

Saskatchewan History

Volume 45, Number 1 Spring 1993



Craiglands Post Office

General Middleton and the Bremner Furs

John W. Gibson, Prairie Photographer

The Saskatchewan Archives Board

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In addition, the Saskatchewan Archives Board has produced several authoritative works over the years on provincial history and a number of other reference booklets and directories to assist historical research in the province. The journal *Saskatchewan History* first appeared in 1948 and has earned a reputation for excellence, receiving awards in 1962 from the American Association for State and Local History and in 1979 from the Canadian Historical Association.

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Front Cover: *Leaders of the Travellers Day Parade, Saskatoon Industrial Exhibition, 23 July 1926, representing Scotland, Ireland, England and the United States. Photograph taken by John W. Gibson.*

Saskatchewan History

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SASKATCHEWAN HISTORY

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The editor of *Saskatchewan History* welcomes the submission of articles relating to the history of the province. Manuscripts must be submitted in duplicate, typewritten, and double-spaced. The endnotes, prepared according to the *Chicago Manual of Style*, should also be double-spaced. Authors may submit manuscripts on PC/DOS 360K floppy disk. The disk must be IBM compatible, preferably WordPerfect 5.1. Two hard copies are still required, and the print must be letter or near-letter quality. The Saskatchewan Archives Board assumes no responsibility for statements made by contributors. Copyright 1993, The Saskatchewan Archives Board.

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Saskatchewan Archives Board:

News and Notes

FOREWORD

[From Volume 1, Number 1 (1948) of *Saskatchewan History*]

No magazine with this title should need an introduction to the people of Saskatchewan who, after much poetic concentration on the future, are suddenly realizing that they have a past, and that the past is important too. Much Saskatchewan history is now being written and published in scattered books and periodicals; more would appear if those able to and ready to write had some encouragement.

Saskatchewan History is designed to give information and encouragement—information about what some are doing, and encouragement to them and others to do more. Space will be given to reviews and notices of all publications on provincial history and related subjects. We hope also to offer new material of various kinds: from the pioneer who tells not what he has read, but what he has lived—the primary historian; from writers who will gather up from little known books important, but rather inaccessible material; and from students who, in increasing numbers, are exploring our archives and fitting together from disjointed fragments the real story of our rather legendary past.

Comments and suggestions for future issues will be welcomed. This new venture depends for its success on those people of Saskatchewan, living here at home, or scattered over the continent, who feel that our province has too long been represented on the historical map by distinguished but lonely pioneers.

H. N.



Saskatchewan Archives Board, S-B1180

In this foreword from the first issue of *Saskatchewan History* (January 1948), the editor, Dr. Hilda Neatby, expressed with her usual eloquence, the mandate of the publication. This mandate has remained constant throughout the past forty-five years and will continue, we hope, for many more years to come. The journal's look is changing, however. With this issue we are introducing a new, more contemporary format. We are confident that *Saskatchewan History's* solid scholarly reputation—established by Dr. Neatby and maintained over the years by five, now six, subsequent editors—will not be compromised by this change.

Your comments and suggestions are welcome. We sincerely hope that the new format will enhance your reading pleasure as we continue to “inform and encourage” through the publication of a wide variety of material relating to the history of Saskatchewan.

J. C.

(more News and Notes on page 9)

Dr. Hilda Neatby, professor of history at the University of Saskatchewan, served as the editor of Saskatchewan History for the first five issues (1948–1949).

Craiglands Post Office, 1911–1945:

An Example of Early Rural Postal Service in Saskatchewan

By Jean Carol Martin

This is the story of a post office in rural Saskatchewan which was operated by members of the Craig family from 1911 to 1945. Located in a farmhouse in the Harwell district near the Alberta border, the post office provided early mail service and met an important social need in the new settlement. It formed an essential part of the community infrastructure necessary to make immigration and settlement successful in that particular locale, as indeed, the establishment of post offices did throughout the West.

As settlement pushed westward in Canada, it was accompanied by requests to establish post offices to meet local communication needs and to support the development of commerce. According to the Postmaster General's 1949 report, "settlers locating in new and strange surroundings in the early days seldom lost much time in securing a means of written communication with the older, established areas they had left behind."¹ Postal inspectors' reports evaluated each request to open a rural post office, frequently commenting on the positive role the post office would play in augmenting community development.² Thus the post office took its place in "...the world of the small town, the country store, the family farm, the muddy, impassable roads, the horse and buggy ... rural Canada at the turn of the century."³ In 1906, there were 513 post offices reported in the newly-created province of Saskatchewan, serving a population of 258,000.⁴ In the entire country, 11,141 post offices met the needs of a population of 6,097,000.⁵

The typical post office in rural districts, villages or even in small

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towns was located in someone's home, and was often combined with a store operation. It might have served fifteen to fifty families. In the dynamics of a rural community, the post office was one of the key places where residents regularly met and visited. In larger towns or cities, postal service was more formal. Regina was Saskatchewan's first city to receive letter carrier service in 1908; Saskatoon and Moose Jaw received this service three years later.

In 1911, Charles Ernest Craig moved his family west from Nova Scotia to Saskatchewan and applied to open a post office. Charley Craig was a natural organizer. As he participated in establishing the institutions of the new community, he saw to it that they bore familiar names—ones meaningful to him. He named the rural municipality "Royal Canadian" in honor of the regiment in which he had served in the Boer War. The family property near Harwell, a South African Volunteer Bounty land grant and homestead,⁶ was appropriately named "Craiglands;" so was the local school, although there was an alternate name choice, "Craigmere," if Craiglands was not selected. It is not surprising that the post office on Charley Craig's farm, on the north-east quarter of section thirty-two, township twenty-seven,



Courtesy of Jean Carol Martin

Craiglands Post Office, photographed here in 1916, was located in the Craig family's farmhouse near Flaxcombe, Saskatchewan.



Courtesy of Jean Carol Martin

Charles Ernest Craig, photographed here in 1900, served as the postmaster of Craiglunds Post Office from 1911 to 1921.

range twenty-six, west of the third meridian, also bore the same name.

Mr. Craig was appointed postmaster on 1 February 1911. In that year, this new post office was one of 1,097 in Saskatchewan. It was in the Saskatoon postal district, served by train from Kindersley to Harwell (renamed Flaxcombe in 1915), and from there, by local transport. In 1911, Canada had 13,324 post offices, eight others of which bore the "Craig" name: Craig, Craighurst, Craigleith, Craigmont, Craigmores, Craigholme, Craig's Road Station, and Craigvale.⁷

The settlers of the Rural Municipality of Royal Canadian No. 261 were mainly of British stock, some directly

from England or Scotland, and others who had lived in eastern Canada and moved west, or who had come from the United States. Sixteen families were served by the new post office,⁸ including some residents of the adjacent Rural Municipality of Mantario No. 262. The people who used the post office the most were the English immigrants staying in touch with folks back home; farmers who migrated from Ontario did not get or send as much mail.⁹

The Craig house was located about six hundred yards from the road. The post office space was just inside the front door in a room to the left. The room also served as a bedroom in the early years, first occupied by Charley Craig's brother-in-law, Bernard Herman, and later by the local schoolteacher. The earliest postal furniture consisted of a desk and "pigeonhole" mail boxes; in 1913, a typewriter and file drawers were added which facilitated Craig's duties as municipal Secretary-Treasurer as well as postmaster. The room served as both office and bedroom until mid-1916, when the schoolteacher left and a porch extension and a summer kitchen were then added to the house. Renovations to the house at that time also included a built-in closet to hold mailbags.

Postal hours in the early days were from eight o'clock in the morning until seven o'clock at night. Sometimes families would simply send a schoolchild in for the mail, but much of the time "getting the mail" was an occasion for a visit. Many bachelors managed to come for their mail around lunch or supper-time hoping to be invited to stay for a meal. Many others would have a cup of tea as they exchanged news with their neighbours.

The mail consisted of letters, parcels and periodicals—mainly *The Family Herald and Weekly Star*. The weeklies, with world news, farming facts, a women's section and a children's page, were very popular. Eaton's, Simpson's and the seed companies would write to "the Postmaster" requesting a list of post office users, and would pay a small sum (five cents or so) per name for added catalogue distribution. Everyone wanted the winter and summer editions of these catalogues for ordering clothing and most of the essentials for running house and farm. The catalogues, together with the weeklies, were usually the only reading material in the house and later in the outhouse, where they served as precursors to modern toilet tissue.

Occasionally other merchandise companies wanted post office users' lists. Charley's son Jim earned his first "outside" money in this way, adding to his list commission the small amount paid for selling Easter and Christmas cards in the district through one of the companies.

Craiglands Post Office maintained a supply of postage stamps and money orders. In 1911 it cost two cents to send a letter within Canada or over to England. The money orders were almost exclusively used for the transmission of funds to Eaton's and Simpson's (in Winnipeg, Toronto, and later, in Regina) and to seed houses in Brandon for vegetable and flower seeds. Newspapers went at one-quarter of a cent per pound to "regular subscribers and news-dealers." Of interest to an agricultural area, "seeds, cuttings (but not cut flowers), roots, bedding plants, scions and grafts" were two cents for the first four ounces, and one cent for each additional ounce.¹⁰ Parcel post rates for catalogue items were low; bulky parcels commonly required only a five, seven, ten or twenty-cent stamp.¹¹

In its first two months of operation, Craiglands Post Office reported a revenue of \$9.00. Charley Craig's

salary was \$5.83 for that period. He also received \$20.83 for making the ten-mile trip to Harwell once a week to pick up and deliver the mail from the train depot.¹² Obviously, it was not a break-even proposition for the Post Office Department, but it did generate some income for the Craigs.

The contract for mail delivery was let by tender. In the early years this was done for a one-year period, and later, for three-year periods. Although the first route was a straight-forward one—from the rail depot at Harwell to Craiglands—the Post Office departmental records for 1912 show: "Tenders invited to ascertain cost of semi-weekly service between Gorefield and Harwell, via Mانتاريو and Craiglands—thirty-six miles."¹³ The bid of Thomas Montgomery at ten dollars a trip was accepted, but on 18 February 1913, he "asked to be relieved of the contract."¹⁴ In 1912, Charles Craig received \$114.58 for eleven months' mail pick-up and delivery. In 1913, the sum was \$111.26 for "10 mos. & 20 dy."¹⁵ The experiment to establish a longer route seems to have been short-lived.

In the early days, the postmaster travelled by horse



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Cressman Post Office near present-day Guernsey, Sask. L. to R.: Two American visitors, Mrs. Cressman (in doorway), Mrs. Israel Cressman, postmaster (at corner), and Jack Cressman with dog.

and buggy in the summer, and by horse-drawn cutter in the winter. Occasionally Charley Craig travelled on horseback, riding his daughter's bay saddle-pony, Topsy. In the winter the trip for the mail required use of a large buffalo robe and a foot-warmer—a canvas-covered metal box fitted with a tray which held coal briquettes heated red-hot in the kitchen range.¹⁶ Whatever the weather, Charley Craig always travelled with his Smith and Wesson 38 pistol by his side.¹⁷

The trip from Craiglands to Harwell was usually uneventful. On one occasion, however, Dick and Frank, the team of horses most regularly used for the mail trip, shied at something, upsetting the sleigh and leaving Charley and the mail behind on the road. When the horses and the empty sleigh arrived at Craiglands, Bernard Herman met them at the barn, turned them around and went back to find Charley and the mail. This breach of mail delivery discipline was memorable because it was so unusual; according to Charley, the horses knew that they had done wrong.¹⁸

During the Great Flu epidemic of 1918-1919, the postmaster wore a homemade mask when he sorted the incoming mail. The epidemic was rampant down East where the weeklies were published and it also affected the West. During the Boer War, Charley Craig had been with a special services unit of the Royal Canadian Regiment charged with operating a field hospital in South Africa. His basis for wearing a mask as a kind of "germ protection" may have come from his wartime experience or from information to the public supplied by health authorities.¹⁹

In 1919 the Post Office was concerned with the resumption of mail service following World War I. One notice sent to postmasters at the time directed that "parcels sent to soldiers overseas and returned for delivery to them in Canada, or to the senders, will not be liable to additional postage."²⁰ This was a sensitive public-relations decision so that postage-due charges would not follow the return—or non-return—of Canadian war veterans. Other notices in that year dealt with the resumption of letter and parcel services with former enemies or enemy-occupied countries and territories.²¹

The year 1919 also brought some changes to the Craig household. The Craig's son Jim graduated from Craiglands School and began high school in Flaxcombe. Charley Craig's fifty-two trips a year to Flaxcombe had already been increased to 104 to provide semi-weekly postal service. They now included stops to drop off

and pick up Jim each Monday and Friday in Flaxcombe, where he boarded for four weeknights during the school term. Jim's second and last year of high school was 1920-1921. He went on to study at the University of Saskatchewan after writing the necessary entrance examinations.

1921 was Charley Craig's last year as postmaster of the Craiglands Post Office. He resigned on 17 August 1921 because his work as the municipal Secretary-Treasurer had become increasingly important. The Royal Canadian municipality decided to build a centrally-located office in the town of LaPorte, a few miles south-east of Craiglands. The Craig family decided to stop farming and move to town. When they left the farm, they left the postal business as well.

By this time, the cost of mailing a letter in Canada (and also from Canada to England) had risen to three cents; one cent of this was a "war tax" which was introduced in 1915 and remained incorporated into the cost of stamps. By 1921 Canada had a dozen post offices with the Craig name; some of the new ones were Craigellachie, Craigie, Craigie Lea, Craigmillar, Craigmyle and Craig's Crossing.²²

During part of 1921-1922 the Craiglands postmaster was Frank Poulter, formerly the hired hand at the Craiglands farm. While the records are not entirely complete, they do show that Mr. Poulter was appointed on 10 December 1921 and that he resigned the following July. John Henry (Jack) Wenmouth was appointed on 18 January 1923.²³

Jack Wenmouth was the first cousin of Charley Craig. He had taken over Craiglands after the Craigs moved. The post office remained with this branch of the family



Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-B7926
McLean Post Office, 1928. The postmistress, Mrs. Calcutt, is seated on the steps. Mrs. Charlie Cates is in the car.

until 1945. Jack's wife Emily (Dinx) Wenmouth was the first assistant postmaster; she was later assisted in turn by their children Violet, Cyril and Thelma. Thelma (Wenmouth) Palin remembers:

When I reached sixteen years of age, I was able to be sworn in and looked after the mail for Dad during summer holidays when he was working on the land. I thought this was really something—my friends didn't have a little job like that.²⁴

The Wenmouths did not handle the mail pick-up from the train depot in Flaxcombe. Mr. and Mrs. Walter Sadler, who lived north of the town, had the contract which involved a round trip of about twenty-two miles. Walter delivered the mail in the winter by covered cutter or sleigh; in the spring he used a team and buggy to cover the muddy roads. In the summertime, Mrs. Sadler transported the mail in the family car.

The Sadlers always delivered the mail on time, prompted in part by the exacting nature of the Flaxcombe postmistress. As Thelma Palin recalls:

One day, on the return trip to Flaxcombe their car caught fire and burned. [The postmistress in the town] reported the incident to the Post Office Superintendent in Saskatoon, stating that 1) the mail had arrived late, and 2) it was delivered by an unauthorized driver in an unauthorized vehicle!

The said vehicle was a 1924 Model-T Ford, driven by neighbour Bill Palin [later to be Thelma's father-in-law]. Mrs. Sadler received a very nice letter from the Superintendent thanking her for having the presence of mind, in a dangerous situation, to save the mail and have it delivered as promptly as possible! A carbon copy was noted and sent to [the postmistress]. Mrs. Sadler often privately chuckled over the latter.²⁵

The Wenmouth household was very busy on Tuesdays and Fridays. The "mailman" was due to arrive at two o'clock in the afternoon. Mrs. Wenmouth had tea and cake or cookies for anyone coming for the mail. Visiting was convenient as the post office occupied a small section of the living room. It contained a desk, a "Toronto couch," and a section of pigeonhole mailboxes. Some people with letters to send would appear before the mail arrived in order to purchase their stamps or money orders so that their outgoing mail was ready. When the Sadlers came with the incoming mail the Wenmouths sorted it immediately. This meant that people would stay and visit until after three o'clock when the incoming mail was ready. The whole process took about an hour and a half. Often, especially in the winter, someone would telephone to the Red and White Store in Flaxcombe and the mailman would come with "emergency" supplies such as tobacco or cigarettes—no delivery charges added.²⁶

In 1935, when the Wenmouths got their first radio, an RCA Victor table model which ran on a rechargeable battery, it became an added attraction. One family often came for their mail on Friday evenings, listened to some radio programs, and visited over tea.²⁷

In the fall of 1945 Jack Wenmouth resigned his post. An attempt was then made to find a new postmaster. The advertisement for the position stated:

\$106 annual remuneration with a \$10 [cost of living] bonus ... out of this amount the Postmaster is required to furnish whatever assistance is required to conduct the office properly, and supplies of stationery, twine, etc. The Postmaster will have to provide at his own expense the necessary quarters for the Post Office.²⁸

No replacement for Jack Wenmouth could be found, and the Craiglands Post Office officially closed on 28 September 1945.

Over thirty-five years of operation, the average annual revenue from the little Craiglands Post Office was \$95.72. Two peak periods of revenue occurred in the years of World War I and World War II, reflecting the importance of communication links during wartime. In its final year, \$138.96 was generated.²⁹ Clearly, the post office at Craiglands had been operating at a loss for most of its existence. In addition to the postmaster's salary, there was an operating cost provided to the Post Office of three hundred dollars for the pick up and delivery of the mail to that location.³⁰ It can be argued, however, that for a very modest financial outlay, small post offices such as Craiglands provided an excellent social service which facilitated settlement and community development during the first four decades of the opening of land in the West.



Split circle postmark strike for Craiglands Post Office, 1911.

By 1945, the number of post offices in both Saskatchewan and Canada was declining. The peak year for Saskatchewan post offices was 1939 when it had a total of 1,530; in the same year Canada had 12,557 post offices.³¹ The decline in the number of post offices by 1945 was indicative of the shift in population from rural to urban centres across Canada; as well, in Saskatchewan at least, some people had begun to move to towns during the winters. By this time there were the alternatives of rural mail delivery or of picking up mail at larger centres regularly visited for shopping and social purposes. Twenty-eight post offices closed in Saskatchewan in 1945, leaving a total of 1,443 in operation.³²

It cost four cents to send a letter within Canada or from Canada to England by surface in 1945. A further war tax of one cent had been included in the postal letter rate during 1943. By then there were other postal alternatives for letters within Canada and overseas. For seven cents a letter could be sent by air within Canada (or by air in Canada and then by sea to England), while

for thirty cents a letter could have full "transportation by air conveyance" from Canada to the United Kingdom and Europe.³³

In the correspondence and documentation relating to the closing of Craiglands Post Office in 1945, both Jack Wenmouth and the District Superintendent of the Post Office noted that a post office in the Craiglands rural district was not an actual necessity. There were sixteen families still making use of Craiglands Post Office, but none of them would be seriously inconvenienced if it closed. Many of them had already applied for postal boxes in Flaxcombe.

There were now only eleven Canadian post offices with the "Craig" name. One more with the prophetic name of Craigend had been added since 1922.³⁴

Members of the Craig family were involved with postal service in Saskatchewan for almost four decades. Their story remains a part of the historical annals of the prairie post office—a record that continues to grow as an increasing number of communities face the prospect of post office closure today.

