A letter from Mr. W. Walker reached me via Halifax giving the good news that water had been struck on my quarter, 4 ft. of water in a 30 ft. well. The cellar also was dug out in the date under which he wrote—Ap. 14—and building operations were about to be commenced the next week. It will at best be a very nice question whether the house will be quite finished by the time we arrive. The thaw-out had not taken place on the 12th April, and they had had quite a lot more snow just before. What a long winter—from the beginning of November to the middle of April! It will make seeding very hurried and very late. . . .

MAY 1. WEDNESDAY. Arrived in Winnipeg about 10.30 o'clock in the evening—13½ hours late—and made our way to the Roblin Hotel in a cab. (The Roblin Hotel is a good 1½ dol. house).

MAY 2. THURSDAY. Spent the day in Winnipeg, partly in buying stores from T. Eaton and for shipment to the homestead, and partly in transacting other business. Saw the two Heatons, and had dinner with one of them at our hotel. The weather was bitterly cold on this 2nd May, in fact the low temperature of 9° was recorded here during the week.

MAY 3. FRIDAY. Caught the 8.30 train for Marshall and prepared for the most trying part of our journey, for we could not get sleeping berths without paying a great deal for them, so had to extemporise a couch for the little ones at night as well as we could, and sit up ourselves. The train was very crowded, which made it still more unpleasant.

MAY 4. SATURDAY. The train lost time every mile, and we were all feeling heartily sick of it all after spending a night with little or no sleep. It was 8 o'clock in the evening before we reached our destination—Marshall, Sask., and most of us were very thankful when this, the final stage of the railway journey, was reached. It was a beautiful evening, but cold, and being too late to undertake the drive of 7 miles to the Homestead we had to make shift at the Restaurant for the night.

MAY 5. SUNDAY. This was an eventful day, for on it I first saw the new home, and the others had their first sight of not only the home but the farm land. We hired a "Democrat"—a kind of large buggy, and driving over prairie and ploughed fields we had the roughest drive that any of us ever experienced. How we all managed to keep in I do not know. Alice, with the baby in her arms, was



within an ace of being shot out when within a few hundred yards of the house. Our luggage did not come along on the same train as ourselves, so that all we had with us was contained in the small hand bags which we had with us in the carriage. However, the Walkers and Ruttans were very good, finding us with bedding and many other things. The house we found only partly finished, showing the sky between the boards the roof, and as the weather was bitterly [sic] cold it was very unpleasant for the little ones. We had to set to work to saw wood and draw water and get things into order. The night was very cold indeed, freezing all liquids throughout the house, and it was more than we could do to keep warm in bed. In fact outside the thermometer stood at *zero*, and this on the 5th May.

MAY 6. MONDAY. Went to Lloydminster, 16 or 18 miles, in Ruttan's waggon, to bring out provisions and also chairs. The railway has not yet got over the troubles of the winter, and nearly half the things one enquires for are out of stock. There is no sugar, for instance, in Marshall; no coal in either Lloydminster or Marshall; and most stores have very small stocks of anything at all. Since I was here before the troubles on the Railway have increased, and at one time a fortnight passed without a passenger train coming in from the east. Things are somewhat better now, but it will take some time to put everything straight.

There is still a quantity of snow about—not all over, but in places, and, of course it is very deep in bluffs and other places where it drifted. Quite half the journey to Lloydminster had to be taken off the trail, for the snow was deep where the waggons had packed it. The weather was very cold, quite a keen wind blowing.

MAY 7, TUESDAY MAY 8, 9, 10 Weather still continuing cold and the house in the same unfinished condition we had a rather rough time. All caught colds, and glad to escape at that. The first well proving a failure caused the delay in building the house, as all the lumber had to be moved nearer the present well, and nothing could be done until water had been struck.

MAY 11. SATURDAY. Made another journey to Lloydminster, this time to bring out shingles for the roof of the house, for the joiner to put on. He could not obtain any in his village (Marshall), as people had run out of them. Bought two large work horses in town for which I paid \$340 (not pounds). Left them where they were until I could put up some sort of shelter for them. I intended to go with Mr. Walker in his ox-waggon, but he had come to the conclusion that the weather was too bad. However, Mr. Ruttan was passing just as I left home, and he drove me in on his "democrat" (light spring waggon). Bought the shingles, but could not take them out on the "democrat", so had to send for them on the following Monday. Went to look at some cows, but did not buy as they were a lean looking lot.

MAY 13. MONDAY. Went into Marshall with Mr. Walker in his ox-waggon. Left the oxen at Marshall and proceeded on foot to the farm where I purchased the pony when in Saskatchewan previously. The boys were with us, and we brought the pony away, the boys taking turns at riding him. Paid \$55 for him, and he

is almost perfect, very quiet and a nice little pony. The boys of course are delighted, and hardly give him time to feed.

MAY 14. TUESDAY. MAY 15. WED. The joiners drove up on the Tuesday and finished the house by the next evening. I spent the Wednesday and two following days in building a temporary stable, which will have to be pulled down to finish the permanent one.

Have had several really nice days, sunshine all day long and quite hot in the middle of the day. It looks odd to see so much snow about when it is so warm. The well has unfortunately filled up with surface water, and we are dependent for drinking purposes on snow, and for washing purposes on "slough" water.

MAY 18. To Lloydminster again with Mr. Ruttan. Bought a waggon and loaded it with lumber, groceries, hardware,—including a kitchen range, and after buying harness for the horses we hitched them in. Mr. Ruttan had business late in the afternoon and beheld me, who had never handled a team before, driving out of Lloydminster with two horses which had not been out of the stable for a fortnight and with a load of about 2500 lbs behind them, besides the waggon. It is not the sort of driving you may perhaps imagine. Part of it is a track over the prairie, and often one has to cross ploughed fields—nowhere except just in the towns are there roads. Then I had to cross four or five streams, the bottom and sides of which were very soft, and in one case got stuck for a short time. But managed to get about 4 or 5 miles on the road before Mr. Ruttan overtook me, when he took hold of the team and I drove his "democrat". The journey home took from 4.30 till 9.30.

MAY 19. SUNDAY Mr. Walker and the two Mr. Firths came round in the morning, together with Mr. Ruttan, and they unloaded the store from the waggon and put it up ready for use. I then had a lesson in harnessing the teams—hope I shall profit by it.

MAY 20.21.22. Set out a line for the fire-guard. The prairie fires have been all round us at varying distances down to 2 miles or less, but we too fortunately escaped. They look very fine at night, but one hardly appreciates the spectacle when one has property which may easily get destroyed. Am told that last year one fire had a front of 250 miles. So far we have not seen one with a greater front than about 20 miles. I also set out the site of the stable and commenced levelling, but the pick and shovel work seems likely to prove too much for me at present and shall probably have to secure help. The children have not so far made any appreciable improvement in health. All have colds, and Jack has spent today (Wed.) in bed. Baby is also somewhat off colour. No doubt they will be all right as soon as they have acclimatised, for one could not imagine a life more likely to keep people healthy. Probably, also, the effects of the journey have not quite worn off. Alice is well, and for myself I feel first rate and am capable of much more physical exertion than I ever was. This life suits me exactly, and Alice also is more than satisfied with it.



The "Canadian Canaries" are in full song this evening and fill the air with their din. "Canadian Canaries", I should have said, are frogs. I can hear them now as I write, although doors and windows are closed. There is a fair quantity of duck about, but the shooting season is over. The boys amuse themselves by setting traps for "gophers"—the Saskatchewan equivalent for rats. They are not greatly like rats, however, but more like little squirrels, and just as destructive as rats. Fortunately they do not venture into houses or out-buildings, but confine their operations to the prairie and to the corn fields. The horses seem very quiet, and am very satisfied with them so far, and they are almost as strong as bullocks. I am very fortunate in having a man of such experience as Mr. Ruttan to help and to advise me in these matters. Have not yet come across a likely cow, but have not done amiss in the short time we have been here. Had the house been to(?) buried (?) nothing could have been done for some time. My previous journey did a lot of good in teaching me where to buy and in many other ways.

MAY 23. THURSDAY Made my first journey to Marshall with my own team. Eric accompanied me, Jack being in bed with earache. Obtained some stores in the village for ourselves, and also executed a few commissions for neighbours, and then went out to a homestead a mile away and obtained oats for the horses. Hay I cannot get, except at fabulous prices, and have to keep the horses mainly on what they can pick up on the prairie. It was a beautiful day, and had no trouble with the team, and quite enjoyed the journey, which took the whole day. It takes a long time to do a little business in these small places.

MAY 24. FRIDAY This is Empire Day, a general holiday, we are told, in Canada. Incidentally I heard to-day that last Sunday was Whitsunday. In the morning we took out the waggon to fetch the wood we had got out some days ago, and got quite a large load, but only small stuff. One has to go about 13 miles to get anything really good in that way. Still, this small stuff is all right now that the weather has changed. It is summer all at once, really beautiful weather, and the snow shows now only in occasional bluffs. As the well is still filled with surface water the absence of snow puts us in an awkward position for drinking water, and we have to get it from the sloughs (small stagnant ponds) and boil it. In the afternoon we hitched the team into Mr. Walker's plough and Mr. W. and Mr. G. Firth ploughed me a fireguard—not a very wide one, but still much better than none at all. Every night the fires are round us, sometimes only a mile or two away, but so far we have escaped. The horses took to the ploughing very well.

MAY 25. SATURDAY The children are all mending up fast and getting rid of their colds. Rene seems better now than she has been for a long time. Was too tired with my exertions of the previous day to do much except odd jobs around the place and the weather was very warm.

MAY 26. SUNDAY Hitched the team into the waggon and took over to Mr. Ruttans the bedding they had lent us, and brought back butter and eggs. Jack, Eric, and Edward all went with me.

In the afternoon we saw a fire rather close, not far from Mr. Walker's, and walking over towards it found Mr. W. and his children and Jack trying to

keep back the fire from a neighbours land. After helping a short time the wind changed and freshened and we found that if we were not quick the fire would soon be over our own quarters. Selecting a place between Mr. W.'s fireguard and a piece of ploughing we attacked it with wet sacks, and after battering away for perhaps two hours and tiring ourselves out we had the satisfaction of finding that we had checked the fire. Arrived home—was so tired that I was glad to get on the pony's back to reach it—found Mr. and Mrs. Ruttan just driving over to pay us a visit.