Acknowledgements

The writing of this article was stimulated by the author's personal visit in July 1991 to the Craigland's property, accompanied by her father, James W. (Jim) Craig. She was also inspired to learn more about the post office operated by her paternal ancestors when she met her relatives, Thelma and Alex Palin (now living in Alberta), and Margaret and Lloyd Larock of Eatonia.

The author extends special appreciation to her father for providing written and oral material for this article; to Thelma Wenmouth Palin for written information; and to Tom Hillman and Lynne Armstrong of the National Archives of Canada who enthusiastically assisted her efforts to locate documentary sources.

Endnotes

¹ Canada, *Report of the Postmaster General for the Year Ended March 31, 1949* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, King's Printer, 1949), 13.

² Post Office Department Divisional Inspectors' reports document the approach used by postal inspectors in evaluating requests to open post offices. Reports from the period 1902 to 1925 have not survived. Pre-1900 inspectors' reports for Canada are located in the National Archives of Canada (NAC), Record Group 3, Records of the Post Office, Series D3, Divisional Inspectors' Reports.

³ Canada, Canada Post, *Postal Service Down the Centuries* (Ottawa: Spalding Printing Co. Ltd., 1974), 35.

⁴ Canada, *Sessional Papers*, Volume XLII, Number 24, "Report of the Postmaster-General for the Year Ended June 3, 1906," xiv. Population data is taken from Canada, Statistics Canada, Post-censal Estimates of Population, Catalogue 91-210, June 1992.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Saskatchewan Archives Board, Homestead File Nos. 1709455 and 1894651, Charles E. Craig, north half 32-27-26 W.3 and southwest 32-27-26 W.3 respectively.

⁷ Canada, *Report of the Postmaster General for the Year Ended March 31, 1911* (Ottawa: C.H. Parmalee, King's Printer, 1911), xii, 29, 37-38.

⁸ Some of their surnames were: Baker, Cooke, Craig, Dutnall, Larock,

MacRae, Myers, Poulter, and Wenmouth. Other names associated with the post office, particularly in later years were: Aberdeen, Birkenhead, Buckle, Clarke, Flynn, Goehr, Jamieson, Leeks, Lentz, Millward, Punter, Rainey, Smithson and Wade. Information supplied by James W. (Jim) Craig and Thelma Wenmouth Palin.

⁹ Personal reminiscence of Jim Craig.

¹⁰ *Canadian Official Postal Guide*, 1911, 16.

¹¹ Personal reminiscence of Jim Craig.

¹² Canada, "Report of the Postmaster General for the Year Ended March 31, 1911," 38.

¹³ Mail Service Contract Registers. NAC, RG 3, Series E2, Volume 1263, Folios 68, 120, microfilm reel T-9952.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Canadian Official Postal Guides*, 1912, 1913.

¹⁶ Its dimensions were approximately three inches by six inches by fourteen inches.

¹⁷ No records of the Post Office indicate that the carrying of a weapon was recommended for mail carriers.

¹⁸ Personal reminiscence of Jim Craig.

¹⁹ Research in the Postal Archives, Ottawa, did not locate any Post Office records relating to precautions to be taken by postmasters during the 1918-1919 flu epidemic.

²⁰ Canada, *Supplement to the Canadian Official Postal Guide, February Supplement, 1919* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1919), 5.

²¹ All postage services were still suspended with respect to: "Austria-Hungary (including Bosnia-Herzegovina), Bulgaria, Germany, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Roumania, Russia, Turkey in Europe and Turkey in Asia, except Palestine and other parts occupied by the British." *Ibid.*, *January Supplement, 1919*, 7.

²² *Canada Official Postal Guide, 1921*, 56.

²³ NAC, RG 3, Series D3, Volume 1566, File 1566/12.

²⁴ Personal reminiscence of Thelma Palin.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ NAC, RG 3, Series D3, Volume 1566, File 1566/12.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Canadian Official Postal Guide, 1940*. For Canada as a whole, the number of post offices increased until 1912, when there were 14,178 post offices. From 1913 to 1918 there was a decrease associated with rural mail delivery (introduced in 1908). From 1919 to 1939 the number of post offices in Canada increased slightly, then declined.

³² In Canada, 12,105 post offices were in operation in 1945. "Report of the Postmaster General for the Year Ended March 31, 1946" (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, King's Printer, 1946), 7.

³³ *Canada Official Postal Guide, 1944-45*, 10.

³⁴ *Canada Official Postal Guide, 1946*, 37.

³⁵ "Split Circle Proof Strikes of Western Canada," in J. Paul Hodges, ed., *Split Circle Proofs of Canada*. (Kelowna: Robert A. Lee Philatelist Ltd., 1989), 99.

Saskatchewan Archives Board:

News and Notes (from page 2)

NOW AVAILABLE FOR RESEARCHERS

The Saskatoon Office of the Saskatchewan Archives Board has recently completed the processing of three important collections: the **Dr. Carlyle King Papers**, the **Dr. Kenneth A. H. Buckley Papers**, and the **Ernest Lindner Papers**. These projects were made possible through a grant from the Canadian Council of Archives Arrangement and Description Backlog Reduction Cost Shared Cooperative Program.

Dr. Carlyle King was actively involved, as early as 1932, in the organization of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), Saskatchewan Section. He served as party president from 1945 to 1960. The King Papers include correspondence, minutes, reports, financial statements and pamphlets pertaining to Dr. King's work on the CCF executive. CCF politics continue to be a vigorously studied topic, and the King Papers provide an excellent source of information about party organization from the perspective of a party strategist.

The King Papers also document Dr. King's work as a member of the Saskatchewan Arts Board (his involvement predates the Board's actual creation in 1949) until 1965; his involvement with the Fellowship of Reconciliation; and his interest in conscientious objection—particularly during the Second World War.

Dr. Kenneth A. H. Buckley was a well-respected economist who taught at the University of Saskatchewan for twenty-five years. He also served as an economist advisor to federal, provincial and local governments, as well as to labor unions, co-operatives, and farm organizations. Dr. Buckley's research and pub-

lications dealt with topics such as capital formation in Canada, growth and housing requirements, agricultural credit, population redistribution, and historical statistics. In fact, a tribute paid to him at the time of his death in 1970 stated: "No serious student of economics will ignore his contribution to historical statistics and the understanding of Canadian economic growth."

The Buckley Papers are primarily made up of the professor's research files—a valuable source for students of economic history that were created by a reputable scholar. The Papers also contain lecture notes for Dr. Buckley's courses, and correspondence pertaining to his involvement with the University of Saskatchewan Faculty Association.

Ernest Lindner emigrated from Austria to Saskatchewan in 1926. By 1931, he had won local recognition as an artist; by 1933, he was exhibiting his work across Canada; by the age of seventy, he was a nationally recognized artist whose works were being purchased by the National Gallery.

The Ernest Lindner Papers are a rich source of Saskatchewan and Canadian art history. The papers include correspondence with other renowned Canadian artists such as Lawren Harris and Augustus Kenderdine, and with Lindner's associates in the Saskatchewan art community. His personal diaries, which span the years 1937–1972, give an intriguing insight into the daily routine and thought processes of a prairie artist.

Finding aids for these collections are now available for researchers at both offices of the Saskatchewan Archives Board. For further information, please contact the Saskatchewan Archives Board, Saskatoon Office, at (306) 933-5832.

(more News and Notes on page 48)



"AND NOW FOR BUSINESS."

PUBLISHED BY C. P. F. & C.

TORONTO LITHOGRAPHING CO.

This 1885 political cartoon shows the rather pugnacious character of General Frederick Middleton.

National Archives of Canada, C11536

The Political Game and the Bounds of Personal Honour:

Sir Frederick Middleton and the Bremner Furs

By Daniel German

"... the property of this poor half-breed had been wrongfully taken ... and if the Government is satisfied ... that such is the fact, then, by every rule of justice, honour and honesty, the Government is bound to make compensation to that man.¹

James Lister, Liberal MP, 1897

"I have some recollection of the causes which led the late Government to resist the payment of this claim. The chief reason was that this man having participated in the rebellion, having taken an open part against the country, he was not entitled to any compensation. However, as the members of the present Government sympathized with the late rebellion, I am not astonished at their paying this claim."²

Richard Tyrwhitt, Conservative MP, 1899

The above were the opposing views in the case of the Bremner furs—a scandal which rocked the government of Sir John A. Macdonald, led to the resignation of the commander of the Canadian Militia, and took the affairs of a Saskatchewan fur trader before a Select Committee of Parliament. In and of itself, it was a relatively minor case of theft, but the Liberal Opposition found in it a marvelous instrument with which to abuse the Government. By the time the above speeches were given in the House, however, most of the individuals involved had moved on. The main figure in the scandal, Sir Frederick Middleton, sometime General Officer Commanding the Canadian Militia and the accused looter, had died in January 1898—a pillar of Victorian London society. Charles Bremner of Bresaylor, North-West Territories, the half-breed whose accusations had brought the scandal to the public eye, was old, poor, and sick. Macdonald, Prime Minister at the time of the scandal, and thus a prime target for the attacks on

actions of the Conservative government, was also dead. Wilfrid Laurier, who had helped lead the attack on Middleton, was Prime Minister and slow to pay the money he had once claimed was owed Bremner.

The facts of the scandal were quite simple. In the aftermath of the North-West Rebellion of 1885, many men had been investigated or detained for putative involvement in the rebellion. Charles Bremner, a farmer and fur trader from the tiny settlement of Bresaylor near Battleford, was one of those detained. At the time of his arrest he had in his possession a quantity of furs, which he had kept with him during the Rebellion. These furs were placed in the hands of a government agent, where it was presumed they would be safe until the question of Bremner's guilt or innocence was resolved. Unfortunately, when Bremner, who had been released from a Regina jail for lack of evidence, returned to Battleford to reclaim his property he was dismayed to find his furs gone, dispersed among several of the officers and officials of General Middleton's victorious forces. The missing furs consisted of: 1,836 muskrat, 10 fisher, 377 lynx, 20 wolf, 54 bear, 19 martin, 479 beaver, 604 mink, 239 skunk, 200 red fox, 3 silver fox, 6 cross fox, 8 otter, 35 wolverine, and 21 badger. At the time of Bremner's claim, the value of these furs was \$5,634.50, at prices ranging from eight cents for common muskrat to fifty dollars for a prime silver fox.³

Chief among the looters was the Commanding General of the Canadian Militia. Middleton had departed from the North-West Territories with a package of the furs, and had apparently given permission for the dispersal of the remaining furs. Bremner pursued the general and demanded an accounting for his lost furs, an accounting which Sir Frederick Middleton (knighted for his successful ending of the Rebellion) refused. In the course of the pursuit, the case came to the attention of several Liberal Members of Parliament, who recognised it as an opportunity to embarrass Macdonald's Conservatives.⁴

The first volley in this parliamentary battle was fired on 31 May 1887 when the Liberal member for Bothwell, Mr. David Mills, rose during discussion in the Committee of Supply on the cost of the Manitoba penitentiary to interject a question concerning Charles Bremner. Recounting the events leading to the loss of Bremner's furs, Mills placed the blame squarely on the

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shoulders of General Middleton and two other government officials: the warden of the Manitoba penitentiary, Mr. Samuel Lawrence Bedson, and Mr. Hayter Reed, the Assistant Indian Commissioner. Reed and Bedson had been temporary members of Middleton's staff and were accused of sharing the missing furs with him. For the Liberals, who were willing to believe, or at least to say, anything bad about the Conservatives, this charge was a God-send. Mills demonstrated this when he proclaimed:

My information is so direct, so circumstantial, that I have had in my own mind no doubt whatever with respect to the accuracy of that information, and that I would like to know very much what redress has been given, and whether any enquiry has taken place. For it seems to me that a party who could be guilty of such proceeding is not worthy of being retained in the public service. I have already given the names of the parties; Mr. Hayter Reed, Mr. Bedson and General Middleton.⁵

The Minister of Militia, Sir Adolphe Caron, denied that this matter had ever been brought before his Department, and the attention of the House passed on

to the matter of the British Columbia penitentiary.⁶ Nonetheless, Bremner had made a claim to the Department of Militia and Defence for the cost of his lost goods. The War Claims Commission's Report No. 105 referred a number of claims to the Department of the Interior for settlement. One of these claims, War Claim No. 615, was Charles Bremner's "for loss of furs, etc., \$6,426.56." This report was approved on 12 February 1886, and although Caron officially endorsed it, it is unlikely that he was personally aware of the details.⁷

Mills refused to drop the issue of Bremner's furs, and Middleton's involvement. On 22 June he once again raised the question in the Committee of Supply. On that day, the Committee was discussing a raise for the warden of the Manitoba penitentiary, one of the alleged accomplices in the theft. Mills used the issue as justification for his accusations, only to be roundly attacked by William Scarth, the Conservative MP for Winnipeg. Scarth stated that he knew the warden, Mr. Bedson, better than he knew the Member for Bothwell and that he believed in the honesty of Mr. Bedson. When the Minister of Justice, the Honourable John Thompson, spoke in



Saskatchewan Archives Board, S-B-336.

A fur trader sorting packs of furs brought in from the far north. Photo taken by C. W. Mathers of Edmonton. Just prior to the outbreak of 1885 Riel Rebellion, Charles Bremner established a store in Bresaylor, North-West Territories, where he built up a good business and accumulated a large quantity of furs.

defence of Mr. Bedson, the Bremner case appeared a lost cause for the moment, and once more went into limbo.⁸ It was not to be raised again in that session of the House.

The Bremner debates of 1888 opened on 17 May. James Edgar, a Reformer MP for West Ontario, started the attack by quoting from a petition which had been presented to the Minister of the Interior on 25 August 1887. Edgar also read into the minutes a number of statements he had received from various Bremner supporters, ensuring that all in the House became familiar with the different aspects of the affair. Thompson, who had prepared himself for this debate, was ready with facts, figures, and innuendo to counteract anything Edgar had to say. It was at this time that Wilfrid Laurier first entered the fray. In his defence of Bremner's claims, the MP for Quebec East and leader of the Liberal Party, a strong speaker, never mentioned the names of Reed, Bedson or Middleton; instead he blamed the Government for all the illegalities. Laurier stated: "I do not accuse anybody, but I say the Government should see that ample justice should be done this man [Bremner] ..."⁹

Laurier's intervention raised the Bremner affair to another level. Whereas Mills and Edgar had simply been annoying, Laurier had the potential to create a full-blown political scandal. Middleton was a perfect subject for attack. A British officer of advanced years, Middleton had not retired in 1887 as regulations had indicated he should because Macdonald's government had requested a special dispensation for him, extending his tour of duty until 1892. Caron had requested this dispensation to prevent a political rival from gaining influence over the Militia, thus linking his name to Middleton's.¹⁰ Any embarrassment for Middleton would therefore reflect on Caron, and, through him, on Macdonald and the rest of the Conservative caucus.

In circumventing his rival's ambitions, Caron had continued a policy which was unpopular in many parts of the country: that of keeping a British officer in command of the Canadian Militia. When that British officer could be accused of stealing a poor half-breed's furs during the Riel Rebellion, it was a situation guaranteed to arouse discontent. The hanging of Louis Riel had already caused Macdonald problems in Quebec;¹¹ his government neither wanted nor needed a related controversy. Recognising this, the Liberals intended to firmly link the theft of Charles Bremner's furs to the idea of a corrupt Conservative English Government.

When the matter came up again in March 1890, James Lister, a Liberal MP, proposed the establishment of a Select Committee to investigate the theft of furs—a theft committed by a British General, a theft committed against one of the citizens of Bresaylor, a town "which consisted of Scotch half-breeds and French half-breeds." The Conservative Member representing the Saskatchewan Electoral District of the North West Territories, Day Hort MacDowall, whose riding included the



Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-A 3373

Day Hort MacDowall of Prince Albert, Conservative Member of Parliament for the Saskatchewan Electoral District of the North West Territories, 1887 to 1896.

village of Bresaylor, quickly responded to this proposal, stating that "the hon. gentleman has been misinformed or mistaken ...":

The hon. gentleman has appealed to our French conferees in this House for their sympathy, because, he said, these were French half-breeds, who resided a few miles from Battleford. I can correct him on that ... These were Scotch half-breeds.¹²

MacDowall then went on to address the question of who stole the furs. He asserted that the three accused were not responsible. In fact, he suggested, it would never be known exactly who took them, since so many furs were seized by the Militia. "... [T]here was hardly a single soldier who came down from Battleford," MacDowall stated, "who had not some furs to sell when he got to Prince Albert." MacDowall was forced to drop this argument when it was pointed out to him that he was accusing all of the Canadian militia of looting and theft. He then revealed that the Liberals might as well not pursue the case since Charles Bremner had already been in contact with him indicating that he was willing to settle, although Bremner had since transferred matters to a solicitor.¹³

There appears to be a discrepancy between Mac-

Dowall's claims in the House and his advice to Bremner. In the House he stated that he had offered to act as an intermediary between Bremner and the Government, an offer which was first accepted then rejected. There exists, however, a letter from James Clinkskill, Battleford's representative in the Legislative Assembly of North-West Territories who was handling the correspondence for the illiterate Bremner, to Sir John A. Macdonald, dated 25 September 1889, in which Clinkskill stated that MacDowall advised Bremner to write directly to the Prime Minister. MacDowall had apparently indicated that he was unable to collect any money for Bremner. Bremner, receiving no satisfaction from the Prime Minister, had no choice but to try legal avenues to recover his losses.¹⁴

Lister's proposal for a Select Committee was designed to avoid any question of Middleton's guilt or innocence and place the blame upon the government:

I say that whether General Middleton took these furs or not, I care not; they were taken in possession by the Government and it was a wanton act of spoliation [sic] on the part of the Government officials to take those furs and appropriate them to their own use. Unless the Government grant the Committee that has been asked for, they are making themselves a party to this, and I say in justice to all concerned, to the Government, to Mr. Bremner and the other half-breeds, it is the duty of the Government not to refuse the investigation that is asked for by this motion.¹⁵

Lister was assisted in his accusations by the Leader of the Opposition, who was quick to add his support. In Laurier's opinion, "... Charles Bremner would have better consulted his own interests if ... he had continued to hold the Government liable, because ... undoubtedly the Government and the people of Canada are responsible to Bremner for the losses incurred."¹⁶ Another Liberal, Sir Richard Cartwright, moved an amendment to Lister's original motion, rephrasing it to state: "That a select committee be appointed to enquire into the statements made in this House in reference to the furs said to have been taken from Charles Bremner, a half-breed residing in Battleford."¹⁷ Since this altered the meaning of the original motion, which had generally addressed the losses of several inhabitants of Bresaylor, the Conservatives suggested that the whole matter be dropped until such time as any civil suit between Middleton and Bremner could be resolved in the courts. When Laurier objected to the proposal to adjourn the debate, Macdonald assured him that he personally would ensure that the matter would be raised again in the House.¹⁸

If this was an attempt to sweep the incipient scandal under the rug it was already too late. That same day, a Montreal paper carried a brief statement by Middleton concerning his problem:

Yes, it's true I am defendant in a five thousand dollar suit brought by Chas. Brymner, a North-West half-breed who claims that I looted his furs. The charge is

untrue. I never saw his furs, and will contest the suit.¹⁹

Unfortunately for Middleton, he was not to have a chance to defend himself before a court where a sympathetic judge might tend to favour a knighted general over a possibly treasonous half-breed.