We used to read of how, when a prairie fire was raging, all living things took fright and flew before it. The only evidences of this I saw this afternoon was a single prairie chicken, which probably had its nest burnt up. All the cattle and horses took the matter very calmly, and in fact must in some cases have crossed the fire.

MAY 27. MONDAY The fire fortunately came to a standstill less than half a mile from the house. All the country through which it passed is a scene of desolation, just black ugliness. In a week or two, according to the natives, the new grass will spring up and give an entirely different aspect to the scene. But [illegible] is one thing that the fire injures that is not readily remedied—the young trees are all killed off. . . .

[the diary ends here—last page torn and illegible]



## Louis Riel's Letter To President Grant, 1875

During the summer of 1966 a number of documents relating to the life of Louis Riel were discovered in Winnipeg. These documents, now in the Manitoba Archives, include correspondence between Riel and members of his family as well as drafts and fragments of Riel's poetry.<sup>1</sup> Of particular interest in the collection is the draft of a letter headed "Mr President" which was written in late 1875 after Riel had been presented to President Ulysses S. Grant in Washington.<sup>2</sup>

It is difficult to document Riel's movements in the autumn of 1875 though it appears he had been in Indianapolis, possibly in October, where he met Senator O. P. Morton of Indiana. To Morton he had outlined a plan presumably for re-establishing himself as head of a Provisional Government in Manitoba and the North West Territories. He was aware that this presentation had not created a favourable impression and he feared that his inadequacies would cause Morton to consider the plan impossible.<sup>3</sup> Following his meeting with President Grant, therefore, he put in writing the details of the plan he had sketched for Senator Morton. The document recently discovered and reproduced below contains the specific proposals Riel wished to place before the United States Government.<sup>4</sup>

HARTWELL BOWSFIELD

Mr President.

At the closure of the audience which Your Excellency has so generously accorded to me, [ ]<sup>5</sup>, I have had the honour of addressing [sic] you with a particular idea.

I remember well the wise answer given to me by your excellency.

With the help of god, and praying to you to lend me your encouraging attention, I will, this [ ]<sup>5</sup>, speak out my thought fully to you.

Mr President, if you please, help me to get justice for my people, the new nation, the metis.

In doing so, you will gain for the republican party which you have already so gloriously headed, [ ]<sup>6</sup> a new epoch of great power for [ ]<sup>6</sup> and if you allow me to say, it will be for the republican party the way to secure beyond all doubt your presidential election in [ ]<sup>6</sup>, should they prepare to accept the third term as necessary to the public welfare.<sup>7</sup>

Mr President, I beg leave to explain my proposition.

The metis people having entered the Canadian confederation, on the faith of a treaty which, Canada, as one of the contracting parties, does not fulfil, and as the Metis have exhausted, during 7 years, all peaceable means of getting satisfaction,

I want now to force unto Canada the accomplishment of her treaty with us. To obtain that object, I would employ six different means.

<sup>1</sup> A volume of Riel's poetry under the title "Poesies Religieuses et Politiques" was published in Montreal in 1886.

<sup>2</sup> Riel's contact in Washington was Edmond Mallet a Franco-American who had become interested in the *métis* cause. G. F. G. Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 1963, pp. 217, 222.

<sup>3</sup> Manitoba Archives, *Louis Riel Papers*, Riel to Senator O. P. Morton, October 31, 1875.

<sup>4</sup> A two page fragment of another draft of the same letter is found in the collection of Riel Papers which has been in the Manitoba Archives for many years.

<sup>5</sup> Erasure in document.

<sup>6</sup> Document cut.

<sup>7</sup> The Republican nomination in 1876 went to Rutherford B. Hayes, President of the United States, 1877-1881.

In rescuing from her hands the government of Manitoba and of the north-west.

In proclaiming loud that the motive of our mouvement [sic] is the preservation of a sacred treaty.

as a proof of our sincerity we would continue our allegiance to England: with the remark that, after all her advising Canada to treat us well, and after having herself promised a general amnesty to do away legally with the unjust and furious accusations thrown by our enemies [sic] against us, she has nevertheless abandoned us as a prey to the english of canada.

in inviting and receiving from the united States, all the french Canadian and irish american citizens who would be would be [sic] willing to share our fortune.

In issuing on our soil, bonds to the amount of several millions. Those bonds I would not risk on the public monetary market, but on a well prepared market.

Above all, in following a plan of action deferential to the united States, a plan arranged to cause no difficulty whatever to this country and carefully intended to have you, Mr President, and your administration perfectly unimpeded to follow, in this progressing difficulty of ours, the generous policy of this government towards oppressed people, a policy which, since the beginning of our troubles in 69, we are happy to acknowledge, you have not yet ceased to give us the benefit of.

A sufficient exposition of my plan requires some developments. Mr. President, be so kind as to hear me.

That Canada has not acted, according the stipulated friendliness of an allied and confederated country, towards the Metis, it is obvious. The publicly committed and applauded murder of an important Metis officer, Elzear Goulet in the fall of 70,<sup>8</sup> the murder of the reverend Mr Tanner, a metis protestant minister,<sup>9</sup> in the same fall of the year 70, both remained unpunished.

the prosecutions, the unwarranted arrests, the confinement in irons, the condemnation to death the outlawry, the banishment of the metis leaders and representative men.