It is not certain why Bremner dropped his lawsuit. It may be, as one historian suggests, that he wanted the greater publicity of a Parliamentary hearing and the resulting vindication of his name over any monetary gain.²⁰ Whatever Bremner's reason, the Liberals were quick to take advantage of the situation. They reopened their attack on Wednesday, 5 March 1890. Only three Ministers were in the House at the time (the others attending an entertainment at Rideau Hall),²¹ and when Sir Hector Langevin, the Minister of Public Works, requested that the issue be again deferred until such time as the Prime Minister could attend, he was answered by Laurier who declared that "... the Opposition is not at all disposed to be factious or severe, but the public business must be answered."²² And answered it was.

Laurier pressed the Government to make good Macdonald's promise to consider the question of a Committee of Inquiry. Sir John Thompson was left with no recourse but to acknowledge the pledge. Sir Hector Langevin was able to end Wednesday's debate on Mid-



National Archives of Canada/Topley, 47151

Major-General Frederick Dobson Middleton.

dleton by affirming that the question of a Committee would be raised when the Prime Minister took his seat on the following day.²³

The previous day, alerted by the newspaper item on Middleton, newspapers in Montreal and Toronto had carried stories on the Bremner fur scandal, calling for an inquiry and reporting on the debates in the House. The opportunity to report on "lootery" involving prominent figures in the government was one which no newspaper could resist. It was exactly the kind of coverage the Opposition could have desired.²⁴ The newspaper reports, combined with the pressure of their demands, helped force the Government to face the spectre of an embarrassing inquiry.

At Thursday's meeting in the House, the Opposition forced the issue with a demand that a Committee be established. Macdonald had no choice but to agree and submitted names for the membership.²⁵ It was a complete surrender on Macdonald's part, and at least one newspaper recognised it as such.²⁶

Once the Conservatives conceded the point, the way

was open for the establishment of the Select Committee. On 19 March 1890 at 10:00 A.M., the Committee held its first meeting, chaired by Alexander McNeill, the Conservative Member for Wiaraton. The question of Middleton's guilt was never really in doubt. During the Committee hearings, the accounts of the witnesses were essentially the same: General Middleton had authorized the confiscation of Charles Bremner's furs. Even Middleton, who had initially denied the appropriation of the furs, admitted under examination that he may have taken the furs. His statement was a blatantly arrogant assertion:

I thought I was the ruling power up there ... that I could do pretty much as I liked, as long as it was within reason. I did not think it was unreasonable to allow a few furs to be taken ...²⁷

In the end the Committee unanimously reported that they considered the confiscation of the furs "unwarrantable and illegal," and that the actions of General Middleton were "highly improper."²⁸



Courtesy of the Bresaylor Heritage Museum

Charles Bremner, age 65, on the Athabaska Landing Trail thirty miles north of Edmonton. This photograph was taken by a travelling missionary from England, Frank Lehman, around the time that Bremner finally received compensation for his stolen furs.

The presentation of the Committee's report on 23 April 1890 created a minor sensation in the newspapers. They stressed that the confiscation was illegal;²⁹ one headline read "Gen. Middleton Censured."³⁰ A more sympathetic report in a Toronto paper claimed that the Select Committee's unanimity was "[c]ontrary to the opinion of many."³¹ Whatever the reports in the newspapers, the Bremner case was a damaging blow to Middleton's reputation, one from which he could not recover.

Vilified in the House and in the press, Middleton was left with no choice but to resign; he did so in July.³² It was obvious that he had underestimated the pressure which would be brought to bear, and had paid the price for the Opposition's desire to chastise the Government. Middleton recognized that there had been nothing personal in the Opposition's actions: "I have been the victim of politics, because I was a British soldier I was sacrificed to please the French vote, that's the case in a nutshell."³³

Letters written to Macdonald show that many were sympathetic to Middleton's plight. Sir Adolphe Caron wrote to the Prime Minister stating: "I feel that as Commanding Officer of the Force he has been a success."³⁴ Another correspondent reflected: "Had he at an early day acknowledged his grave Mistake, to say the least of it, the govmt might have been able to let him down easier, but after the report no govmt could venture to retain him."³⁵ Yet another wrote: "I do not think the General intended any dishonest thing but acted thoughtlessly."³⁶

Even the Prime Minister regretted the need to accept Middleton's resignation: "I am very sorry for General Middleton, and did what I could to save him, but he acted foolishly"³⁷ Despite his regret, Macdonald realised that Middleton had damaged the Government's position, and was aggrieved that the actions of Middleton had opened the door to attacks on the government and the policy of retaining British officers in command of the Militia.³⁸

The departure of Middleton from the scene resulted in the gradual disappearance of the issue of Bremner's lost furs from the Order Paper. Without the general as a target, the Liberals' attack lost its focus. The Bremner Fur Scandal faded with a whimper; only occasional references in the House showed that Bremner was not completely forgotten.³⁹

Seven years later, T.O. Davis, Liberal Member for the Saskatchewan Electoral District, raised the issue once more. Sir Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal Government quickly agreed to re-open the question. It is interesting that when Davis began his speech, he had to describe the Bremner affair to a House which had forgotten: "... I am quite aware that I am bringing up a question that was discussed some years ago in this House; and although this question was discussed and a great deal of evidence was taken before a committee, up to the present time Mr. Bremner has never been paid ..."⁴⁰ The

story which was told in the House varied from the facts, but the essential truth that Middleton had taken the furs was recounted. The Liberals were not content to allow only the general to be blamed; they were also intent on reminding all that "... poor Bremner, the half-breed of the North-west, never could get hon. gentlemen opposite to extend to him one atom of simple justice."⁴¹ By that time, Middleton had been dead for over a year.⁴² He had never paid Bremner, and certainly the Conservatives saw no need to speed through the payment—one Member wishing there was time for another inquiry.⁴³ Even the Liberals, however, were slow to compensate Bremner for the cost of his lost furs. It was not until 9 August 1899 that the Liberals finally moved the payment of \$5,364.50 to Charles Bremner.⁴⁴ When he finally received his payment, Bremner retired to obscurity in Edmonton.⁴⁵

The whole affair was, after all, a minor scandal, easily forgotten by all but those who were intimately involved. The Commanding General of the Militia had been forced to resign; he was, however, quickly replaced by another British officer.⁴⁶ The Bremner case may have offended Laurier's sense of justice, but as he was occupied with many other pressing issues such as the Manitoba School Settlement, the Prime Minister did not hurry to push through Bremner's payment.⁴⁷ If the scandal had made a small fur trader from Saskatchewan famous—according to one 1890 traveller, the affair was the talk of England⁴⁸—the fame was short-lived. Perhaps the final words on the continuing notoriety of the Bremner Fur Scandal can be left to Goldwin Smith, a historian and journalist who wrote so lucidly about the events of his day:

A most painful incident and one which threw a glaring light on the system of political party was the attack on the character of the English General, Middleton who had commanded against the French Half-Breed rebels at Batoche. The heart of the French at Quebec had been with their rebel kinsmen ... To propitiate them an attack was made in Parliament on General Middleton's honour ... The poor old soldier, beset by these politicians, was bewildered, and in that assembly no one was found to take his part ... I got up a public dinner at Toronto for General Middleton, and so for him the matter ended well. Of the charge of stealing furs no more was heard in Parliament. It seems that he had rather hastily allowed a bale of furs of no extraordinary value belonging to a man who had gone into the rebel camp to be divided among the members of his staff. In the old country there is still something to keep the political game within the bounds of political honour.⁴⁹

*The author wishes to thank Dr. Carl Christie and Owen Cooke,
Directorate of History, Department of National Defence.*

Endnotes

- ¹ Canada, *Official Report of the Debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada*, 5 May 1897. (Hereafter referred to as *Commons Debates*.)
- ² *Commons Debates*, 9 August 1899.
- ³ Canada, "Appendix (No. 1). Report of the Select Committee in Re Charles Bremner" (Ottawa: Printed by Brown Chamberlin, Printer to the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty, 1890), 38.
- ⁴ The best accounts of the trials and tribulations of Charles Bremner may be found in Margaret Stobie's "The Bremner Furs," *The Beaver*, 316:1 (August 1985): 36-44, and in her *The Other Side of Rebellion: The Remarkable Story of Charles Bremner and His Furs* (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1986).
- ⁵ *Commons Debates*, 31 May 1887.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷ Canada, Department of Militia and Defence, *Report on the Suppression of the Rebellion in the North-West Territories, and Matters in Connection Therewith, in 1885* (Ottawa, 1886), 297.
- ⁸ *Commons Debates*, 22 June 1887.
- ⁹ *Commons Debates*, 17 May 1888.
- ¹⁰ Desmond Morton, *Ministers and Generals; Politics and the Canadian Militia 1868-1904* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 89.
- ¹¹ H. Blair Neatby, *Laurier and a Liberal Quebec: A Study in Political Management* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1973), 27-28; J.R. Miller, *Equal Rights; The Jesuits' Estates Controversy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979), 33.
- ¹² *Commons Debates*, 3 March 1890.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴ James Clinkskill to Sir John A. Macdonald, 25 September 1889, National Archives of Canada (NAC), MG 26, A, Vol. 43, 17119-17123.
- ¹⁵ *Commons Debates*, 3 March 1890.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁹ *Daily Star* (Montreal), 3 March 1890.
- ²⁰ Stobie, *The Other Side of Rebellion*, 134.
- ²¹ *Globe* (Toronto), 6 March 1890.
- ²² *Commons Debates*, 5 March 1890.
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ *Globe* (Toronto), 4 March 1890; *Gazette* (Montreal), 4 March 1890; *Daily Star* (Montreal), 4 March 1890.
- ²⁵ *Commons Debates*, 6 March 1890.
- ²⁶ *Globe* (Toronto), 7 March 1890.
- ²⁷ Canada, "Appendix (No. 1). Report of the Select Committee In re Charles Bremner," 17.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, iii-iv.
- ²⁹ *Daily Star* (Montreal), 24 April 1890.
- ³⁰ *Gazette* (Montreal), 24 April 1890.
- ³¹ *Globe* (Toronto), 24 April 1890.
- ³² Desmond Morton, "Middleton, Sir Frederick Dobson," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography 1891-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Vol. 12), 732-36.
- ³³ *Daily Witness* (Montreal), 11 August 1890.
- ³⁴ Sir Adolphe Caron to Sir John A. Macdonald, 10 July 1890, NAC, MG 26, A, Vol 201, 85082.
- ³⁵ J.R. Gowan to Sir John A. Macdonald, 3 July 1890, NAC, MG 26, A, Vol. 221, 94894.
- ³⁶ H. Muma to Sir John A. Macdonald, 9 June 1890, NAC, MG 26, A, Vol. 486, 242700.
- ³⁷ Sir John A. Macdonald to the Marquess of Lorne, 18 August 1890, *Correspondence of Sir John Macdonald*, Joseph Pope ed. (Toronto: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1921), 473.
- ³⁸ Sir John A. Macdonald to HRH The Duke of Connaught, 20 August 1890, *Correspondence of Sir John Macdonald*, 475.
- ³⁹ Stobie, "The Bremner Furs," 44.
- ⁴⁰ *Commons Debates*, 5 May 1897.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² It is one of the ironies of this case that Middleton died in the Tower of London in circumstances of respectability and splendour. After his disgrace, he returned to London, where the Crown, demonstrating its belief in his innocence, appointed him Keeper of the Crown jewels, a position he held from 1896 until his death. Morton, "Middleton," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, 736.
- ⁴³ *Commons Debates*, 10 August 1899.
- ⁴⁴ *Commons Debates*, 9 August 1899.
- ⁴⁵ Stobie, *The Other Side of Rebellion*, 179.
- ⁴⁶ Morton, *Ministers and Generals*, 94-95.
- ⁴⁷ See Neatby, 82-99.
- ⁴⁸ J.R. Gowan to Sir John A Macdonald, 3 July 1890, NAC, MG 26, A, Vol. 221, 94894.
- ⁴⁹ Goldwin Smith, *Reminiscences*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1910), 455-456.

WOMEN IN ALBERTA AND SASKATCHEWAN HISTORY

WASH III

The third WASH workshop will be held in October 1993 at the Saskatchewan Archives Board offices at Regina.

The workshop is open to anyone—from both academic and non-academic settings—with an interest in the history of women in western Canada, including teachers, graduate students, researchers, archivists, and writers of community, organizational and individual histories. Sessions will reflect the interests of the participants.

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John W. Gibson:

The Life and Work of a Prairie Photographer

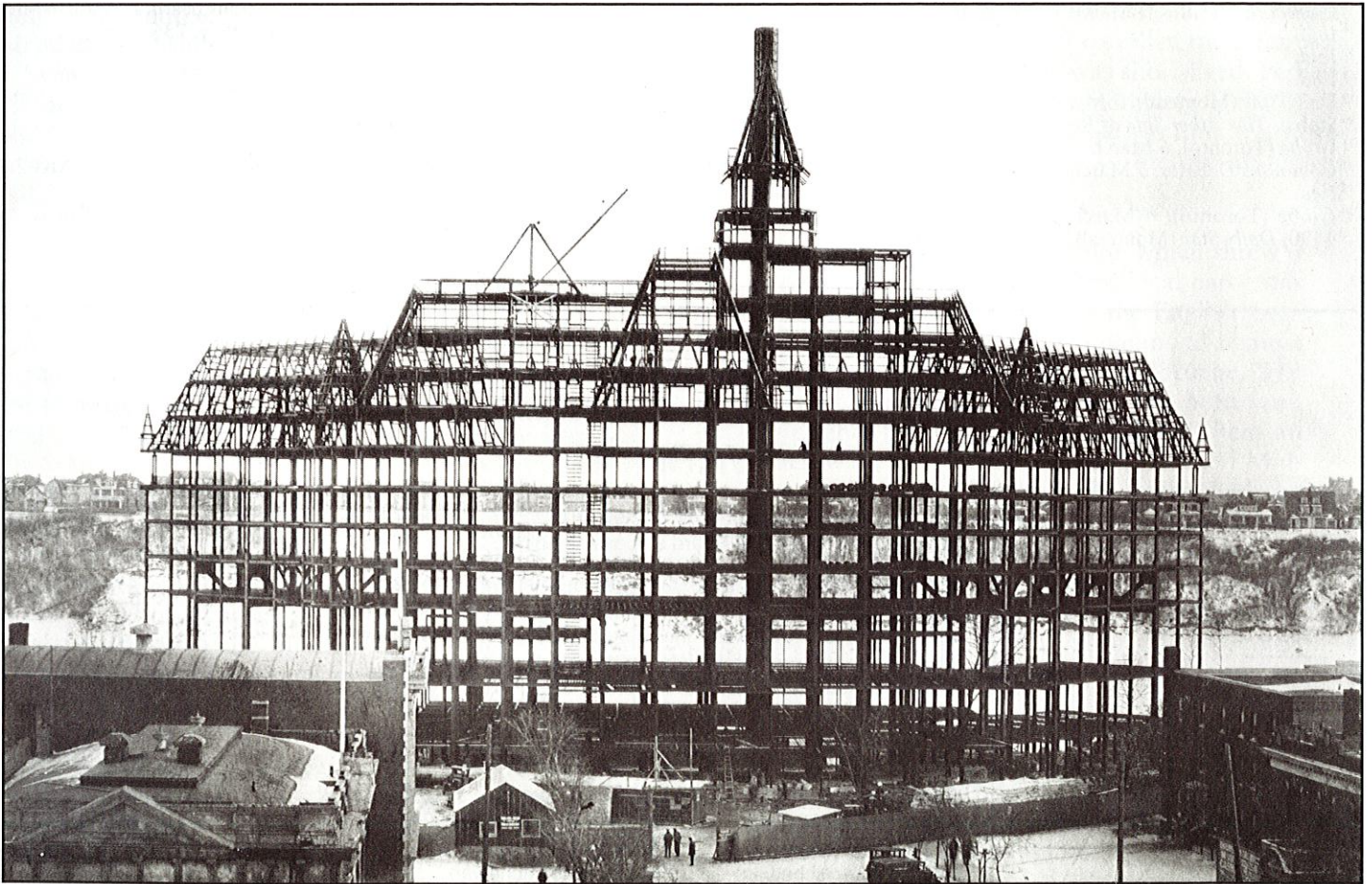
By Brock V. Silversides

One of the more important prairie photographers during the first half of the twentieth century was John W. Gibson. Although he approached photography as a business first and foremost, Gibson had a natural ability to capture on film the essence of his surroundings: the fields and farmers as well as the city street scenes of

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western Canada. Throughout his career, Gibson was based in three major urban centres: Winnipeg, Regina and Saskatoon; his work, however, encompassed the entire prairie region. Close to half of his total output featured rural subject matter. His productive period exceeded fifty years—a half-century that saw tremendous changes in the region from the beginnings of mass settlement, through two world wars, a depression and finally the cautious prosperity of the 1950s.

In addition, where most photographers master one branch of the photographic art and dabble in others, Gibson excelled in four applications: panoramic, portrait, press and commercial photography. In alternating



Courtesy of Gibson Photos Ltd.

Construction of the structural framework of the Bessborough Hotel in Saskatoon, photographed by Gibson in 1931. Begun in 1930 and completed the following year, the hotel did not open until 10 December 1935 because of the Depression.



Courtesy of L. Murray Gibson

John W. Gibson began his career as a photographer in Winnipeg in 1906 and continued until his retirement in Saskatoon in 1952.

periods he was stationary, then itinerant, then a combination of the two. He would not stand still, and refused to be compartmentalized. He was widely travelled, and could mix with all types and classes of people.

In his body of work one confronts reality, not the idealized impression customers try to extract from a photographer. Because much of it seems so ordinary and not particularly flattering, many would consider it of historical or documentary interest only. A closer look, however, reveals that his images are truthful, uniquely western Canadian and imbued with many levels of value.

John William Gibson was born 19 December 1872 in Logan, Harrison County, Iowa, son of John Gibson and Carrie Warner. His father was a farmer from Belfast who settled in Iowa in 1870. Little is known of Gibson's youth except that the family moved first to Zaneta, Blackhawk County, when he was four years of age, and then to the town of Reinbeck, also in Iowa. During his teens, he succumbed to a growing wanderlust, and started riding the rails. He worked his way down the Mississippi River to New Orleans with no goal or job in mind—he simply wanted to make the trip. He had an adventuresome spirit, and was anxious to see new places and meet new people.

In 1890, at 18 years of age, he was involved in a railroad accident which had a major impact on his life: his

left hand was severed at the wrist. The exact details of the accident are not known. Gibson's son, Murray, wryly observes that "it happened in several ways, depending on what story he was telling at the time."¹ Even though the loss of his hand had to affect his career choice, Gibson did not let the handicap interfere with his personal life. He remained fiercely independent, asking for help only when tying his tie or lacing his boots. There were even some advantages. His obituary states:

Old timers here remember he used to mix the poisonous chemicals for developing with the stump of his arm where others used a wooden paddle. He had become immune to the poisons through use.²

In September 1896, he tried to settle down by marrying Emily Gillespie, a school teacher from Cedar Rapids. Their wedding announcement mentions the first of his many occupations:

Mr. G. who formerly resided in Reinbeck, and who at present is interested in the drug business with Ladage & Company is one of the prominent young business men of Grundy Center ... The young couple returned to Grundy Center on Thursday, the following day, and opened a home in the Morse property just north from the school building.³

Ladage & Company City Drug, located in the Commercial Block (705 G Avenue) in Grundy Center was much more than a pharmacy. According to advertisements from 1898, the firm sold bibles and books, leather items, chinaware, albums and toilet cases, wall paper, fancy vases, lamps and "many other goods too numerous to mention."

The very nature of this job tied Gibson down and he soon tired of it. He worked for a time as a travelling salesman for an encyclopedia company at the turn of the century, and later, for one year, 1904, as proprietor of the Gibson Advertising and Distributing Agency in Saint Paul, Minnesota. In the meantime, two children were born to Gibson and his wife: a daughter, Irma, in 1897, and a son, Leslie, in 1900.

Restless again, he decided to wander up to Canada. Gibson's son jokingly recalls how Canada came to his father's attention:

When he was going to school, he read in McGuffey's Geography under 'C' for Canada, and it said "... noted for its fields of barren snow and fur bearing animals" and somehow that intrigued him and so that's what Canada was.⁴

It is more likely, however, that Gibson was caught up in a general exodus of Iowans to the Canadian prairies between 1904 and 1907 in search of free homesteads and new business opportunities.⁵

Gibson arrived in Winnipeg in 1904 at the age of thirty-two with his mind open to almost any employment. His first job, as listed in the 1904 Henderson's directory, was as an agent for the firm of Savage and

McGavin, real estate and financial brokers. Within a year he became acquainted with Lewis B. Foote, one of the city's most prominent commercial and studio photographers. Foote also worked for both the *Winnipeg Telegram* and later the *Winnipeg Tribune*. Gibson was never listed in city directories as working for Foote, but there is no doubt that Foote introduced him to the world of photography. Gibson's son recalls:

I can remember meeting Foote just very shortly after the war. He was a really elderly gentleman and he had no end of stories about he [sic] and Dad. And so, I kind of had the feeling that he was a benefactor or something — I guess you might call it an apprenticeship or something, but this is where he got his photography.⁶

The apprenticeship was not always easy. Foote told Murray Gibson an anecdote about an attempt his father once made to provide extra illumination for a street shot taken at night. Using a truly innovative approach, he poured a long line of magnesium flash powder along the eavestrough of the building on which he had set his camera. He then tripped the shutter and started the building on fire!

Although Gibson went on to become both a commercial and press photographer, it is difficult to judge how much Foote influenced Gibson or what practices he imparted to his apprentice. There are few surviving examples of Gibson's Winnipeg era images; nevertheless, some stylistic similarities can be inferred. In particular, he seems to have adopted Foote's sensibilities to working class subject matter and street scenes. Nothing appealed more to Gibson than street events such as parades, fires or demonstrations.

In 1906, Gibson is listed as a commercial photographer for the first time. His office was located at 302 Boyd Street in the north end of town. At approximately

the same time, Gibson initiated a freelance relationship with the *Manitoba Free Press* (later *Winnipeg Free Press*).

Gibson was unquestionably successful as a press photographer. This is quite remarkable, considering that he had only one hand, making camera manipulations more difficult and time-consuming than usual. He generally used either the 8 x 10 inch or 5 x 7 inch format view camera—both were heavy contraptions that had to sit on a tripod and have their bellows racked out. This was quite formidable, as a press photographer is supposed to follow the action, be adaptable and respond to changes immediately.

Gibson had a number of talents which compensated for his handicap. One of these was his apparently thorough previsualization. He would set up his camera at the location where the event was about to happen, pre-focus and load the film. Then he would wait for the "decisive moment" and trip the shutter. His uncanny knack for predicting the place and time became second nature to him. Perhaps the best example of Gibson's previsualization was his now-famous shot of a most reluctant subject, British author Rudyard Kipling, who visited Winnipeg in October 1907. Captioned "Mr. Kipling as he Stepped from His Private Car Yesterday," the candid photo was published in the *Manitoba Free Press*. A newspaper article, published many years later, explains the great lengths that Gibson went to in order to take this rare photograph:

Mr. Gibson ... was the first and only photographer who was able to obtain an un-posed picture of the English author.

Kipling, Mr. Gibson relates, refused to be photographed in an unconventional pose. He was always on guard against photographers and would successfully shield his face with his hat or in some other manner.



Mr. Gibson revealed that the picture was obtained only through the co-operation of the Canadian Pacific railways. Mr. Gibson arranged with them to have the train stop at a certain marked point.

In the station, directly opposite where the rear exit of the observation car would stop, Mr. Gibson had a

Gibson (centre) in a self-portrait taken in the Winnipeg market ca. 1907, shortly after he began his career as a commercial and press photographer.

Courtesy of Gibson Photos Ltd.

window removed, a small hole cut in the blind, and two cameras set up. He also arranged to have Kipling leave the train first. Mr. Gibson had asked permission to photograph the traveller at the time.

Seeing no photographer, Kipling declared he would wait but thirty seconds. Mr. Gibson then signalled to his men in the station and the "most difficult man to photograph" was shot.⁷

Gibson also had the necessary aggressiveness for a press photographer. Foote recalled an occasion when



Courtesy of L. Murray Gibson

John Gibson setting up the Kodak Cirkut Outfit, a panoramic camera that he put to good use throughout most of his career, photographing rural scenes such as threshing crews and urban scenes such as parades and conventions.

Gibson and another photographer met on a rooftop, each thinking he had found a unique viewpoint to photograph an event, now forgotten. As the other photographer was setting up his camera, Gibson "accidentally" knocked the tripod over and the other's camera went rolling off the roof. Apologizing profusely, Gibson proceeded to take his exclusive pictures.

The other half of Gibson's business, commercial photography, was considerably easier to handle than the press jobs. Much more care could be taken to set up a shot of a building or display window because the subject matter was immobile. A number of his architectural and street images were sold to postcard companies such as

the Valentine Company of Montreal; many were included in Canadian series postcards.

It was in Winnipeg that Gibson started using the Kodak Cirkut Outfit, a camera that gave panoramic negatives 8 inches wide and up to 8 feet in length. Patented in 1904 by William J. Johnstone, the Cirkut was originally made by the Rochester Panoramic Camera Company. Once introduced to the public, it became the most widely used of the panoramic cameras. In 1907 that company merged with Eastman-Kodak who continued to manufacture the camera. It was an ingenious machine. The whole camera revolved on a circular track and was driven by a clockwork motor. It could and did take pictures up to 360 degrees.

Considerable skill and experience was needed to operate the camera. In addition to determining the usual variables such as aperture and the focal length of the lens used, the photographer had to take into account the shutter speed as determined by the speed of the little motor and the distortion inherent in such a view. As well, a developed sense of previsualization was needed to be able to fit everything in the camera's range.

The advantages of a panoramic photograph for the photographer are self-evident: if he captured 100 or 200 people on film and each person ordered a print, he could make a healthy profit. Aside from the lucrative nature of panoramic photography, there was nothing Gibson loved so much as making a swing with his Cirkut and controlling a crowd. An onlooker from the early days remembers Gibson's style:

I can still recall Gibson waving to people to come in closer or go farther back or get in a semi-circle, giving the orders like a general in the field, then ducking under the cloth to get his composition on the ground glass and standing on top of this ladder. I always saw him on top of a ladder ... because the tripod would be at least ten feet high. It was a tremendous thing.⁸

In 1908 Gibson formed his first and only photographic partnership, Gibson, Metcalfe & Co., with H.J. Metcalfe. Their business was located at #42 - 245 Portage Avenue. The partnership did not last long, and Gibson was again working solo in 1909.

Gibson's "golden" period in Winnipeg began in that year and continued until well into the First World War. It was at this time that he started to earn his reputation as a successful photographer. By 1913, he had incorporated his studio with himself as president. He covered the Bannatyne Block (1911) and Lombard Street (1912) fires, shot the opening of the Winnipeg Hunt Club in St. Vital (24 May 1913) and sold views of the Winnipeg Rodeo of 1913. With the great wave of patriotism in 1914 and 1915, Gibson was kept busy photographing soldiers—both individual portraits and group shots. He took a series of at least sixty photographs of contingents of troops embarking at the Winnipeg train depot heading east for overseas service.

The golden years ended in 1916 when Gibson's mar-

riage, which had been rocky, finally came apart. Incompatibility led to a divorce; Emily and the children (now three with the birth of Esther in 1906) returned to Reinbeck. Gibson's business was not going well either. Although the studio was moved to more spacious quarters at 337 Smith Street, by 1917 his business was simply not viable enough to keep going. With great reluctance, he became an employee of Brigden's, an affiliate of the Toronto Engraving Company founded by Frederick Brigden in 1872. Located at 592 Notre Dame Avenue, the firm's specialty was fashion-illustration, photography and engraving; it also handled the contracts for Eaton's mail order catalogues. This job was probably a temporary measure for Gibson; it allowed him to earn travelling money, for by this time he had decided to leave Winnipeg. His destination was Saskatchewan, where there would be fewer competitors practising his type of photography.

In mid-summer 1918, Gibson moved west in search of business opportunities. For the next seven years he travelled extensively, making money along the way. His life was almost wholly given over to a nomadic existence. He travelled across the prairies with his camera, dropping into small towns to take photographs of church, school or picnic groups, going up and down the grid roads looking for threshing or railway crews. In the spring and summer months he lived in a tent; during the winters, he stayed in hotels.

Gibson had a knack for this type of photography work. A journalist of his day observed:

He was a good salesman because he could go into a field with his sales pitch and get the crews to stop work and line up all the rigs for a picture. He ... probably put more faces on film than any other photographer in the country.⁹

His accomplishment lay not only in the number of faces, but also in the quality of the photographs—in the way in which he captured the ruggedness of the farm labourers in their surroundings. These are not the faces of the rich, the influential or the powerful. They are the faces of ordinary farmers reaping the results of their hard work. There is something in their honest expressions and in the fundamental importance of their occupation, that makes these photographs outstanding in their conventionality.

Only in a loose sense did Gibson make Regina

his base of operations. It is significant to note that he was not listed in city directories for 1918, 1919 and 1920. For part of this period he was totally independent, but most of the time he was associated with one of the many Regina studios operating in these early years.

This association offered advantages to both Gibson and the studio that employed him. Few photographers in Saskatchewan were capable of handling a Cirkut, so Gibson was a valuable addition to any studio staff. It also helped to Gibson to have a business address to give to potential customers as he could not afford to keep up his own darkroom when he was out of town. The following arrangement was worked out: Gibson would take pictures in the field and send the negatives back to the studio which would process, print and sell the results. In addition, when he was in Regina, Gibson would do some darkroom work and photograph conventions or meetings. Even though his images appear under the stamp of various studios, they can be easily identified by his unique hand-written captions. In a sense then, he had the best of both worlds: a freelancer's schedule and, intermittently, the facilities and backing of an established studio.

The extent of his travelling during this period can be gleaned from a sampling of the locations in his surviving pre-1925 panoramic negatives. They include Yorkton, Conquest, Creelman, Grand Coulee, Wolseley, Milestone, Hewerd, Pense, Harris, Milden, Indian Head, Ellisboro, Kindersley, Bounty, Bateman, Ardath, Morse, Elbow, Davidson, Sovereign, Mortlach, Hodgeville, Grandora, Zealandia, Moose Jaw, Chapin, Caron, Parkbeg, Carlyle, Valley Centre, Lebret and Melville. He even returned to Manitoba, taking shots of the farms around Roblin.

Gibson realized that the backbone of the prairie economy was agriculture and that important commissions would come from farmers and farming organizations.



Main Street, Rosthern, Saskatchewan, 1927.

Glenbow Archives, ND-13-7

His own youthful farm experience gave him an edge over many other photographers. He could talk the same language as farmers and grasp quickly which subjects were most important for recording. He advertised mainly in agricultural periodicals such as the *Free Press Prairie Farmer*, *Country Guide*, and *Western Producer*. Also, by reading these same papers closely, looking for notices of rural fairs, picnics, church socials and agricultural exhibitions, he found potential business. He often showed up at such events unannounced on speculation and usually did a good business.

Many of his panoramas are of model farms in Saskatchewan: the Rosthern Experimental Farm, the Sutherland Forest Nursery Station (later Forestry Farm), the Wilson Brothers Farm at Harris and a series of the Hughton Community Farmers Ltd. In addition to the threshing crews already mentioned, Gibson also photographed ploughing, seeding and harvesting activities. Strangely enough, however, he never practised formal, posed livestock photography. This was an activity which would certainly have made him more money.

Some of the agricultural organizations that commissioned Gibson include the Saskatchewan Farmers Union, the Saskatchewan Grain Growers Association, the Saskatchewan Horticultural Society, the Saskatchewan Livestock Producers, the Saskatchewan Agriculture Society, the United Farmers of Canada and the U.F.C. Women's Section, as well as the University of Saskatchewan's various Farm Boys and Farm Girls, Swine and Stock Judging clubs.

One of his important contacts in the industry—a contact made when both were working for the *Manitoba*

Free Press—was a former street and legislative reporter, George F. Chipman. Chipman became editor of the *Grain Growers Guide* in 1909 and frequently called upon the services of his former fellow employee for illustrations. It is difficult to identify Gibson's photographs in this publication, as credits were few and far between; it is known, however, that a number of his images were used for the front covers. One particularly humorous cover photo on the 10 June 1925 issue shows Gibson's two sons, aged five and three, playing with a bear cub. The caption reads: "Baby Bruin Considers Beating a Retreat". The publishers of *The Guide*, United Grain Growers, also used a Gibson photo of the U.G.G. Saskatoon warehouse for their book *The Grain Growers Record 1906 to 1943*.

Few photographs remain of Gibson's intermittent urban work from this period. When he arrived in Regina in 1918, he hired on with Turner Studio (1745 Scarth Street) owned and operated by William R. P. Turner. Gibson took mostly military shots of the various regiments and their homes at the white-tented training camp on the Exhibition Grounds. On 5 August 1918 Gibson took a Cirkut view of the Duke of Connaught inspecting the First Depot Battalion lined up in front of their tents. His photo received national prominence, earning a two-page spread in the now defunct *Montreal Standard* (28 September 1918) under the caption "Training the Men of the Canadian West for the Firing Line". Various smaller photographs inserted on that page and others portray a sports day at the camp, "Over the Top" training exercises, kit inspection, rows of recruits filing past medical officers, various group and



Courtesy of Brock Silversides

Company lines at Camp Exhibition in Regina photographed by Gibson in August 1918 while working for the Turner Studio.





Courtesy of Gibson Photos Ltd.

Milden baseball team, Northwest Saskatchewan champions, 1925. L. to R.: J.A. Currie, J.E. Hudson, L.C. Ferguson, P.J. Maguire, T.S. Hersberger, G.W. Mathews, R. Glen, A.W. Hudson, T. Shatilla, L.S. Donaldson, L.M. Maguire, R.J. Mott, C.I. Goodwin, A.E. Bratseth, C.W. McCallum.



Lloydminster, Saskatchewan after a major fire that destroyed much of the business district in August 1929.

Glenbow Archives NE-3-634

individual portraits of officers and the regimental brass band.

His fellow photographer on Turner's staff was a young man by the name of Percy A. Butcher. Butcher had been with Turner since the studio began in 1916 and was, in a sense, the assistant manager. When Turner died on 10 November 1918, a victim of the influenza epidemic, his will directed that the studio be handed over to Butcher to either operate the business or sell it at his discretion.

Butcher decided to continue the business, but changed the name to Capitol Studio in 1919.

Gibson's panoramas now started to be produced under that name. The earliest and most important product of this association was Gibson and Butcher's coverage of the Prince of Wales visit to Regina on 4 October 1919. Both Gibson and Butcher were on hand with Cirkut cameras at a reception for the prince held at the Legislative Building. In addition, Gibson covered the prince's arrival at the train depot and a longer ceremony in Wascana Park where individuals were awarded military decorations.

The *Morning Leader* of 6 October used Capitol Studio photographs exclusively for its coverage of the visit, publishing a total of eight images including one panorama each from Gibson and Butcher. The newspaper even included a small article on the studio under the headline "Excellent View of Proceedings":

Some excellent views of the proceedings at the Legislative buildings were secured by P. A. Butcher, proprietor of the Capitol Photo Studio Scarth Street until recently known as Turner's Studio. Mr. Butcher had an assistant stationed at the depot and pictures of the royal party arriving at the depot were taken as well as numerous views of the reception, and the guard of honour band, veterans receiving decorations, nurses, scouts, school children etc. Mr. Butcher has an announcement elsewhere in this issue regarding how these photo-graphs can be secured.¹⁰

Gibson's association with Butcher became increasingly strained. The initial cooling of their relationship came about because of competition over a woman. The story is told that while visiting Butcher in the hospital, Gibson met Butcher's girlfriend, Martha Priester. Before a week had passed, Gibson and Priester were seeing



Saskatoon Public Library Local History Room, LH 3441

The Prince of Wales at a military awards presentation in Regina on 4 October 1919, taken by Gibson with a Cirkut camera.

each other and Butcher was no longer involved.

Gibson married Priester in Moose Jaw on April 5, 1919. She was born Martha Clorinda Priester on 5 February 1898 in Peel Township, Wellington County, Ontario. Her father, Peter Priester, homesteaded near Rouleau in 1905. By 1912, the family had moved into Regina where her father worked as a teamster. Martha (nicknamed Queen or Queenie by her father and later by everybody) worked as a stenographer, first for the Remington Typewriter Company and then for the Scarborough Company of Canada, from 1915 to the time of her marriage. She then transferred all of her energy to support her husband's career. The Gibsons had three sons: Sheldon Priester and Lorne Murray, born in the early years of their marriage, and Ralph Bud, born 7 July 1933.

Gibson and Butcher parted company at the beginning of 1920 when Gibson started his own establishment, first calling it The Gibson Studio and later, in 1922, The Western Studio. Located at #31 - 706 Hamilton Street, the business could not have been too successful, as by 1923 it had folded.

Once again, Gibson became a salaried employee, this time of the Townsend Studio Co., operated by J. L. Richmond at 1778 Hamilton Street. He proved his worth as a photographer, and the following year, Richmond made him a partner in the business. Very little memorable work has come from this period of Gibson's career—most of his photographs were group portraits of conventions and organizations. As well, he was travelling a lot, taking pictures from Fort Qu'Appelle to Prince

Albert. The Townsend studio was the Regina agent for the Moose Jaw studio of Weekes and Pugh (and vice versa). It is interesting to note that a number of Moose Jaw Cirkut views (mainly conventions) credited to Weekes and Pugh were actually taken by Gibson and labelled in his handwriting. The studio had a similar arrangement with Gale's Studio in Melville, and a decade later Gibson's panoramic skills were contracted by Spencer's Studio in North Battleford.

By January 1925, Gibson returned to become again a full-time employee with Butcher's Capitol Studio. One of his first commissions was to photograph the participants in the 24th Annual Convention of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers held January 27 to 31, 1925.

Perhaps the most unique assignment done for Capitol Studios was his series on an historical pageant staged on 15 August 1925 in the small town of Lebret, situated on Lake Katepwa in the Qu'Appelle Valley. The pageant was an outdoor play in which a few French Canadians re-enacted "The Arrival of Champlain" in Canada by canoe and his "welcome" by a band of Indians in full dress. Three panoramas exist: one of the arrival on the beach, one showing a line-up of the Indians involved and finally a group photo showing the actors and the spectators.

By the mid-1920s Gibson had had enough of Regina. An irritating series of salaried jobs, the folding of his own studio and the friction with Butcher all combined to disenchant him with the capital city. For a very brief period, he returned to the rural transitory lifestyle that he still revelled in. His eldest son, Sheldon, remembers that "... the last town that Dad set up an 'itinerant type' studio in was at Outlook. They tried to get me to go to school there but I would run away."¹¹

Mrs. Gibson was beginning to worry about their sons' education. She was concerned that if the family continued their wandering lifestyle, the boys would not receive formal schooling. By 1925, their eldest son Sheldon had passed school age without ever entering a classroom. Murray was five years old and quite accustomed to being a vagabond.¹² Queen finally put her foot down and decided to settle the family. Gibson had done a fair amount of business in Saskatoon recently and decided



Courtesy of L. Murray Gibson

John Gibson with his wife Martha (nicknamed Queen or Queenie) and their sons Sheldon and Murray during their travelling years, ca. 1921.

that the place was as suitable as any, so he set up shop in the basement of the Farnum Block at 650 Broadway Avenue.