The metis Adjutant [sic] General, A.D. Lepine presently detained in prison for two years and deprived of his political rights for live [sic].

The responsible government of manitoba not yet fully established, although, according the act of our constitution and of our stipulations, it ought to have been in 71.

<sup>8</sup> Elzéar Goulet had been a member of the court martial which, in March 1870, had condemned Thomas Scott to death. In September 1870, he was driven into the Red River by two soldiers and a civilian, and was stoned to death or drowned. Stanley, *op.cit.* pp. 113, 160; W. L. Morton (ed.), *Alexander Begg's Red River Journal*, 1956, p. 537n.

<sup>9</sup> James Tanner, a supporter of Lieutenant-Governor A. G. Archibald's conciliatory policy, spoke at an election campaign meeting in Poplar Point November 30, 1870. Driving home from this meeting he was thrown from his wagon and killed when ruffians caused his horses to bolt. *The Weekly Manitoban*, December 3, 10, 1870.





Louis Riel



Three hundred beautiful lands bought and held by the metis before the transfer of the country but which have been taken away from them by force and for want of protection,

The 1,400,000 one million four hundred [sic] acres of land stipulated to be appropriated [sic] for the purpose of extinguishing the indian right of the metis to the soil, and which have been allotted on tracts of land already belonging to the metis, with the determination of paying us with our own goods, our honour as a people, however small we are, our honour which has been trampled upon, during so long a time; and so many other facts are there to illustrate how much the canadian government have disregarded the manitoba treaty.

Undoubtedly it is must just [sic] that we should in consequence, reassume our former attitude.

But the question arises: are we strong enough to do it? Mr President, I believe we are. There are in the province of manitoba 12,000. twelve thousand metis english and french.

in 69-and 70, the english had more confidence in the canadian government, while the french metis wanted guarantees. Since the establishment of canadian rule in our country, the english metis have been so badly treated, on their land question, that they joined their french metis brethren. As early as four years ago, the first canadian governor of manitoba, the Honorable G.A. [sic] Archibald made the following statement to the federal authorities in regard to the fenian invasion of that Province in 71 "should we have had a war, said he, in that war every french metis would have been a participator, while from the english metis, in accord on the question of property with the french, neutrality was the utmost that would have been counted on."<sup>10</sup> Four years of misrule getting worse and worse every day have only completed that want of confidence.

In the north west there are fifteen thousan [sic] metis who understand that if we succumb in Manitoba, they will succumb after us.

There are also in the north west three or four thousand adventurers who are against Canada to a man.

Besides, we have behind us the favorable dispositions of thirty eight thousand indians in that vast territory.

The reason of their mistrust and dissatisfaction is that Canada has intentionally [sic] made equivoque [sic] treaties with them, one at stone Fort in 71; another one at lake of the woods in 73, a third one at lake qu'appelle in 74. Canada holds an interpretation of these treaties, and the indians maintain that it is a false one.

In all I have, in Manitoba and the north west, about 68,000 sixty eight thou-

<sup>10</sup> Half-breed discontent had resulted from delays in the granting of lands to half-breed families under the Manitoba Act. Early in October 1871, a small group of Fenians under John J. O'Neill crossed the border from the United States and took possession of a Hudson's Bay Company post. Within a few hours they were rounded up by United States troops from Fort Pembina and returned to American territory. At the time it was feared by many that French half-breeds might join these Fenians in the "invasion".



sand souls to support my policy. The Canadian government have not more than 10,000 ten thousand souls, to resist my forces.

That is the emigration which has entered Manitoba and the north west, since four years.

Of those ten thousand souls, have to be deducted three thousand Mennonites who, on account of their creed do not go to war and are hindered from shedding human blood.

The seven remaining thousand souls apt to furnish soldiers, are to be divided into three different part.

1st those who live in Winnipeg.

2nd the settlers of a locality called Portage la Prairie [sic], which is isolated on the Assiniboine River, 60 miles west of Fort Garry.

3rd the settlers who are scattered with their families and without protection in our immense prairies.

In the north west are the two hundred Mounted Police men. But it is not to [sic] much temerity to say, I hardly count them. As they are in the midst of that territory, who have offered me in 73,400 four thousand men, in order to help us from being arrested. In fact the Mounted police can hardly take care of their horses. The Metis have to do the work for them and guide them when travelling.

The whole eastern side of Fort Garry is opened. That part of the wall has been demolished. Lately there were only ninety two volunteers distributed in Manitoba to guard it.

Mr. President, such are my forces and my chances of re-establishing successfully at Fort Garry the same Provisional government of the north west, which has accepted conditionally [sic] the Canadian confederation in 70.

But as soon as we would occupy the unprotected Fort Garry, the second of our means of action, that is to say, our proclamation cannot fail to secure for us the favorable verdict of public opinion. It would appear so reasonable to proclaim that the great motive of our movement [sic] is the preservation of our international treaty.

So just a pretension being combined with the third of our means, that is to say, our continued allegiance to England, it will be observed by all impartial people and the public at large, that, while the Metis are determined to get justice, it is encouraging to see them unforgetful [sic] that they are yet a small people, and that they attempt not more than they are reasonably expected to do. So public opinion will be getting more and more favorable.