If the move to Saskatoon signalled the end of the most carefree and interesting part of Gibson's career, it also was the start of his most stable and profitable period. Studio portraiture work, a necessary part of any photographer's business, was guaranteed to bring in money. As well, Gibson returned to using his 8 x 10 camera for commercial work, covering subjects such as buildings and businesses.

The Cirkut camera was still put to good use, for it was in cities like Saskatoon that conventions were held, and a panoramic camera was needed for the larger ones. As well, ready customers could be found at the University of Saskatchewan convocations and elementary school graduations. A person who was in one of Gibson's panoramas remembers:

It was big business taking pictures of schools. I recall Gibson for example, coming to Bedford Collegiate when I was a student there on the celebration that we had welcoming back Ethel Catherwood ... and the whole school got out on the front lawn and had their picture taken with Ethel.¹³

Many clubs and associations wanted a panoramic photograph of their members and activities to hang in their meeting places. Some of these groups included the Homemakers Club (University of Saskatchewan), Canadian Girls in Training, Loyal Orange Order, Saskatoon

Motor Club, Saskatoon Saddle Club, various school trustees, Federated Women's Institute, the Oddfellows (I.O.O.F.), Life Underwriters of Saskatoon, Girl Guides, Saskatchewan Registered Nurses, Seventh-Day Adventists, various choirs, Saskatoon Missionary Society, the Mennonite Brethren, the Ukrainian Institute, and the Kinsmen Club.

As well, Gibson received a lot of business from the Canadian Army and its base at Dundurn twenty-five miles south of Saskatoon. For a full regimental portrait with everyone in focus, only the Cirkut camera could do the job. Gibson was present at the reunion of the 5th Battalion (Western Cavalry) on 23 March 1929 for the depositing of its colours and, from the years 1929 and 1930, has left a series of negatives from Dundurn Military Camp of various Saskatchewan companies. The University of Saskatchewan had him photograph the graduates of the Canadian Officer Training Corps from 1926 to 1930, and between the wars the Royal Canadian Legion hired him on numerous occasions. Sheldon Gibson recalls one exciting trip when he was a teenager: "In the mid '30's we went down to Dundurn to photograph the last gathering of the South Saskatchewan Regiment with all of their horses. I vividly remember their last "charge!"—sabres and all."¹⁴

Not surprisingly, the Saskatoon Board of Trade used many of Gibson's photographs in their pamphlets advertising the city. The first such pamphlet, produced in 1926-1927, was called *Thirty-Five Thousand Welcomes*. It utilized five of his panoramic shots and at least three of his 8 x 10 images. Another is a fold-out pamphlet entitled *Saskatoon, Sask.—The Industrial, Commercial & Educational Centre of the Great Growing Plains of Western Canada* from 1928-1929. It contains statistics and interesting facts about the city set around a Gibson panorama of the downtown skyline taken from a point north of the eastern approach to the 25th Street bridge. As well, in the first issue of the Board's magazine *The Hub Booster* (1939), the center page features another Cirkut view of the downtown taken from atop the Hotel Bessborough looking north, west and south.

The *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* regularly used Gibson's commercial work for its advertisements and his panoramas for special issues. For example, his sweeping view of the University of Saskatchewan campus was used in both the 21st Anniversary of Saskatchewan issue (15 July 1926) and the 35th Anniversary of Saskatchewan Edition (24 May 1941). The same two issues also included his famous 1926 Cirkut view of the four corners of Saskatoon's major intersection at Second Avenue and Twenty-First Street.

Even with all this in-town patronage, Gibson insisted on continuing with some out-of-town work. One profitable source of business that he had once again pursued was rural panoramas: the towns and their inhabitants, the schools and their children. The years from 1926 to 1928 were years of intensive travel across the province. In 1926 he photographed in Battleford, Bounty,



Glenbow Archives, ND-13-101

Aaron Sapiro speaking at the opening of the Saskatoon Exhibition 19 July 1926. Sapiro came from the United States to help Saskatchewan farmers organize the wheat pool.

Cutknife, Fort Qu'Appelle, Lloydminster, Regina, Rosthern, Tessier, Aberdeen, Ardath, Asquith, Dinsmore, Elrose, Eston, Forgan, Kinley, Langham, Plato, Radisson, Rosetown, Swanson, Vonda, Vanscoy and Waldheim. From the Autumn of 1927 came negatives of Kindersley, Delisle, Elrose, Laura, Leney, Hughton, Tessier, Kinley, Beadle, Kinistino, Muenster and Flaxcombe.

In 1928 he reached Allen, Blucher, Denholm, Denzil, Dunblane, Elstow, Hague, Hepburn, Herschel, Humboldt, Kerrobert, Laird, Maclin, Bruno, Doddsland, Fielding, Luseland, Primate, Prince Albert National Park (for its official opening) and Springwater. He also ventured into Alberta for the first time, photographing Vermilion, Provost, Kitscoty, Wainwright and Calgary.

Although he was attempting to settled down to the comfortable routine of studio portraiture and commercial work, interspersed with periods of travel, Gibson could not ignore his roots as a press photographer. He continued to record, though on a lesser scale, historic moments and personalities throughout Saskatchewan.

The first of these was a series on Aaron Sapiro speaking at the opening of the Saskatoon Industrial Exhibition on 19 July 1926. Sapiro, an American agricultural pool organizer, had been called in by the Farmers Union of Canada in 1923 to help organize their Wheat Pool.

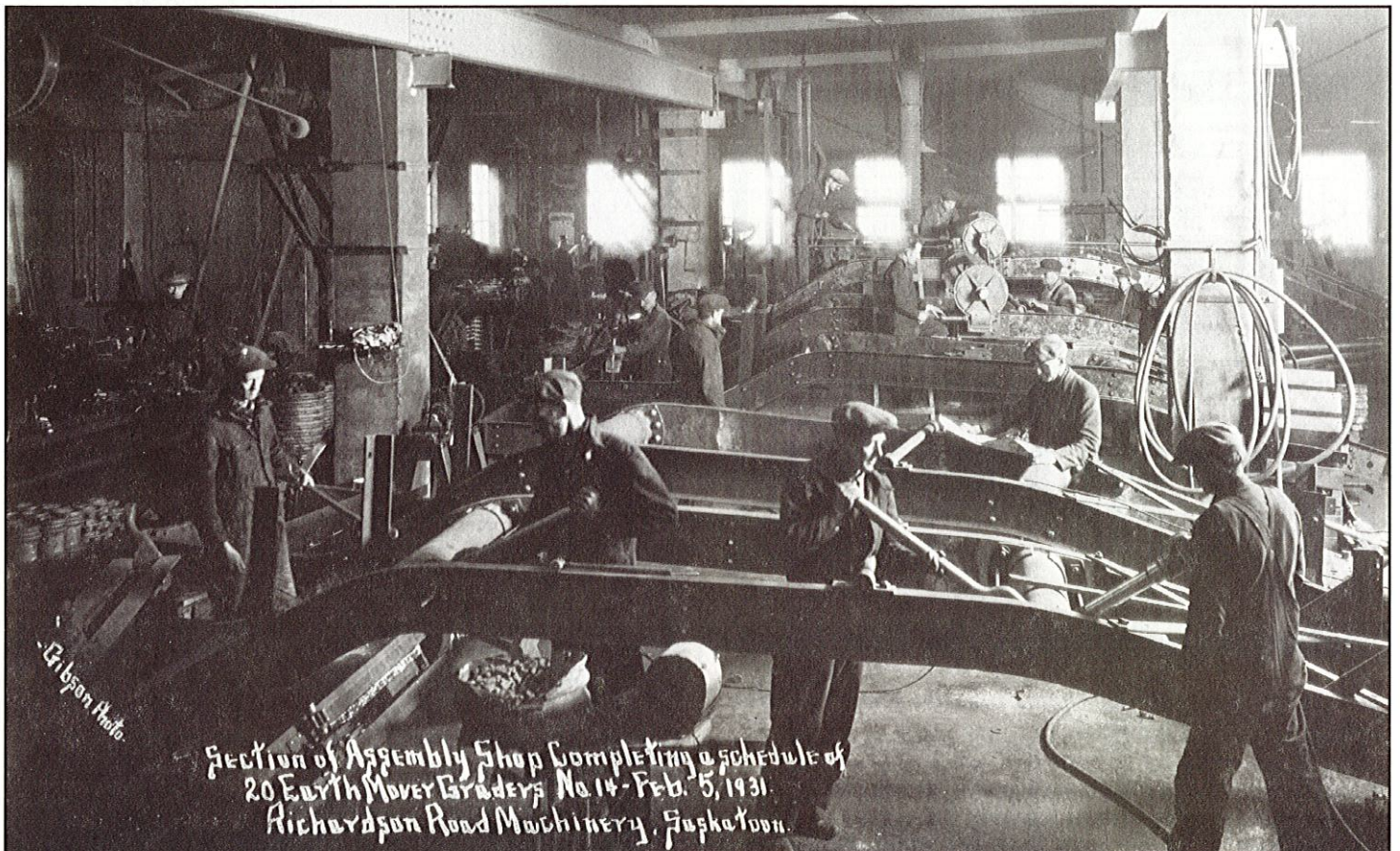
In 1928 Gibson recorded on a panorama the official opening and dedication of the Memorial Gates at the University of Saskatchewan which were built in memory of the sixty-four students of that institution who lost their lives in the Great War. That same year, he went to the town of Humboldt to photograph its 21st Anniversary celebrations.

Gibson frequently took photographs around Lloydminster. In 1926 he shot a series of panoramic negatives labelled "Making History" which portrayed the entrance of the first Canadian Pacific Railway train into that centre. The same summer, he shot various city views, farming views, threshing crews and the Barr Colonists Old Timers Reunion. He returned to Lloydminster in August of 1929 to photograph the devastation of a major fire. According to the label on his negative, the fire caused \$1,000,000 damage.

His most famous Saskatoon-era event coverage was of the visit to Saskatoon of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth of 3 June 1939. He was one of the official photographers for the visit, and was issued an armband for identification which allowed him access to areas in closer proximity to the royal party.

Gibson began his coverage with a series of photographs of the flag-bedecked buildings on First Avenue, shot in 8 x 10 inch and 5 x 7 inch film. When the train carrying the King and Queen stopped and they stepped out onto a platform to the tune of "God Save The King", Gibson climbed his step ladder and produced a number of impressive panoramic shots from his vantage point on First Avenue. They stretch from the Canada Building (Twenty-First Street) on the left to the Massey-Harris Warehouse (Twenty-Third Street) on the right and include the bleachers set up for dignitaries, a company of soldiers and the "human flag"—a union jack comprised of hundreds of school children wearing red, blue and white jackets. This sold very well, as did most of his panoramas. The standard price for the panorama was one dollar while 8 x 10 inch prints cost fifty or seventy-five cents.

Gibson did commercial work for most of the major industries of Saskatoon. Prominent among these customers were the building contractors. The R. J. Arrand Company had him do progress shots of the building of the School for the Deaf (August – October 1930) as well as shots of the construction of the Broadway and Borden (Ceepee) Bridges. The R. B. McLeod Company commissioned him to photograph the excavation of the future Eaton's store in April 1928; the A. W. Heise & Co. Ltd. asked him for photos of the original grand-



Courtesy of Gibson Photos Ltd.

Workers in the Assembly Shop at Richardson Road Machinery in Saskatoon completing twenty graders, 5 February 1931.

stand at the Exhibition; and the Bennett and White Construction Company hired him to record progress shots of the addition to the Federal Government Terminal Elevator on 11th Street in September and October 1930. Other shots of the staff and premises of local companies include Richardson Road Machinery, Quaker Oats, John East Iron Works, Robin Hood Mills, McLaughlin Motor Car Company, and the Wentz Lumber Yard Company. Dairies like the Saskatchewan Co-operative Creameries and Palm hired Gibson to take plant shots, staff picnics and delivery wagons.

The Depression of the 1930s hit Gibson's studio hard, but due to his adaptability and salesmanship, he was able to create his own business. Reverting to the lifestyle of his Regina period he was once more on the move, taking photographs not because he had been hired to do so, but purely on speculation. Many church and company picnics (usually held at places like Pike Lake or Saskatoon's Forestry Farm) were "crashed" by Gibson

sion, but in one instance outfoxed himself. Apparently he had lined up a group of farmers and labourers for a Cirkut shot. In order to ease their tired expressions he announced that the price of wheat had just gone up. The crowd immediately dispersed, thinking of work rather than picnicking. Gibson never got his picture.

During the 1930s, Gibson engaged in bartering, exchanging his skills for goods and services. Murray Gibson reports:

... I can remember getting boots from Wells (the shoemaker at Five Corners) in exchange for a family portrait, so there was quite a bit of that going on.... We ate some common deals with Page the druggist. He had a family of three and often, at least three or four times a week for quite a period, we'd have a common meal like stew ... it was more economical. It was never in a bread line though.... There were many people in the same boat, so you never felt you were singled out for suffering.¹⁵

By the mid-1930s it was becoming obvious that Gibson's dependence on Cirkut photography was not generating sufficient income to keep the business going. The era of the large threshing crews was coming to an end, and for people attending conventions, group portraits were losing their popularity. Mrs. Gibson had the foresight to realize that if the studio was going to survive, they had to diversify their services. Reluctantly, Gibson had to agree. His emphasis never was portraits, and much of the commercial photography was being dominated by two other well-known Saskatoon photographers, the aggressive team of Leonard Hillyard and Ray Hume.

To augment the business, Mrs. Gibson started to take in amateur photo-finishing, much to the chagrin of her husband. Darkroom work was not his forte. He enjoyed printing his own panoramas, but was completely indifferent to the work of others, especially those with a limited knowledge of photography. "Dad thought it was a passing fad," Murray explains. "Why do something for two bits when you could swing the Cirkut and, by God, sell fifty pictures at a buck a piece at one crack? But ... it wouldn't sustain."¹⁶

Mrs. Gibson gradually became the backbone of the business; the rest of the family got involved as well. After school and on weekends, the three children helped with the washing and ferrotyping operations as well as the deliveries and errands. Murray Gibson recalls that:

... rather than carry coal or feed horses I worked in the studio and darkroom. I regarded the work as my chores. My brother and I couldn't go to bed at night until the work was done, because the chesterfield in the studio was our bed, a combination studio and bedroom.¹⁷

During the 1930s Gibson engaged in some joint photography with Hillyard. It was never an official partnership, but rather a pooling of individual talents. Gibson's son describes the situation:

NOTICE TWO FREE SITTINGS

We have remodelled our studio into streamline, modernistic effects. Backgrounds and equipment are the latest procurable. As a special offer GOOD UNTIL NOVEMBER 10th, 1939, we will make----

1 8x10 Enlargement, beautifully mounted.... \$1.65

OR

Half Dozen Half Cabinets..... \$2.90

It is customary to make only two sittings on small orders, but to acquaint you with something new, we will make FOUR sittings, with no extra charge.

Christmas Sittings....
must be made early, as it takes about ten days to finish orders

Please Understand....
portraiture is not amateur finishing work, it just isn't done that way

GIBSON PHOTOS

650 Broadway Phone 97538

Open Evenings by Appointment

Courtesy of L. Murray Gibson

Advertisement for Gibson Photos from the Nutana Herald, Saskatoon, 27 October 1939.

who would line up the participants, swing the Cirkut and take their orders on the spot. As everybody was in a good mood, a surprising amount of business was drummed up in this manner.

Gibson even tried to add to the joviality of the occa-

Hillyard didn't have the Cirkut camera and wouldn't be able to handle one. You just can't learn it and say here ... it takes a little extra to do it. Hillyard was a popular and good photographer and did a great deal of commercial work and conventions. When he would come to a situation where an 8 x 10 really wouldn't suffice, he would call Dad to shoot the Cirkut and so they collaborated on some jobs. It was to their mutual benefit. Len couldn't handle the panorama and Dad could.¹⁸

A good example of this meshing of each photographer's strong points can be seen in a panorama of the Royal Canadian Legion's 12th Dominion Convention in May 1948. The crowd shot is Gibson's while the smaller individual inserts (including a stage appearance by T. C. Douglas) are Hillyard's.

In 1941 Gibson went on one of the few vacations of his life, motoring through the Banff and Jasper National Parks. The Cirkut and the 8 x 10 cameras were taken along and, impressed with the scenery of the Rocky Mountains, Gibson spent much of his time taking shots from scenic viewpoints. Some of the remaining panoramas include the Lake Louise Chateau, Cascades Rock



Courtesy of L. Murray Gibson

John Gibson (on left) with a Kodak representative in Saskatoon, ca. 1945.

Garden, the Bow River, Jasper Park Lodge, Mirror Lake and the Columbia Icefields.

These photographs found a market. James Chrones, proprietor of Saskatoon's Gem Cafe, ordered a series of the images which Gibson printed on trans-lite film and hand-tinted. They were illuminated from behind and displayed on the walls of the restaurant for the delighted patrons.

While his photographic work was heavily people-oriented, John Gibson was very much a loner. He was devoted to his wife and children, and when he was not working nights in the darkroom he preferred to stay home. Gibson was not particularly sociable. His favorite pastime was duck and goose hunting, especially with his sons. Considering that he had only one hand, he was a very accurate shot. Five feet nine inches tall, an abstainer with brown hair and eyes, he was very strong-willed and could be stubborn as a mule. While he tended to dominate people, much of the time his behaviour could be put down to his dry deadpan humour. According to Murray:

A lot of people thought he was a little gruff or ornery, but this was his form of humour and he enjoyed being able to tell people off. He just enjoyed that kind of thing.¹⁹

With crowds, Gibson had to be abrupt and authoritarian in order to get the proper placement for his exposure. With kids especially, once the Cirkut had started its 10 second swing, he would bark: "Keep still, damn you!" This quickly brought all fidgeting to a standstill. At one University of Saskatchewan convocation Gibson hollered to an uncooperative subject: "Hey, you with the purple robe, hurry up and sit down!" The man was, as the photographer was well aware, the president of the university, James S. Thomson.

Gibson grew more cantankerous as he got older and became more confined to his studio. He delivered more than one underhanded insult to both his portrait customers and to amateurs bringing in finishing. To one irate lady who was complaining about her portraits, Gibson remarked in his straightforward manner: "It's not as if you presented me much to work with!" For a number of reasons he is remembered succinctly by one acquaintance: "Old Gibson was tough as nails."

It was only in 1944, forty years after coming to Canada, that Gibson decided to become a Canadian. Although totally indifferent as to his nationality, he was prodded into taking this step by the possible curtailment of his favourite hobby. According to a newspaper account:

Mr. Gibson ... had never gone back to the United States except for a brief visit, he had never taken the trouble to become a Canadian citizen. A wartime experience made him take a more serious view of the situation.

When the Second World War broke out the RCMP visited him and because he was an alien American,

took away the only firearm he possessed, his shot gun.

Mr. Gibson was an enthusiastic hunter ... so he decided to become a Canadian and have all the privileges of citizenship.²⁰

After application and processing delays, he was officially issued his certificate of naturalization on 7 November 1945.

The last major event that Gibson covered was the opening of the Highway Bridge at Saskatchewan Landing on 20 June 1951. Two Cirkut views were marketed, both with smaller inserts such as the old ferry making its last crossing, Premier T. C. Douglas making his speech, and various views of the crowd.

At about this time, he began to be affected by hardening of the arteries and, as well, became slightly confused with advancing age. By 1952, when he could no longer run the studio, the business became a partnership between his wife Queen and his son Murray. For all intents and purposes, Murray became the manager of Gibson Photo.

In 1957 the Gibson Studio was moved south into the former premises of the Longstaff Hatchery at 720 Broadway Avenue. Murray remembers that:

Dad was hardly aware of the move at this time. I came home in '45 [from the Second World War] and joined the firm. For five years after that, until 1950, he was involved and capable – from then on he slipped.²¹

With Murray in charge, further diversification took place. There was a gradual shift away from amateur finishing and towards the retailing of cameras, film and other photographic supplies. Studio portraiture as well as commercial photography continued until 1981, when Murray sold the family business. Today, this thriving business, now at 702 Broadway Avenue, still retains the Gibson name.

On Tuesday, 12 November 1959, John Gibson died from an embolism. He was eighty-six years old. It is no apology to emphasize that Gibson was first and foremost a businessman with no pretensions to being an "art" photographer. He practised photography in order to make a living and, considering the money earned by photographers at that time, did moderately well. As his son explains:

Dad was never a man of means. There was nothing tough about it; we never went short, never starved ... of course we went through the hard times like everybody else, but by today's standards he was successful. He raised a family and was never in a position to take charity or welfare. So it was obviously successful.²²

At the same time it is just as obvious that Gibson was not driven solely by the urge to make money. He genuinely enjoyed meeting and organizing people, taking their photographs, and selling his wares. He liked the fact that he was providing a unique service with his Cirkut camera and that the results were truly popular.

Gibson is one of a handful of photographers who developed a genuinely western Canadian outlook. Few managed, as he did, to capture both the people and the environment of the prairies in their photographic work. Gibson had the gift of previsualization both in his press photography and panoramic work. His eye for a scene was attuned to pleasing composition and, as well, many of his photographs have become historically important. He photographed people, their families, their labours, their celebrations, their clubs and associations, their surroundings, and even their deaths. His strongest work reflects the unsophisticated, rural character of the prairie provinces. Western Canada, and especially Saskatchewan, is richer for his efforts to preserve its visual history.

Endnotes

¹ Personal interview with Murray Gibson, 19 April 1983.
² "Pioneering Cameraman," in *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 13 November 1959.
³ *Grundy Center Herald*, 17 September 1896.
⁴ Interview with Murray Gibson, 19 April 1983.
⁵ A Des Moines newspaper lamented: "Hundreds of the good farmers of Iowa are removing to Canada where they have bought or expect to buy cheap lands ... they are removing by train loads. They are taking immense quantities of household goods with them. Canada will gain a splendid citizenship at our expense. Those who remain behind in the neighborhoods from whence these people had gone will experience a lonesomeness and discontent." *Des Moines Capital*, 3 March 1906.
⁶ Interview with Murray Gibson, 19 April 1983.
⁷ "Once Shot Kipling – Visitor Says," in *Winnipeg Free Press*, 8 June 1949.
⁸ Personal interview with Claire Hume, 15 January 1983.
⁹ "Pioneering Cameraman," in *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 13 November 1959.

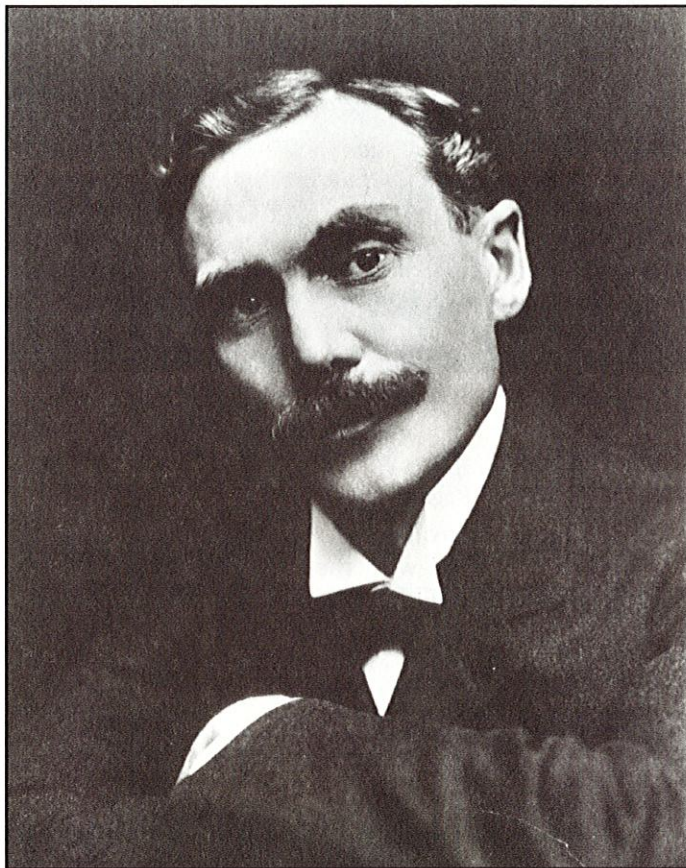
¹⁰ *Regina Morning Leader*, 6 October 1919.
¹¹ Sheldon Gibson to B. Silversides, 22 September 1984.
¹² Patrice Kelly. "Murray Gibson – Photographer," in *On Broadway* (Saskatoon: Broadway Merchants Association), 15 December 1982.
¹³ Interview with Claire Hume, 15 January 1983. Ethel Catherwood of Saskatoon won a gold medal for high-jumping in the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics.
¹⁴ Sheldon Gibson to B. Silversides, 22 September 1984.
¹⁵ Interview with Murray Gibson, 19 April 1983.
¹⁶ *Ibid.*
¹⁷ "Gibson Remembers Beginnings of Photo Business," in *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 13 February 1976.
¹⁸ Interview with Murray Gibson, 19 April 1983.
¹⁹ *Ibid.*
²⁰ "Pioneering Cameraman," in *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 13 November 1959.
²¹ Interview with Murray Gibson, 19 April 1983.
²² *Ibid.*

Premier Walter Scott and the Regina Cyclone of 1912

On Sunday, 30 June 1912, a terrible cyclone struck the city of Regina without warning. Within twenty minutes, twenty-eight people were killed, 200 were injured, and 2,500 were made homeless. Over 400 buildings—including the Legislative Building, the Telephone Exchange building, the Y.W.C.A., the Y.M.C.A., the New Carnegie Library, and three large churches, several warehouses and grain elevators, and hundreds of private homes—were seriously damaged or destroyed. The property loss was initially estimated to be over five million dollars; the final figure was \$1,200,000.¹

The Walter Scott Papers (M1 IV.142.— Regina Cyclone) provide some insight into the response of people both inside and outside Regina to the disaster. Scott, the first premier of Saskatchewan (from 1905 to 1916), received many letters and telegrams expressing sympathy and support for the city during this time of crisis. Correspondence in these files show that help came from all across Canada and beyond in the form of generous contributions to the Relief Fund. By the end of July, the fund totalled \$214,000.² The Saint John Ambulance Association, based in Ottawa, provided invaluable assistance during the crisis.

The Scott family was one of the many hit hard by the cyclone. Laura McDonald, wife of Scott's step-brother Willie, was killed instantly outside her home. Scott and his wife, Jessie, were inside their house on Lorne Street when the storm descended. Fortunately they were not hurt, but their home was seriously damaged. Their daughter, Dorothy, huddled in a closet at the home of a friend; she also escaped injury. The Walter Scott Papers reveal some of the details of personal tragedies that resulted from the Regina Cyclone, as well as the strength and resources of the people of the city as they



Saskatchewan Archives Board, S-B3710

Hon Walter Scott, Premier of Saskatchewan from 1905 to 1916.

worked to help alleviate the suffering and distress of their neighbors.

The following documents are reprinted with some punctuation added for clarity.

The Editor

¹ J. William Brennan. *Regina: An Illustrated History (The History of Canadian Cities)*, (Toronto: James Lorimar & Company, Publishers and Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1989), 83.

² Montagu Clements. "Storm Clouds Over Regina," in *Saskatchewan History*, Vol. VI, 1953. 20.



The YWCA building facing Victoria Park in downtown Regina.

Saskatchewan Archives Board, S-B3710

1 July 1912 [Telegraph]
Hon. Walter Scott, Regina

Distressed to hear of awful calamity. I hope the people of Regina with their usual courage will face the disaster to build up even a finer city.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier
Prime Minister of Canada
Ottawa, Ont.

disaster that has overtaken Regina. If I can be of any assistance let me know and I will freely help.

Again assuring you of my personal sympathy to each and everyone of the bereaved ones—

I am yours faithfully,

William S. Maxwell, Grand President
Order Sons of St. George
Chicago, Illinois

2 July 1912 [Telegraph]
Sir Wilfred [sic] Laurier, Ottawa

Your kind message of sympathy with Regina in our calamity much appreciated. Glad to assure you situation is being met with true western courage.

Walter Scott

6 July 1912
William S. Maxwell, Grand President
Order Sons of St. George
Chicago, Illinois

My dear Sir,

I beg to acknowledge the very kind message of sympathy on behalf of yourself and fellow members of the Grand Lodge of the State of Illinois of the Sons of St. George, and wish to assure you that the same is very much appreciated indeed. The disaster, so unexpected and so destructive of all things in its course, was one calculated to test the courage of the very bravest but the situation has been met by the citizens of Regina in a manner which leaves nothing to be desired. Prompt measures were taken for the relief of the wounded and distressed, and thanks to the many generous contributions from various parts of Canada and Great Britain it has been possible to do much towards alleviating the hardships of those who were so unfortunate as to be in the path of the cyclone. The kind messages of sympathy and offers

1 July 1912 [Telegraph]
Hon. Walter Scott, Regina

Please convey to citizens of Regina sympathy of Alberta in their terrible disaster. Inform Relief Committee Alberta Government will make cheque for ten thousand dollars tomorrow morning.

Arthur Sifton
Premier of Alberta

July 1, 1912

My Dear Sir:

Allow me to tender you the heartfelt sympathy of all my fellow members and myself, in the terrible

of help from far and near have encouraged our citizens in their efforts to restore order out of chaos and assist the victims of the catastrophe.

On behalf of the citizens of Regina I again wish to express our appreciation of your exceedingly kind message.

Believe me,

*Very sincerely yours,
Walter Scott*

1 July 1912

Dear Mr. Scott:

At a special meeting of the British Empire Association of Illinois held at the Auditorium Hotel Chicago this evening a resolution was unanimously passed of sincere sympathy with you and your people on the serious disaster which has overtaken your city and district.

*W.K. Paterson
British Empire Association
Chicago, Illinois*

3 July 1912 [Telegraph]

*W.K. Paterson
British Empire Association
Chicago, Illinois*

Citizens of stricken city deeply appreciate sympathy expressed in your action.

Walter Scott

2 July 1912

My dear Mr. Premier,

Having read of the terrible catastrophe which has befallen Regina, I hasten to express my deep sympathy with you and your colleagues not only from an official standpoint, but also regarding the personal loss to yourself and others. It is a very great sorrow and loss, which has moved our hearts with deep emotion, compassion and sympathy. I know that our dear people in Regina will be only too pleased to do all they possibly can to assist in this time of darkness and trial. God truly moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform. May He out of this great trial work some mysterious blessing, light and salvation! We cannot understand the why and wherefore, and under the circumstances nothing will be more helpful and comforting than just to submissively and resignedly bow to His decree, feeling that our Heavenly Father is too wise to err and too good to be unkind. May He be especially near to you, giving you all the comforting and sustaining grace, wisdom and guidance that you require!

Again expressing our deep sympathy,

Believe me,

*Yours faithfully,
Henry W. Mapp, Chief Secretary
The Salvation Army
Toronto, Ont.*



The Massey-Harris implement warehouse constructed in 1902 north of the CPR tracks in Regina.

Saskatchewan Archives Board, S-B436

6 July 1912
Henry W. Mapp, Chief Secretary
The Salvation Army
Toronto, Ont.

Dear Mr. Mapp,

Permit me to thank you very sincerely for your kind message of sympathy in the time of our trouble. The reports which appeared in the Eastern papers regarding the awful destruction wrought by the cyclone of last Sunday, while pretty complete, can convey but a faint idea of the havoc caused by the elements. It is a source of wonder to all who have visited the ruins that the death list was not many times greater than it was. Many of the escapes reported are almost beyond belief.

While the sad occurrence was one calculated to unnerve the most courageous, the citizens who were so fortunate as to be out of the range of the storm at once responded nobly and did everything humanly possible to comfort those in suffering and distress. The many sympathetic messages and assistance received from all parts of Canada and Great Britain has [sic] greatly encouraged those in charge of the relief work and while it will necessarily be some little time before all the sufferers can be arranged for, the work has proceeded with great rapidity and we hope in the course of a few days to have the immediate needs of all provided for.

Again expressing my appreciation of your message, in which appreciation I am joined by the residents of the city,

Very sincerely yours,
Walter Scott

2 July 1912

Dear Mr. Scott:

I telegraphed you today that the Executive Committee of this Association had instructed Major Birdwhistle to proceed to Regina to render such assistance in the work of relief as may be assigned to him by your local Committee. Major Birdwhistle is a very efficient officer, his particular forte being organization. The national character of our Association was recognised by Parliament at its last session, and we feel that in this emergency it devolves upon us to assist, to the fullest extent in our power, our fellow Canadians of Regina in the dreadful calamity which has overtaken their city.

The Executive desires me to extent [sic] through you its deepest sympathy to the citizens of Regina.

Sincerely yours,
Fred Cook, Honorary Secretary
St. John Ambulance Association
Ottawa, Ont.

16 July 1912
Fred Cook, Honorary Secretary
St. John Ambulance Association
Ottawa, Ont.

Dear Mr. Cook:

I have not had opportunity before to acknowledge receipt of the letter which you gave to Major Birdwhistle on his coming to Regina to assist in the work of relief of the survivors and sufferers from the Regina cyclone. Unfortunately I was not here when Major Birdwhistle presented your letter and have not yet had the pleasure of meeting him. I know, however, that he has been on the ground and rendering effective and much appreciated aid.

The blow which Regina as a community has sustained is an acute one. The spirit displayed by the people as a whole including the sufferers has been in every way praiseworthy. In reality, however, the time of trial is still to come. A great many people cannot fail to find themselves in severe financial straits and there will be genuine necessity for discreetly applied and well-directed aid.

In [sic] behalf of the people of the Province allow me to express heartfelt appreciation of the sympathy extended by your Executive and the practical measure of aid which you have given by the despatch of Major Birdwhistle to Regina.

Believe me,

Very sincerely yours,
Walter Scott

5 July 1912

Dear Mr. Scott:

Confirming my wire of this date I beg to enclose you, on behalf of the Provincial Government, a cheque for Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000) to be expended for the relief of the distressed people in Regina, as a mark of sympathy from the people of British Columbia.

The news of the disaster caused deep regret in this Province, and the energetic manner in which the people of Regina are striving to restore their city is well worthy of admiration.

Yours sincerely,
Sir Richard McBride
Premier of British Columbia

9 July 1912
Sir Richard McBride
Premier of British Columbia
Victoria, B.C.

Dear Sir Richard:

I have to acknowledge receipt from you of cheque for \$5,000.00 so generously contributed by your Government to the fund for the relief of the sufferers from the cyclone which visited Regina on June 30th. I have placed the cheque in the hands of the Treasurer of the Relief Committee. Let me assure



Knox Presbyterian Church fronting on Victoria Park, Regina.

Saskatchewan Archives Board, S-B420

you again that both the Provincial and Civic Governments and the people here appreciate very highly indeed the expressions of sympathy which have come through you from the sister Province of British Columbia. Under the blow which came with such suddenness and terrific force, the sufferers and survivors, while not at all disheartened and while facing the situation with fortitude at once remarkable and admirable, yet stand in need of all the encouragement which can possibly be extended. Again thanking you,

Believe me,

*Very sincerely yours,
Walter Scott*

4 July 1912

Dear Mr. Scott:

It is with great regret that we have read of the terrible disaster which has happened to your city and most heartily sympathise with you in the trouble which you must be having. It is desperately unfortunate that after all the work you have had in raising your city to a place of such importance that so much damage should take place within such a short space of time. I only hope that the newspapers' reports have been exaggerated...I am glad to see however that you, yourself, received no damage although you had a narrow escape....

Is there any hope of your being over here shortly? I presume now after this trouble you will be more deeply engrossed than ever. If you have a moment to spare I will be very pleased to hear from you and hear your reports as to the amount of damage that has been done. It was surely a very unusual thing to have a tornado of this force breaking over your city! Is there any truth in the theory that it is owing to the deforestation? My wife joins me in deepest sympathy with you and trusting the reports to come in will show that the damage has been exaggerated.

With kindest regards.

*Yours faithfully,
C. Hope Murray
Glasgow, Scotland*

22 July 1912

*C. Hope Murray
Glasgow, Scotland*

Dear Mr. Murray,

Your letter of the 4th instant to Hon. Walter Scott has been received by me in his absence. Immediately after the close of our Provincial election, which resulted very favorably for the Scott Government, the Premier left to spend a few days at Detroit Lakes, a small summer resort in Minnesota....

The reports of the cyclone which reached you were slightly exaggerated in regard to the number of

people killed outright but the number given as injured in the first reports was altogether too small. The wonder of the whole unfortunate occurrence is that the death list was not many times greater than it was (28 killed). Some of the escapes reported are almost beyond belief. Mr. and Mrs. Scott were in their home on Lorne Street when the cyclone struck and although the house was damaged considerable [sic] they escaped injury. Their house stood the strain better than any in that part of the City. I am sending you under separate cover a booklet containing a number of views which will give you a faint idea of the terrible havoc wrought. Mr. Scott's house is shown in one of the illustrations but not very clearly. You will note on the opposite page the ruins of the residence occupied by Judge Lamont. This was a solid brick house, two and one half storeys in height, and one, you would have thought, was [sic] strong enough to weather any gale but you can see for yourself how little of it is still standing and even that little will have to be pulled down. The house immediately south of the Judge's was completely demolished. Mr. Scott's place is directly across the street from Lamont's. The house next door to the Premier's in which I roomed was wrecked but luckily I did not happen to be home at the time. A sister-in-law of Mr. Scott's living on the North Side was instantly killed. She was in the house when the storm came on and ran out to close the door of the chicken coop and on her way back to the house she was struck by flying timbers.

Even yet it is hardly possible to estimate the total amount of damage done. It is evident, however, that the loss will be \$3,000,000.00 and some of our business men figure that it may go as high as \$5,000,000.00. I understand that there was only one man in the City that carried an insurance policy containing a clause covering tornadoes. It is quite common in some of the States south of us to carry this kind of insurance but it has never heretofore been considered necessary to have protection against cyclones in this part of Canada. As a result of the recent disaster many householders lost practically everything they owned. While the calamity for a time was a staggering one it is really wonderful to see the way some of the greatest sufferers have borne up under it. The work of clearing away the debris was taken in hand at once and although it will probably take a year or two to build up the wrecked area, splendid progress is being made in the way of putting up temporary accommodation....