These second and third means would have another very desirable effect. It would furnish the French province of Quebec a sound platform to stand on, in giving us her whole support. She has upheld our claims with us for many years. She has been insulted and despised [sic] with us. She has a long tradition of grievance against the English. Her representation 65 members in the Dominion

parliament would mostly all countenance our demands. The fourth of our means of action is to invite and receive a french Canadian and irish emigration in manitoba and the north west would fasten more completely to us the support of Quebec, as in helping the metis, by a constitutionnul [sic] and safe opposition to the canadian ministry, she grasps at the chance of building to her own self a sister and homogenous province in the west, whose influence and representation can only better her situation in the confederation.

I have also spoken of an irish emigration. But this is, Mr. President, this is one of the most important features of the plan.

Your excellency is perhaps aware that, last year, during the session of the canadian Parliament, the honourable Premier, Mr. Alexander McKenzie [sic] has announced his policy of forming a new Province west of manitoba. I would be ready to take advantage of that resolution and to carry it out for him.

Besides five hundred french canadian ready to reach the manitoba frontier at Pembina, as emigrants, I can, in a few days, rally four hundred chosen irish men to reach the same frontier, also as emigrants and submitting themselves to the laws of this Country, and when on the soil of manitoba, ready to follow me up to Fort garry the seat of the government, any time, . . .<sup>11</sup>

As soon as I would get there that while the french canadians are invited to come and settle in manitoba, an altogether irish province must be formed west, as Mr. McKenzie wanted to form one . . .<sup>11</sup>

An irish patriot who is enjoying in the united States the respect and confidence of all classes, one who dislikes the fenian principles and whose principles are also mine has joined me for the enterprise.

If my previsions [sic] do not fail me, the announcement would arouse here<sup>12</sup> the great mass of the Irish. The minds would become full of the idea. From all over the united States the irish would long for a province of their own.

Many of them would come to us, immediately. Organisations would be formed to prepare and join us in as great number as possible. It is easy to conceive what anxiety the canadian government and england would experience. Our hold on the north west would thereby become so strong and so much better.

Now comes the fifth of our means of action: the bonds. Bought here at the earliest date of our mouvement [sic], those bonds would increase in value just at the same rate as our political situation would; and while price got for them would enable us in manitoba and the north west to push on our work, the friendly members of the prepared market here could obtain large profits; receiving thereby a return for their unappreciable help. For their better success and our own, it would be well, I suppose, to show themselves as forming no organisation connected with our mouvement [sic], and those amongst them who could be known as having bought our bonds, should be known only as having bought on their

<sup>11</sup> Omission in original manuscript.

<sup>12</sup> i.e. in the United States.



mere individual risks. For our part we would issue bonds to the amount of as many millions as England and Canada could be bought to redeem; the more money we would have, the more would we be able to perfect our enterprise in the northwest.

With a strong Irish movement [sic] on foot we would not only have Quebec to countenance our politics, in the East, but all the Irish of Canada would give us their support. The Tories themselves who have treated with us in 70, now meeting the chance of forming a powerful [sic] coalition would not hesitate to ally themselves with Quebec and the Irish.

The Grits are now in power. They were the opposition during the Red River troubles in 69-70. They opposed with all their might the then ministry, and tried to keep them from treating with us. They failed in their design. But after the treaty had taken place, after it had been sanctioned [sic] by the Parliament, their policy was to ignore it. They accused the Tories and their leaders of having entered into negotiations with rebels; of having suffered British subjects to be unjustly sentenced to death and executed, of having honoured the Métis guilty of such a crime etc.

The idea of the Grits was to compel the government to treat the northwest people as a mere district of Canada, rather a district of Ontario. Finally they got into power, and had to meet the difficulty which they had made so much of, in public opinion.

Now then, they wanted also to compromise with the Métis leaders. Every time, before voting my expulsions from Parliament, they opened negotiations, sending me delegations on delegations. When I was in Plattsburgh New York, they have sent a delegation to me. And when I was in the Province of Quebec, they have sent to me three different delegations that I can prove.<sup>13</sup> Instead of members of Parliament to enter into pourparlers, they ought according to their antecedents on the north west affairs, to have sent policemen to arrest me, as they knew where I was. When they had well understood that I had no other desire than to hold fast the true platform of the Métis cause, they have outlawed me. In the hope of defeating to a complete degree the popularity of the Tories, they have done their best, to prove, on the floor of the Parliament, that their leaders had treated in reality with us. They have acknowledged [sic] the obligations of the government towards us. But they alleged that it was out of place to comply with those obligations. Undoubtedly they thought the Métis could never recover from their present state, and that the shameful [sic] dealings of the ministry would be buried for ever with our cause.

As soon as I would get the power again in the northwest, I would of course reveal and prove all that. Judge, Mr. President, how chancefully the French Province of Quebec, the Irish element of Canada and the Tories would rush against the ministry and the policy of the Grits.

<sup>13</sup> Riel claimed that Sir John A. Macdonald, in 1873, had sent Rev. J. B. Proulx to offer him \$35,000 to leave the country and that this offer was made again by Liberal Prime Minister Alexander Mackenzie through a Rev. Lacombe and Dr. J. B. R. Fiset, Member of Parliament for Rimouski. G. F. G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada*, 1960, p. 211.

I have dwelt on that point to show how in the midst of the canadian Parliament, a strong party would naturally spring out of my mouvement [sic], of which party therefore the very constitutionnnul [sic] interest would be to treat with us, and to share the willingness of Quebec and of the irish on that matter, the english tories of the Dominion would have to say, perhaps with some sort of excuse, that, had it not been for the grits, they would have fulfilled long ago their treaty with us. But now that the opposition can be overcome, they are ready to do well by the northwest.

That feature of the canadian affairs would have some influence on the policy of england and would to a certain extent prepare her mind to trust our loyalty another time, as she did in 1870.

Another influence would also direct England towards conciliation. It is the [home,] influence of the Hudson's Bay company. That company have in manitoba and in the northwest, at least, ten millions of Dollars worth of property. In the case of a war, the company would suffer immense ruin and I believe that none of their losses would be compensated by england nor canada; because the interest of the company are c[losely] connected with those of the metis population throughout the whole north west, and generally their employees are with us. Those relations would imply some responsibility and to prevent the consequences of a war which would not be but one of extermination, the committee of the company in england would do their utmost in behalf of a peacefull [sic] settlement of the difficulty. Their endeavours would have weight near the imperial government.

Be it what it may, England would decide. And I have to foresee that she will try to reach us. But to that end, she is so dependant [sic] of this government, principally in the winter season, that she would also have to bring the matter on the [ ? ] here at Washington. Then, according the sixth idea, if, your administration, Mr. President, really find in my policy nothing unworthy of their sympathies and of their favour, I say, undoubtedly every thing is gained. Without any intervention from this government, only in the simple form of an answer expressly provoked, the ordinary course of the generous american policy would complete the situation. Not only would canada treat with the metis, but we would be able to carry out in that treaty the following points:

the execution of the manitoba treaty of 1870,  
the formation of a new province west of Manitoba.  
the redemption by canada of our issued bonds.

the government of the northwest to be not to be surrendered before sufficient period of time: that is to say when our bonds would have been all redeemed; when the first public animosity of the minds in canada would have subsided and when we would have received sufficient guarantees that we would not, this time, be treated as we have been treated by colonel Wolsely [sic] and his expedition in 1870; as we have been treated by the canadian government, their military and their emigrants during so many years Mr. President, this fourth and last clause is not only called for by prudence and by the dreadfull [sic] experience we have had,



but it would also give me the time of bringing a powerfull [sic] french canadian and irish emigration in the north west. I would also furnish [sic] your administration and the republican party the opportunity of favoring, during a good while and untill [sic] after the presidential election the plan of forming an irish province in the northwest. The irish american citizens finding in your excellency and in your friends such an echo for the dearest national aspirations, would by a great majority throw themselves into the arms of the republican party. The delay for the surrender of the northwest to canada would appear to them as a mere way of getting more men in that country and then take another issue. Nothing is likely to entertain that hope amongst the irish as the preparations of war which it would be wise to push on actively against Spain and Mexico. It could be freely published that as the adversaries of the republicans have charged that party with the intention of making war as means of being more successfull [sic] during the election of . . .<sup>14</sup> the government are determined to postpone, if possible, any declaration of war untill [sic] the elections are over, in order to show the highest possible respect for the public opinion of the American people.

But whatsoever could be said on that matter, as long as I would hold the situation in the northwest, that situation would convey in itself the possibility of a war with england, and England with Canada, seing [sic] your armaments going on, would have to guess against whom in reality you make them. She would only be more in accord with the Canadian government to carry out. . . .<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Omission in original manuscript.

<sup>15</sup> Manuscript incomplete.

## Book Reviews

POUNDMAKER. By *Norma Sluman*. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1967. Pp. 301. \$5.95.

**N**orma Sluman's biography of Poundmaker, chief of the Battle River Cree, is an interesting and readable account of his life and times. In view of the fact, however, that the author has evidently spent considerable time and energy not only researching newspapers and other published material but also in interviewing people on reserves in the Battle River country, and in view of the fact that her stated objective is to write "A story of real people and their era as accurate as time, care and patient research can make it", it is disappointing to find that the book includes neither footnotes, bibliography nor index. In short, it lacks the documentation which usually accompanies solid historical scholarship. Only in the foreword does the author give even a slight indication of her sources of information—and significantly, she does not mention archival documents. This omission is important in that authoritative, first-hand accounts of a number of incidents described in the book are available in the Public Archives of Canada.