I note your question regarding the cause of the calamity, but up to the present no one has been able to give a satisfactory reason for the occurrence. I do not think there is anything in the theory advanced that it may have been caused by deforestation. Our prairies have always been destitute of trees and while we occasionally [sic] have rather violent wind

storms there is no record of anything in the shape of a real tornado having visited this part of the Dominion before. It is nothing unusual for them to occur in the Northern States and I have often wondered how it was that we were exempt from visitations of the kind. In 1904 I passed through St. Paul and Chicago on my way to the World's Fair at St. Louis a day or two after a terrible cyclone had visited that territory. On that occasion the heavily wooded parts seemed to have suffered far more severely than the more open spaces....

*Yours very sincerely,
[Writer unknown]*

4 July 1912
Mrs. John A. McDonald
Ilderton, Ont.

My dear Mother:

No doubt you have all been much shocked at the news of the calamity which befell Regina on Sunday afternoon. Willie [Scott's step-brother] told me that he sent you a wire and I also wired Minnie [Scott's step-sister] Monday morning. Willie has since communicated with the folks at Strathroy. Laura [Willie's wife] must have been killed instantly. She was outside of the house and Willie thinks she had gone out when she heard the storm approaching to look after her chickens and tried to see that they were in safety. He and the two children were in the house which was utterly demolished. He has no idea at all how they got out of the place.

At our place we were more fortunate. Our house did not go to pieces although a good portion of the roof was destroyed, nearly all the windows broken and considerable other damage done. We will have to take down a part of one wall as it has been sprung out several inches. Our house fared better than any of the others near at hand on our street. The one next to us on the north was utterly destroyed, nothing being left standing of it except the lower storey. How the people in it escaped being killed is simply a marvel. The house on the south of us did not go utterly to pieces but the roof disappeared completely. The house itself which was a frame one was moved several feet off its foundation and twisted and warped so badly that it will have to be torn down altogether. Across the street from us all of the houses fared even worse little being left of them except the foundations. I have not yet been on the north side of the railway where Willie lived but am told that the wreck over there is even worse than on our side, there being entire blocks which were practically levelled. The wonder is that hundreds of people were not killed instead of only about thirty which is the case. The property damage will be immense. Dozens and dozens of people had all the wealth they possessed in their house and lot. Insur-

ance policies will yield nothing on account of damage of this kind and when the house and furniture have been completely destroyed the position in which such people are left is sad indeed.

Laura's funeral is to be held on Friday afternoon at two o'clock. Willie and the children are stopping with Laura's father and mother whose house was considerably damaged but not destroyed. Mr. and Mrs. Smith were not in Regina on Sunday but had gone to Swift Current to visit another daughter. Willie brought the children to our place but as we could not stay in our house, he got shelter Sunday night with a family named Langford who come from the neighborhood of Granton. The Smiths came back on Monday.

On Sunday night Willie did not think that any of the children's clothes had escaped but the next day, fortunately, he found most of them. The poor little things scarcely realise yet what has happened. I saw him again yesterday afternoon. He thinks it likely that for some time he and the children will remain with the Smiths.

When the storm occurred we were all in our house except Dorothy [Scott's daughter] who had gone after Sunday school with a girl friend named Baker to Baker's house two or three blocks away

from us. The Bakers were not at home except two young girls. They lived in a frame house. The eldest girl got the others into a clothes closet which turned out fortunate. All the windows were broken and the things in every room mixed up or destroyed. The girls were safer in the clothes closet than anywhere else.

Frank and Etta Telfer were at the time of the storm in the Wascana Hotel which was not directly in the track of the storm and was not damaged. Frank immediately after went over to Willie's and came with Willie and the children to our place. We have been stopping since Sunday with Stewart Young and his wife. Workmen are now repairing our house and within a day or two we will be able to go back into it at least to sleep. It will mostly have to be replastered and papered but I think that most of our furniture has escaped serious damage. At all events we are vastly better off than anybody in our immediate neighborhood excepting to the east of us. The houses on Cornwall Street east of us did not get the full force of the cyclone and, excepting for chimneys blown down, shingles blown off and some windows broken were not badly damaged.

I trust that this may find you all well at Ilderton.

*Yours affectionately,
Walter*



Saskatchewan Archives Board, S-B441

Sweeping across Regina from the south, the cyclone hit one of the city's most prestigious residential districts. Premier Scott lived on Lorne Street, pictured here shortly after the devastation. His home sustained little damage compared to those of his neighbors.

[*The Beaver* (Vol. 73:3, June/July 1993) features a related article entitled "Regina's Day of Wrath; The Killer Cyclone of 1912," by John E. Stewardson, pp. 12-16. Ed.]

Ten Dry Farming Commandments

1. Thou shalt have no other occupation than farming.
2. Thou shalt fallow thy land every third year, being careful to plough it both early and deeply.
3. Thou shalt cultivate thy fallow and not allow weeds or any other thing that is green to grow thereon, or winds to blow through it, for in such way the moisture which thy fallow should conserve will be wasted and thy days will be nothing but labour and sorrow.
4. Thou shalt not despise the harrow, but shalt use it even whilst thou plougest, and shalt place thy chief reliance upon it thereafter, whether in early spring, late spring, midsummer or autumn.
5. Thou shalt sow good seed early and down into the moisture, lest preadventure it cometh not up betimes. He who soweth his seed in dry soil casteth away many chances of reaping.
6. Thou shalt not overload thy dry land farm with seed, even as the merciful man doth not overload his ox or his ass. Thin seeding best withstandeth the ravages of drought and hot winds.
7. Thou shalt keep on thy dry farm such kinds and numbers of horses, cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry as the water supply maketh possible, and thou canst grow pasture, fodder, roots and grain for. Thus shalt thou be protected against adversity, and thus shalt thou give thy children and children's children cause to call thee blessed, inasmuch as thou didst not too greatly dissipate in thy lifetime the fertility stored in thy soil through many thousands of years.
8. Thou shalt not live unto thyself alone, but shalt join the Grain Growers' Association, the agricultural society in thy district or any like minded organisation that is good. Through these thou shalt work unceasingly for the welfare of thy district and the upbuilding of Saskatchewan agriculture.
9. Thou shalt study thy dry land farm and its problems unceasingly, and ponder on ways and means whereby its fruitfulness may be increased, keeping always in memory the fact that not alone by speeches and resolutions, but also by intelligent and timely hard work shall production be increased and the economic salvation of thy country be wrought.
10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's big farm. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's big four, nor his mortgage, nor his worry, nor his hurry, nor anything that is thy big neighbour's.

Remember these dry farming commandments to keep them wholly.

Book Reviews

The Bard of Edam: Walter Farewell Homesteader Poet.

By Michael Taft. North Battleford: Turner-Warwick Publications, 1992. Pp. xix, 166. Illustrations. \$15.00 (Paper).

IN THIS BOOK words speak louder than actions. According to Michael Taft, who edited and wrote a commentary on the life and poetry of Walter Farewell, The Bard of Edam, there was little to the life, a series of failures mostly. But there are the poems, preserved by Walter and then found by accident in someone's garage. Walter Farewell had little influence on life in Edam. He was a failed homesteader, maker of home brew, cafe helper and pool hall operator—a town character, not much respected, except for his ability to recite poetry. But he did write the poems, three scribbled full, minus a few torn out pages, and they have been preserved and published. It is possible that the marginal Walter Farewell will be Edam's best known citizen.

The poetry reflects the styles current in Walter's young manhood (he was born in 1879), with the metres, rhyme schemes and diction of the poetry he must have been brought up in. Some of the early poetry is romantic.

The east is gilded with the sign of day,
Paler, the moon sinks down behind the west;
The weaker stars on high have died away,
The stronger ones in lesser light are dressed. (12)

But if Walter Farewell's poetry is going to be enjoyed—and used by historians—it is in the satirical and local verses that we find his best voice. In "Political Verses" Walter laments with pleasure the defeat of the Tories.

This is the first of six stanzas:

'Tis a story of sorrow, but true
That the Tory survivors are few;
Ere the 3rd had gone by
They were happy and spry,
But now they are mournful & blue. (41)

He wrote a number of poems on the hardships of the homesteader, always on the edge of disaster. "Springtime in Saskatchewan" is good for the bullfrogs, the prairie chicken, the roosters, the gophers—and fleas and mosquitoes—but not for the "wild homesteader,"

From his tangled whiskers, streamy, comes a
language of blasphemy,
There's a 'choke-dog' in his stomach, and his soul is
far from sweet –
Though each brimstone exclamation is enough to
swamp a nation,
He must catch the early moisture if he damns
himself complete. (54)

Images of hell are Walter's favourite image of life on the prairie, which he also calls in one poem "the flapjack plain," since that's all he gets to eat:

Then get the old black spider out and mix the dope
again,
For it's flapjacks or starvation on the Flapjack
Plain! (61)

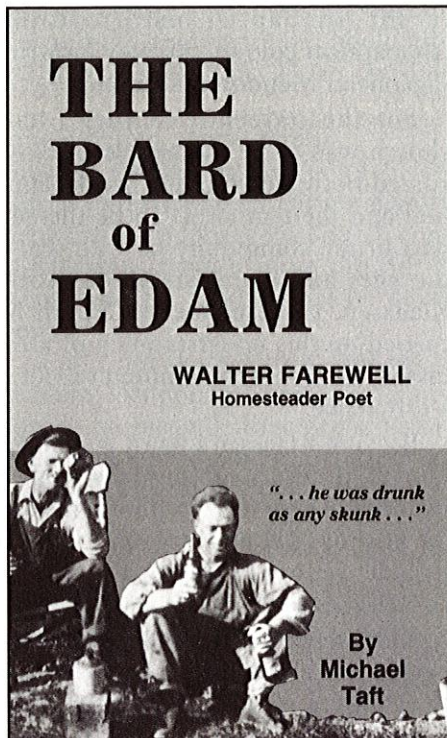
My favourite of Farewell's devices to show how awful farming was comes from a 1919 poem in which he sentences the leaders of Germany to a fate worse than death.

The Kaiser, tried and doomed to hang,
Would count that fate no worse than charming
Would meet the rope without a pang
Had he been used to western farming!

The Crown Prince, set to raising wheat -
Upon these God-forsaken plains
Would hail hell as a blest retreat,
And count damnation greatest gain!

You judges of the beaten foe,—
Who sowed for power, to reap repentance, –
On Hindenburg a farm bestow
If you would give the extreme sentence! (97)

According to Michael Taft there's no evidence Farewell ever recited his own poems, which is a shame. "The



Kaiser's Sentence" could have given fellow farmers much pleasure.

The other most interesting subject in Farewell's repertoire are his drinking poems from his days as a bootlegger and drinking man.

Yes, whiskey straight and Holland gin, it got the
best of Brown,
And he was drunk as any skunk that staggered
through the town. (103)

When Farewell went on a bender to Saskatoon, he "drank enough homebrew to burn myself in two" (105). The best of the drinking poems is about homesteader Brown who failed not because of frost or drought but because he "spent the proceeds of his crops/ On drinks and cards and dolly mops!"

One drink, the hair stood on your pelt,
Another gave a lion's soul;
A couple more beneath your belt
And you would climb a telegraph pole. (106-7)

The poems are surrounded by Michael Taft's commentary, on Farewell, his occupations, his town. Taft's enterprise is in keeping with his earlier books and the folklorist's discovery of creativity everywhere. In *Discovering Saskatchewan Folklore* (NeWest, 1983) Taft found creativity in Belgian lace, an evening of storytelling and a religious pilgrimage. English departments at university teach great art, the canon, and such a curriculum would never notice the likes of Walter Farewell. Yet this book, and folklore in general, make clear the common creativity of people and challenge older academic traditions.

I'll say in closing that historians might find useful bits here to enliven their tale of the past—as they might also in another collection of popular poems I've read recently, *A Toast to Baldy Red* (NeWest, 1991), a lively collection of Alberta poetry. My own favourite poems by Walter Farewell include "Political Verses," "An Old Bachelor Long I Have Known," "After the Drought," "The Machine Man," "The Soliloquy of a German Soldier," "Brown II," "Only a Smell," and "The Slaying of Goliath."

Don Kerr
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon



"The Days of Our Years;" A History of the Eigenheim Mennonite Church Community: 1892–1992.

By Walter Klaassen. Rosthern, Saskatchewan: Eigenheim Mennonite Church, 1992. Pp. 312. Illustrations. \$40.00 (Cloth).

THE EIGENHEIM Mennonite Church community celebrated its centennial July 3 to 5, 1992. This church has

the distinction of being the first Mennonite church in Canada's Northwest. Mennonites began to settle in the Eigenheim area west of Rosthern in 1892; they built their first church in 1896. The congregation of Eigenheim was originally part of the Rosenort Mennonite Church. In 1929, however, the Eigenheim congregation severed its ties with the Rosenort Church and adopted the Eigenheim name.

As part of its preparation for the church's centennial, the Eigenheim congregation commissioned Walter Klaassen to write a history. Klaassen was an obvious choice: he is a former member of the congregation and the son of a former minister. He is also a church historian by profession. As an historian, Klaassen has made significant contributions to the shape and direction of recent Anabaptist historiography. His interest in Anabaptism colours the way he writes the history of the Eigenheim Mennonite Church.

For the sixteenth century Anabaptists, to be the church was to be the people of God. This view encompassed both worship and work; faith and life; the spiritual and the temporal. To be the church was also to be part of the community of faith that has existed through the ages and manifests God's work in the world. For Klaassen, the Eigenheim Church has exemplified and carried on this understanding of the church. He writes a history of a church community, not of a church; there is a difference.

Because Klaassen's work is a history of a church community, it differs substantially from most congregational histories. These tend to have a narrow scope that focuses on institutional and organizational developments. They include pictures of church activities and special occasions as well as lists of church leaders and members.

Klaassen's history takes a narrative approach. He begins before recorded history—before life itself—and then moves to a survey of the history of the land, its peoples and their faith prior to the late 19th century settlement of the area that became known as Eigenheim. His story of the Eigenheim church community is placed in the context of the social, political and economic environment. Eigenheim's history cannot be understood apart from its agricultural backbone, and thus an analysis of agricultural concerns is an integral part the work.

Throughout this book, one senses Klaassen's deep appreciation for and attachment to the Eigenheim community. This does not, however, prevent him from dealing with both positive and negative aspects of its history. It also does not prevent him from being prophetic. He senses that the growing emphasis on the family as a sub-unit of the congregation is weakening the traditions and common vision that have characterized the church. Social vision is not enough—a church community must have a vision beyond itself. Klaassen is also concerned about the land. He believes that the Eigenheim Church will disappear if the farmers in the congregation—whose numbers are decreasing—do not give the earth the care it deserves.

"*The Days of our Years*" includes an extensive picture album, maps of the Eigenheim and Silberfeld cemeteries, and short entries on the neighbouring communities of Silberfeld and Danzig. The bibliography at the end is evidence of the seriousness with which Klaassen pursued his research. He was fortunate to have at his disposal a good selection of diaries and memoirs which, he points out, provide a male-oriented perspective on the Eigenheim story. Even though he attempts to include as much of the female perspective as possible, many of the families in the picture album are identified using only the father's name.

While Klaassen deals at some length with the tensions that plagued the church leaders, he does not give much consideration to the frictions between groups in the church. Issues such as the church's relationship with the Rosthern Youth Farm and the approach one should take to revivalism divided the congregation. These divisions did not mirror the divisions in the leadership, and at times represented quite different perspectives.

Klaassen does not give the recent history of Eigenheim as much attention as he gives its earlier history. Perhaps because Eigenheim is no longer the church community it once was, Klaassen found it more difficult to fit contemporary events into the themes that he developed earlier in his book.

These comments should not detract from this excellent work. The Eigenheim Mennonite Church congregation has every reason to be pleased. Klaassen's history provides a valuable resource to those who are interested in the story of the Mennonite church in the Saskatchewan Valley.

Paul Friesen

Canadian Mennonite Bible College
Winnipeg, Manitoba

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Historical Saga of the Doukhobor Faith, 1750–1900s; Toil and Peaceful Life.

By Sam George Stupnikoff. Saskatoon: Printed by Apex Graphics, 1992. Pp. 83. Illustrations. \$9.00 (Paper).

FOR ANYONE INTERESTED in the progression of religions in general and of the Doukhobor religion in particular, Sam George Stupnikoff's book is an excellent read, meticulously written and well-researched. Stupnikoff presents an interesting and unique account of the events leading up to and following 1899 when the Doukhobors first came to Canada. The story of the dreadful persecution that they suffered in Czarist Russia is told with terse simplicity and graphic drama.

The Doukhobors paid heavily for their refusal to bear arms and for their refusal to give an oath of allegiance to anyone but their God. Stupnikoff recounts the terrible events of 29 June 1895, when the Doukhobors, in a

final revolt against militarism, piled all of their weapons into a heap, doused them with kerosene and torched the lot. The people formed a long, winged "V" around the fire and chanted hymns until the morning hours. This incident did not go unnoticed. Near dawn, emissaries of the Czar confronted the Doukhobors and demanded that they present themselves before the local governor ten miles away. The Doukhobors replied that they were praying, and said that if the governor wanted to see them, he should come to them because "he is alone and we are many" (3). For this effrontery, the Doukhobors were set upon by two thousand Cossacks and beaten with lead-tipped whips. They were later flogged with "thorny rods, the thorns remaining in their flesh ..." (5). Many Doukhobors perished, and many more were sent to Siberia. The official hand was heavy indeed.

In the winter of 1898–1899 the Czar grudgingly granted the Doukhobors permission to leave Russia. They were assisted by humanitarians like Leo Tolstoi and the Society of Friends (Quakers), all of whom had been appalled by the way these people had been treated.

The book goes on to tell the story of the Doukhobor settlement in three districts in Saskatchewan. They settled with remarkable dispatch. A Quaker gentleman who came to Saskatchewan in 1903—a scant three years after the Doukhobors—commented that, from across the river, the villages looked "like washing on a line, all painted different pastel colours. They were that pretty!" (Personal interview with Joshua Wake by Betty Ward).

The uniqueness of this ethnic group has been largely ignored, with the exception of the infamous Sons of Freedom who are an embarrassment to Orthodox Doukhobors. This short book reveals the consistently high moral standards, the Christian ethics and beliefs, and the reverence for life—all life—and the respect for education held by the Doukhobors. For example, Stupnikoff, a native of the Blaine Lake district, mentions with pardonable pride that the "highest number of Doukhobor students graduating from universities ... emerged from the Independent Doukhobor settlement of the Blaine Lake area" (79).

Historical Saga of the Doukhobor Faith, 1750–1900s is valuable for historians, Doukhobors, as well as for general readers interested in the history of religion. Stupnikoff's is an eloquent voice crying out against ancient injustice. At the same time, he attempts to set the record straight in order to provide the young members of his sect a vision of themselves and their place in the world, their historical roots, and a vibrant hope for their future.

Agatha Stupnikoff, the author's wife, has contributed in no small way to the quality of this book with her tasteful cover design and with her careful attention to details in the many excellent illustrations.

Betty Ward

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

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Kohkominawak Otacimowiniwawa / Our Grandmothers' Lives as Told in Their Own Words.

Edited and Translated by Freda Ahenakew and H.C. Wolfart. Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1992. Pp. 408. \$20.00 (Paper).

IN HER REMINISCENCES about growing up in her home community of Peepeekisis, Cree Elder Eleanor Brass noted that grandmothers "were the wise ones" (Brass, *I Walk in Two Worlds*, 1987, p. 52). The testimony of seven Cree grandmothers collected by Freda Ahenakew and H.C. Wolfart in *Our Grandmothers' Lives as Told in Their Own Words* clearly reinforces this assertion. The narratives provide readers with a glimpse of the life experiences of these Elders and, in the process of doing so, reveal some of the knowledge and skills that they have acquired over the years.