Lack of documentation makes it difficult to assess either the thoroughness of an author's research or her evaluation of the material which is available. In other words, did Sluman have access to a particular piece of information, and decide not to use it? Or was she not aware of it? In chapters twenty-eight to thirty, for example, Sluman describes a rain dance held on Poundmaker's reserve in 1884, during which a disagreement between Farm Instructor John Craig and Ka-wee-chet-way-mot, an Indian who wanted extra rations, almost precipitated a general Indian uprising. The incident is significant—not only in demonstrating problems of the day and the temper of the people involved, but also as the precursor to the Riel Rebellion of the following year. Sluman accordingly devotes considerable space to the incident. Her account seems to be derived from Robert Jefferson's reminiscences, a pamphlet entitled *The Cree Rebellion of 1884* which was published in Battleford by the Northwest Historical Society (both of which were written many years after the events described took place), P. G. Laurie's report in the *Saskatchewan Herald*, such standard sources as the *Sessional Papers of Canada*, and from interviews with residents of the area and descendants of the participants. Each of these is an obvious source of information. However, does Sluman's reliance upon these sources result from her conscious decision that they are the most valuable, or does it evolve from the fact that other equally obvious sources were not checked? Little reference seems to be made, for example, to reports of government officials such as Superintendent L. N. F. Crozier of the Battleford detachment of the North West Mounted Police, and Indian Agent J. M. Rae of Battleford. Both were at Poundmaker's reserve during the crises, had positions of responsibility, and wrote their official reports almost immediately thereafter. Such factors as those just mentioned, and others—an informant's reason for being on the scene, his relationship to important participants, his knowledgeability of the general situation, and his personal point of view must all be considered in evaluating the relative importance of particular documents.



Without intending to labor the question of historical documentation, it does, in justification, seem appropriate to introduce it in a review for a periodical such as *Saskatchewan History*. To do so, however, is not necessarily to fault Sluman's recreation of personalities and events.

In common with most biographers, Sluman mixes historical research and literary craftsmanship in her book on Poundmaker, and flavors these essential ingredients with psychological insight, sociological background, and other spices. She bases her account on fact, but in recounting the dramatic sequence of events uses a narrative style and adopts certain fictional techniques. It is, accordingly, sometimes difficult to know where actual quotations begin and end, and to know where imaginative color is used to supplement historical record. There is also an emphasis on chronological story rather than on an analysis of the various situations. However, this technique does enable Sluman to tell Poundmaker's story with sympathy, and this is, perhaps, the book's outstanding quality. Sluman has tried to understand, and to look at Poundmaker and his times, through the eyes of his own people. Whether or not this is truly possible to do, insofar as almost all the available records and documents were written by white men and project events and personalities through what might be called "a white filter", Sluman has, nonetheless, written of Poundmaker with sensitivity and sympathy. She has, we understand, interviewed many of Poundmaker's descendents, and a number of people who live on the reserve which bears his name. The result is a readable and interesting biography.

ARLEAN MCPHERSON

SCHOOLS OF THE FOOTHILLS PROVINCE: THE STORY OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN ALBERTA. By John W. Chalmers. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967. Pp. x + 489. Illus. \$7.50.

Many ambitious projects were completed during the Centennial year. One of these was that undertaken by Dr. Chalmers in the writing of the *Schools of the Foothills Province*. The story of the development of public education in Alberta has been told by a man who was intimately associated with many of the pioneer activities which he portrays so vividly. It is not often that a Table of Contents instils in the prospective reader's mind an eagerness to get on with the story, but this is what the writer of this book has succeeded in doing. Through such chapter headings as "In the Beginning", "Backing and Filling", "Off and Running", "The Roaring Twenties", "Schools without Walls", "Children Flawed and Blunted", "Babes in the Woods", "Captive Cargo", and "Unto Caesar", this book becomes a fascinating *must*.

Part I, "Historical Bench Marks", could have been published as a book in its own right. In its ten chapters and 171 pages, Dr. Chalmers describes the educational services in Western Canada, from their origins as private schools under church auspices, in the Red River Settlement, to the organization of publicly supported schools in 1884, and their subsequent development into the firmly established territorial system which was in existence when the province of Alberta was formed in 1905. Then in picturesque language and entertaining style, he

helps the reader to become vividly aware of the joys and sorrows, the trials and tribulations, and the hopes and aspirations of a pioneer people who, in a lifetime, experienced prosperity and adversity through two world wars and the greatest drought and economic depression that the western world has known.

At first, there were the single room rural school houses which were also the community centres. With the advancing technology, these gave way to two and three rooms, and, with the coming of the late fifties and early sixties the more highly centralized ten, twenty, thirty, and forty teacher schools. From the three man rural and village school boards, there developed the larger boards with control over ever expanding administrative areas. To provide for the changing values and newer needs, there were new developments in curricular offerings. These led to newer types of schools and the demand for more highly qualified teachers. Part I ends with the final chapter given over to an examination of the 1959 findings of the Alberta Royal Commission on Education. These findings he describes as "Almost a Consensus".

In Parts II, III, and IV, Dr. Chalmers departs from his analysis of social, political, and economic conditions and his more generalized account of educational developments, which were characteristic of Part I. Instead, he follows a topical plan, in which each chapter deals with a different aspect of educational growth. Many of the specific developments came about as the result of conflict between the provincial authority, which jealously safeguarded its prerogatives, and local boards of school trustees, and teachers. The professional organization of teachers, in its attempts to improve the economic and social conditions of its members, and, at the same time, to bring about professional improvement, often clashed with the provincial and local school authorities. The title of the final chapter, in which the status of teachers is discussed, is a significant one: "Magistri neque servi".

A perusal of the book's content will leave no doubt in the minds of the readers regarding the occupational orientation of the writer. He has a point of view which he presents fearlessly. His colorful language, the ease with which he tells the story and expresses his ideas, together with the several pictorial illustrations, make reading the book a pleasure.

*The Schools of the Foothills Province* has many strengths. It also has some weaknesses. One of these is the writer's reliance on second hand sources. Another is the lack of primary documentation. There is also the tendency to present new developments without relating these to movements elsewhere. Many changes which have come into the Alberta educational system, and into the systems of other provinces, have been part of a continental development (and in some cases European). Of course, this is difficult to convey to readers, but yet this message must be conveyed, if developments are to be viewed in true perspective. Finally, personal recollections of events are sometimes tinged with personal interpretations which may be highly subjective.

None of the weaknesses which I have indicated negates the fact that this book is an important contribution to the history of Canadian education. The



Alberta Teachers' Association, which commissioned Dr. Chalmers to write the book, and the author himself, are to be most sincerely congratulated on the results of their efforts.

M. P. TOOMBS

PRINCE ALBERT, THE FIRST CENTURY, 1866-1966. By Gary Abrams. Modern Press: City Clerk, City of Prince Albert. 1966. Pp. 389. Illus. maps. \$3.50.

A number of years ago I went to visit an isolated spot on the banks of the North Saskatchewan River below Prince Albert to see the remains of a power development scheme which was never completed. There I saw a concrete dam stretching part way out into the river and on the south shore large concrete locks partly filled with rainwater. Everywhere was the sign of decay and in a strange way it was very fascinating. I did not know then how much these concrete workings had cost the city of Prince Albert nor how much they were a symbol to the citizens of that city of defeat. These concrete works, started in 1912, were part of the La Colle Falls power development which it was hoped would mean industry and urban development for Prince Albert. When the money ran out the power development was left unfinished and the City of Prince Albert was left with a massive debt which it has only recently been able to retire. These concrete works were really a part of the dream of a grand future which had dominated the hopes of Prince Albert citizens but which has always somehow seemed to escape realization.

As part of its own centennial celebrations the city of Prince Albert sponsored the writing of a local history. Mr. Gary Abrams, then a graduate student at the University of Saskatchewan, was chosen to write the history. The completed book is one of the best local histories which has yet been written for any community in Saskatchewan. In writing the history Mr. Abrams has gone much beyond a mere narrative of events to try and analyse the forces which have affected the growth and development of Prince Albert. The result is a study in depth of the intriguing problem of why Prince Albert has failed to achieve the urban greatness which appeared to be its birthright.

The present site of Prince Albert was no more than an Indian camping ground until 1862 when James Isbister became the first person to settle there. Four years later the Reverend James Nisbet established a Presbyterian mission on the site and he is generally recognized as the founding father. The mission was never a great success but a flourishing community developed on the site and it seemed certain that a large and important community would develop there. Initially the major source of prosperity was a trade in flour but lumbering and cattle also became important products. The initial blow to Prince Albert's development was the decision to build the transcontinental railway across the southern plains leaving the northern community isolated. This blow was followed by a world wide depression during the last part of the nineteenth century. Prince Albert located on the fringe of the wheat belt did not benefit as much as many other towns in Saskatchewan from the large scale immigration which occurred during the later part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century. Then in the period before the first World War Prince Albert got caught up in the

boom of anticipated development and to ensure urban growth embarked on heavy expenditures like the La Colle falls development. The hoped for urban development never materialized and all that was left was a partially built dam, other unused facilities and a massive debt. In the author's words "The struggle to bear its massive burden of debt forms a principal theme in Prince Albert's second half-century."

This is a well written and researched history. The first half of the book will no doubt be the most interesting to the general reader because of the story of development and frustration which it tells. The second half is dominated almost to exclusion of everything else by the story of how Prince Albert met the problem of civic finances. The author is quite correct in recognizing finances as the major problem faced by the civic government in the post 1918 period, but surely the history of this struggle could have been leavened by some account of developments in other areas. Nevertheless, this is an excellent history and should serve as an example of what can be done in the writing of local history.

D. H. BOCKING

## Notes and Correspondence

The Saskatchewan Museums Association held its first annual meeting on May 4 and 5 at the Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon. The general meeting was chaired by Dr. Strother-Stewart and there were approximately 58 people in attendance during the meetings. Dr. Strother-Stewart of Swift Current was elected President, and Mr. Gordon Wilson, Executive Director of the Western Development Museum was elected Vice President. Directors elected were Mrs. M. A. Simpson, Superintendent, Fort Battleford National Park, Mr. S. P. Regan, President, Fort Qu'Appelle Museum, Mr. G. Straub of Shaunavon and Mr. C. Molberg of Nipawin. Mrs. Lillian McBean of Swift Current was appointed Secretary Treasurer.

The business meeting adopted a new constitution and considered various problems regarding membership and the relationship of the Association with the Canadian Museums Association. There was considerable discussion about the problem of keeping museum items in the province. Papers were presented on the following topics: The Relationship of Libraries and Museums, Art and the Community, History Around Us, The Preservation of Ethnic Cultures, Cultures of the Indians, The Museum Picture in Saskatchewan and The Drain of Our Heritage—The Loss of Early Household and Farm Equipment and How to Stop It. A banquet was held at Mohyla Institute on the Saturday evening. Guest speaker was Mr. C. Chico, Guidance Councillor for Bedford Road Collegiate who spoke on the theme of careers in museums.

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