The narratives in this book are prefaced, first, by a series of brief biographical sketches of the grandmothers who will be sharing their thoughts and experiences with readers, and second, by an extensive introduction to the narratives by Wolfart that outlines the nature and scope of this collection. Readers will find both these features to be quite useful; they help to contextualize the narratives. The introduction also reveals the editors' motive for compiling these narratives: to establish an "authentic record" of the lives that these women led.

The editors' goal of authenticity is multi-dimensional. They endeavour to record and publish narratives that remain true to the narrations, described by the editors as "Cree women speaking to other Cree women" (19). The editors achieve both goals through the use of bilingual texts (Cree/English), unaltered textual translations and the content of the narratives themselves. Moreover, the editors want to illuminate for the reader the actual and often prominent role(s) that women play within Cree communities, thereby correcting the oversights of historians, ethnologists and anthropologists who have often failed to recognize the extent to which aboriginal women contribute to community life.

The editors divide the narratives into three parts; each section clearly demonstrates how Cree women were actively involved in a variety of activities including subsistence production and managing household affairs. Part I, entitled "Life in the Bush," refers extensively to the numerous domestic skills that Cree women have employed in their households yet also establishes that women engaged in hunting, fishing and trapping to meet their families' needs. Part II, entitled "Reserve Life," demonstrates that though the surroundings may be different, Cree women in reserve communities assumed roles that were similar to their counterparts who chose to live in the bush. Again the narratives relate how Cree women sought to meet the pressing needs of their households—whether it meant setting snares, participating in the wage labour economy, preparing food for consump-

tion or for storage, or manufacturing household goods. In "Reminiscences of Muskeg Lake," the third part of this collection of narratives, readers are treated to a lively exchange between editor Ahenakew and two grandmothers from the Muskeg Lake community. The conversation touches upon a vast array of topics, from domestic work to the community's signing treaty with the Crown to traditional pharmacology.

As Wolfart has indicated in the book's introduction, the narratives reveal a number of themes. Among them is the image of Cree women as active members of their home communities who possess diverse skills. Yet these same women are witnessing rapid change among their people and recount with regret how the latest generation has rejected many of the traditions and practices that have served them well. Though the latter is, as Wolfart suggests, "a darker, more tragic theme," (29) the grandmothers seem undaunted by this conflict. As one of the women was told by her own grandmother:

Hey ... we must not give up Grandchild ... you too persevere nevertheless, counsel your children, counsel your grandchildren! You must not give up in this, one must persevere to try to turn them around; one day perhaps they might think about how things had been in the old days ... (81, 83)

This record of "the old days" assembled by Ahenakew and Wolfart certainly provides readers with a unique account of Cree life. As well, it affords numerous opportunities to ponder the past, present and future of Cree people and their communities. For this we owe a debt of thanks to the Grandmothers.

S.G. Sliwa
Trent University
Peterborough, Ontario



Grain / The Entrepreneurs.

By Charles W. Anderson. Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer Publishing Ltd., 1991. Pp. 196. \$27.00 (Cloth), \$14.95 (Paper).

THERE ARE A NUMBER of things that strike you when you read this little book. The first thing is that the book is about the building of the West and the grain economy. Second, it is about the men, and also the women, who were the entrepreneurs in that period of growth and investment. As Vernon C. Fowke explains in his seminal work, *The National Policy and the Wheat Economy* (Toronto 1957), western Canada served as Canada's investment frontier for the period up to the 1930s.

This is a story that has generally not been told. It focuses on the private side of grain trade in contrast to the development of the cooperative organizations such as the United Grain Growers and the Pools, and the

public organizations such as the Canadian Grain Commission.

It is about those men and women with the will and determination to make their fortune in the development of the grain economy. Where the information is available, the author takes a biographical approach. I found this interesting because it provides some insight into the makeup of an entrepreneur. Although the author does not specifically pose the question, the message is clear: the growth and prosperity of a society depend greatly on the vision of its people and upon their determination to see that vision realized.

Grain describes the major segments of the prairie grain marketing system: the private elevator companies and the terminal companies; the railways; and the milling companies. The book includes the stories of the famous families that founded and ruled the private grain industry in its early years: the Peaveys, the Searles, James Hill and others. It also tells the stories of those families that are still influential today such as the Pattersons, the Parrishes, the Heimbeckers, and the Richardsons.

Readers who are looking for analysis—political or economic—will likely be disappointed; *Grain* is more descriptive than analytical. But the description of the formation of the private companies, and in some cases their mergers or collapses, is informative.

Grain led this reader to reflect on the twentieth century in Saskatchewan—the early years of economic growth followed by the current period of economic decline. If one reads the book introspectively, it provides a useful contrast of the early “building” period of prairie settlement with the current period of “abandonment.” In the early 1900s, railways and country elevators, farms and communities were built; today rail lines and farms are being abandoned, elevators are being closed or consolidated, villages and towns are dying. *Grain* would have been strengthened if the author had more clearly contrasted the early with the modern period, characterizing the former as a largely laissez-faire period where individual entrepreneurship was critically important, and portraying the latter as a period of dependency on government with comparatively little entrepreneurship.

If the agricultural economy of the west is to prosper once again, we will need entrepreneurs like those described in *Grain*. We will need men and women with the vision and the will of those individuals in the early settlement period. *Grain* does not say this implicitly, but the message is there.

Gary G. Storey
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon



Up the Johns! The Story of the Regina Rifles

By Stewart A. G. Mein. Regina: Senate of the Royal Regina Rifles, 1992. Printed by Turner Warwick Publications Ltd., North Battleford. Pp. 237. Illustrations. Maps. \$50.00 (Cloth).

THE STORY OF the Royal Regina Rifles is much more than a regimental history. It is a comprehensive, day-by-day and year-by-year account of the evolution of a fighting regiment. From its earliest roots as the Regina Home Guard during the North West campaign, to the 28th Battalion in the Great War, the Regiment reached its final, modern metamorphosis as “The Reginas” in the Second World War.

Up the Johns! gives the reader an in-depth look at how history, traditions and circumstances combine to bring together a body of men from different cultures, backgrounds, status, and geographic areas. This combination led to the formation of one of the most efficient fighting formations in the Canadian Army, with a campaign history that tells of bravery, tremendous sacrifice, dedication, and will.

The author, Stewart Mein, tells the story of the Reginas, or “Farmer Johns” as they were affectionately known, in an historic and factual format. There is no melodrama, no “blood and guts,” no axe to grind. It is a story of men at war. It is the story of a regiment and its soldiers. It is a story transposed straight from the Regimental War Diaries and edited into a fascinating documentary. The book does not dwell on the individual or the deprivations suffered; instead it presents the reality of war so well that it somehow leaves the reader almost “feeling” the battle fatigue of the troops struggling onwards into battle.

What fighters they were! The 28th Battalion fought from Mount Sorrel and Vimy Ridge to Passchendaele and Cambrai. They experienced the horror of the trenches and mine warfare. It was the 28th that endured the assaults at Courcellette-Thiepval; it was the 28th that stubbornly defended the line at the Ypres-Menin Road. The Reginas fought from Normandy to the Orne; they took part in the bitterest of the battles at Falaise Gap, scene of some of the hardest fighting after D-Day. On the way, they bled at Brettville L’Orgueilleuse and at Ardennes Abbey, battling to the death against the tough 12 SS Panzer Division on the outskirts of Caen. Then it was on into Belgium and Holland, and finally into the Reich itself, to Moyland Wood and beyond, where some of the most desperate of the final battles for North-West Europe took place.

Then, on May 8th, it was all over. The Reginas became part of the occupation forces and thereafter were posted back to Canada. A legend has been made and a regiment baptized in fire. This legend lives on. Personnel from the Regiment serve today on Canadian peace-keeping missions abroad.

Up the Johns! is crammed with historical facts. It details the Regimental Orders, transfers, promotions, and all of the machinations of a fully functioning regiment at the front. This information provides for a much more comprehensive understanding of the logistics required to support and sustain a unit of fighting men from the training camp to the front lines. The drills and duties of the Regiment during peacetime—and especially between the wars—are all faithfully recorded. This book will be especially appealing as a study aid for

military historians and students alike.

All told, this is a very well researched, thoroughly documented and enjoyable book. It should prove to be a delight to Regimental veterans, who will be able to pinpoint their places in the story of the “Farmer Johns” with pride. They have every reason to be proud.

Jeremy Swanson
Canadian War Museum
Ottawa, Ontario

CALL FOR PAPERS

The next colloquium of The Rupert's Land Research Centre (RLRC) will be held at Edmonton, 25–27 May 1994. The Programme Committee invites proposals (up to two pages) for papers, or completed papers, suitable for delivery in twenty minutes. Groups of prospective participants are invited, alternatively, to submit proposals for an entire (three-paper) session. The deadline for receipt of proposals and papers is 30 September 1993.

Submissions are welcome on any topic pertaining to the Canadian West. Of particular interest are topics pertaining to the history of the fur trade in western Canada. The fur trade today, missionary history (especially at fur trade sites), the Scots in the fur trade, Metis and Freemen and their families, the history of treaties, archaeology,

genealogy, and cross-culture, comprise themes that might be addressed.

Given sufficient interest, the conference will be preceded by an optional excursion to Rocky Mountain House and Jasper (23–25 May), and followed by another to the Peace River country, including Dunvegan (28–30 May). A banquet, musical evening, and tour of the Fort Edmonton archaeological dig are also planned.

Please submit proposals and papers to:
Professor I.S. MacLaren, Chair
Programme Committee, Canadian Studies Program
The University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2E1
Fax: (403) 492-8142

GRANTS RECEIVED

The Advisory Board of *Saskatchewan History* acknowledges with thanks two generous grants, received in 1992, from the NeWest Institute for Western Canadian Studies and from the Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society.

Through the generosity of our readers, who made donations to the NeWest Institute for Western Canadian Studies designated to *Saskatchewan History*, we received financial assistance in the amount of \$1,201.75.

The Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society provided \$1,340.00 to assist in printing promotional brochures for the journal. We are very pleased with the response to the promotion made possible through this grant.



Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society

The Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society (SHFS) is pleased to have this opportunity to tell the readers of *Saskatchewan History* about the Society and its programs. Some of you may know the Society through its quarterly magazine *Folklore* which is now in its fourteenth year of publication. *Folklore*, written by avocational historians, tells about the human history of Saskatchewan from the perspective of those who have lived it. Membership in SHFS includes a subscription to *Folklore*.

Each summer, the Society offers historic tours to its members and the general public. This year, the three tour packages—one tour each in June, July and August—are: **South Country** (Weyburn, Estevan, Oxbow, Moose Mountain, and Arcola); **Multicultural-Monsters-Minerals** (Humboldt, Edenbridge, Carrot River, The Pas, and Creighton); **Heritage of the Nations** (Swift Current, Head-Smashed-In, Cardston, Waterton, and Havre). Ranging from two to four days in length, the tours emphasize fun and history in the fellowship of others interested in the many unique aspects of our province's past. SHFS members receive discount prices for tour packages.

SHFS has offered member funding for local history projects ranging from the publication of community history books to the reenactment of historical events such as the Canadian Militia's activities in the 1885 Riel Uprising. The Society sponsors a local history

marker program which helps communities in the province commemorate buildings and sites of historical significance through the placement of plaques. In addition, the Society has a program which recognizes Saskatchewan farms and businesses that have been operated by the same family for eighty years or more.

In 1992–1993, SHFS was one of the sponsors of the Saskatchewan Documentary Heritage Inventory feasibility study. An important component of this study was a volunteer-driven records survey pilot project in the Rural Municipality of Indian Head. This project was successful in surveying historical records at over eighty locations, including local government offices, schools, churches, businesses, service clubs, and private homes. The Society, along with the project's other sponsors (Saskatchewan Council of Archives, Saskatchewan Genealogical Society, Saskatchewan Architectural Heritage Society, and Saskatchewan Society of Archivists), is confident that the Indian Head records survey will serve as a model for other communities interested in identifying and preserving their documentary heritage.

The Annual General Meeting of SHFS will be held September 24 to 26 in Regina. If you would like more information about this meeting, our programs, tours or membership benefits, please call:

(306) 780-9204.

Lewis H. Thomas History Honours Scholarship Awarded

Ms. C. Marie Fenwick is the first recipient of the Lewis H. Thomas History Honours Scholarship established by Mrs. Margaret Thomas and the Department of History at the University of Regina.

Ms. Fenwick is now completing the requirements of the B.A. (Honours) degree in Canadian history at the University of Regina. She has received several General Proficiency Scholarships and the J.J. LePine Book Prize while attending this university.

The Lewis H. Thomas History Honours Scholarship

was established in the memory of Dr. Lewis H. Thomas, who served as Provincial Archivist of Saskatchewan from 1948 to 1957, and taught Canadian History at Regina College and the University of Saskatchewan, Regina Campus from 1957 to 1964. He subsequently taught at the University of Alberta until his retirement in 1982.

Donations to the Lewis H. Thomas History Honours Scholarship can be made through the Business Office, University of Regina.

Saskatchewan Archives Board:

News and Notes (from page 9)

NEW MEMBERS OF THE SASKATCHEWAN ARCHIVES BOARD

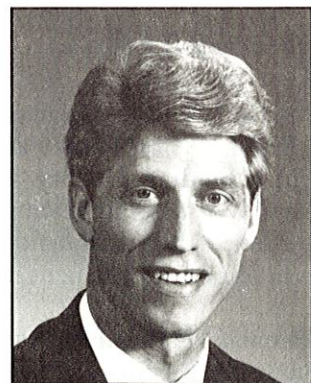
On 22 December 1992, three new members were appointed to the Saskatchewan Archives Board. The following individuals join Dr. B. Zagorin (Chair), Marian Powell (*ex officio*) and Trevor Powell (Secretary):



Hon. Carol Carson

Hon. Carol Carson, Minister of Municipal Government, was first elected to the Saskatchewan Legislature 21 October 1991, as MLA for Melfort. On 1 November 1991, she was appointed to Cabinet as Minister of Community Services and Minister of Environment and Public Safety. Ms. Carson was appointed to her current post on 17 March 1993. Until recently, she served as Mayor of the City of Melfort, and chairman of Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association's standing committee on health, the environment, and policing services. She has twice served as a member of the board of directors of SUMA. Ms. Carson has been a strong supporter of local activities and events. She was president of the Melfort and District Donor's Choice from 1983 to 1985, and has served as director on various local boards including the Melfort-Kinistino Rural Development Corporation, the Melfort Union Hospital Board and the Parks and Recreation Board.

John Law, Senior Vice President of Finance and Accommodation at the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation, is currently responsible for the provincial government's Treasury Board operation, including the

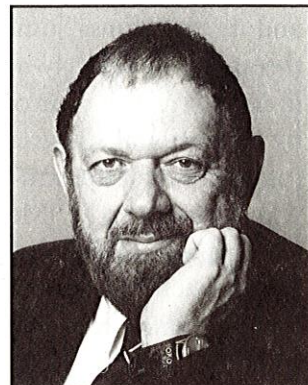


John Law

preparation of the province's \$5 billion expenditure budget. He has experience in both the public and private sectors, including public relations and marketing responsibilities with the Canadian Football League's Winnipeg Blue Bombers and Labatt's Brewery Limited. Mr. Law has served in staff advisory positions to Cabinet and Treasury Board ministers in three jurisdictions,

with the federal government, and the Provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Urban Studies from the University of Winnipeg and a Master of Public Affairs degree from the University of Manitoba.

Dr. William Antony Swithin Sarjeant is a professor of geological Sciences at the University of Saskatchewan who has jointly authored an encyclopaedia entry and three books on the history of Saskatoon, plus articles on its history and environment. Dr. Sarjeant has been Chairman of the City of Saskatoon Special Committee for the Identification and Listing of



Dr. William A. S. Sarjeant

Historic Buildings and Sites; member of the Preservation Committee of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada; member of the Executive of the Community Planning Association of Canada (Saskatoon Branch); member of the Saskatoon Heritage Advisory Board; and editor of the annual journal, *Saskatoon History Review* from 1989 to the present. Dr. Sarjeant was appointed to the Archives Board in 1992 and was subsequently named Chair of the Saskatchewan History Advisory Board.

NEW EDITOR APPOINTED

The Saskatchewan Archives Board is pleased to announce the appointment of Joan Champ as the new editor of *Saskatchewan History*. She replaces Kathlyn Szalasznyj whose resignation was received with regret earlier this year.

Ms. Champ, B.A., M.A., is a history graduate of the University of Saskatchewan. She has extensive experience as a researcher and co-ordinator of heritage activities in the province. Most recently she conducted a feasibility study for the Saskatchewan Documentary Heritage Records Inventory Project.



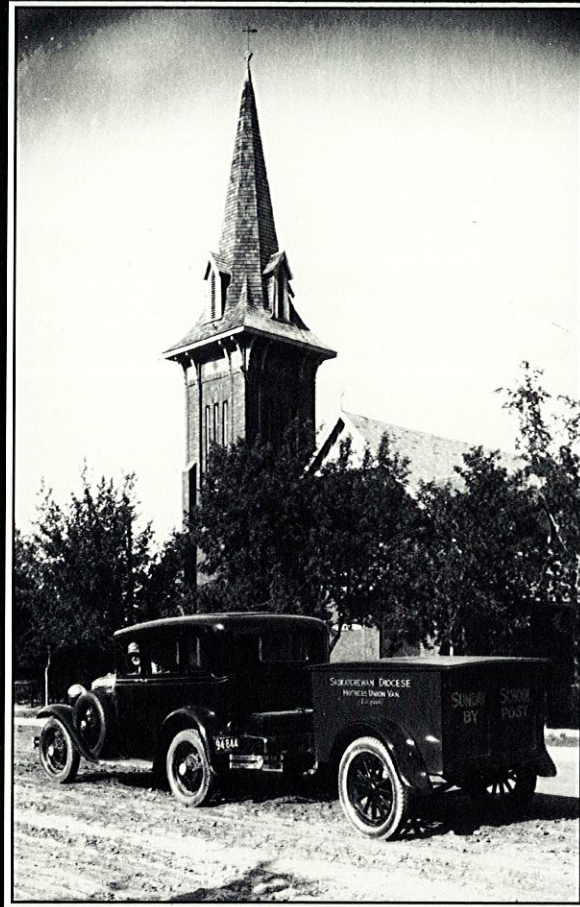
Joan Champ

Ms. Szalasznyj became editor of this journal in 1989. Her contributions toward maintaining the solid scholarly reputation of *Saskatchewan History* over the past three and a half years are greatly appreciated.

AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE
FROM THE
SASKATCHEWAN
ARCHIVES BOARD

Guide des sources historiques des francophones aux archives de la Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Archives Reference Series, 2nd edition, Regina: La Société historique de la Saskatchewan, 1992. Pp. 102. Illustrations. \$10.00 (Paper).

The new edition of the *Guide des sources* summarizes the content and extent of the written, oral and visual record of the province's Francophone community held at the Saskatchewan Archives Board. A cooperative effort of the Archives board, La Société historique de la Saskatchewan and the Secretary of State, this book is divided into seven sections: documents relating to provincial and federal governments; papers of organizations and associations; local histories including materials relating to parishes and dioceses; oral histories and other audio-visual documents; newspapers; and photographs. An index of people, places and organizations is included. The text is in both French and English.



Glenbow Archives (ND-13-70)

Mothers Union Van, Saskatchewan Diocese, in front of St. Anglican Church on Dufferin Avenue in Saskatoon, 1930. Photograph by John W. Gibson

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