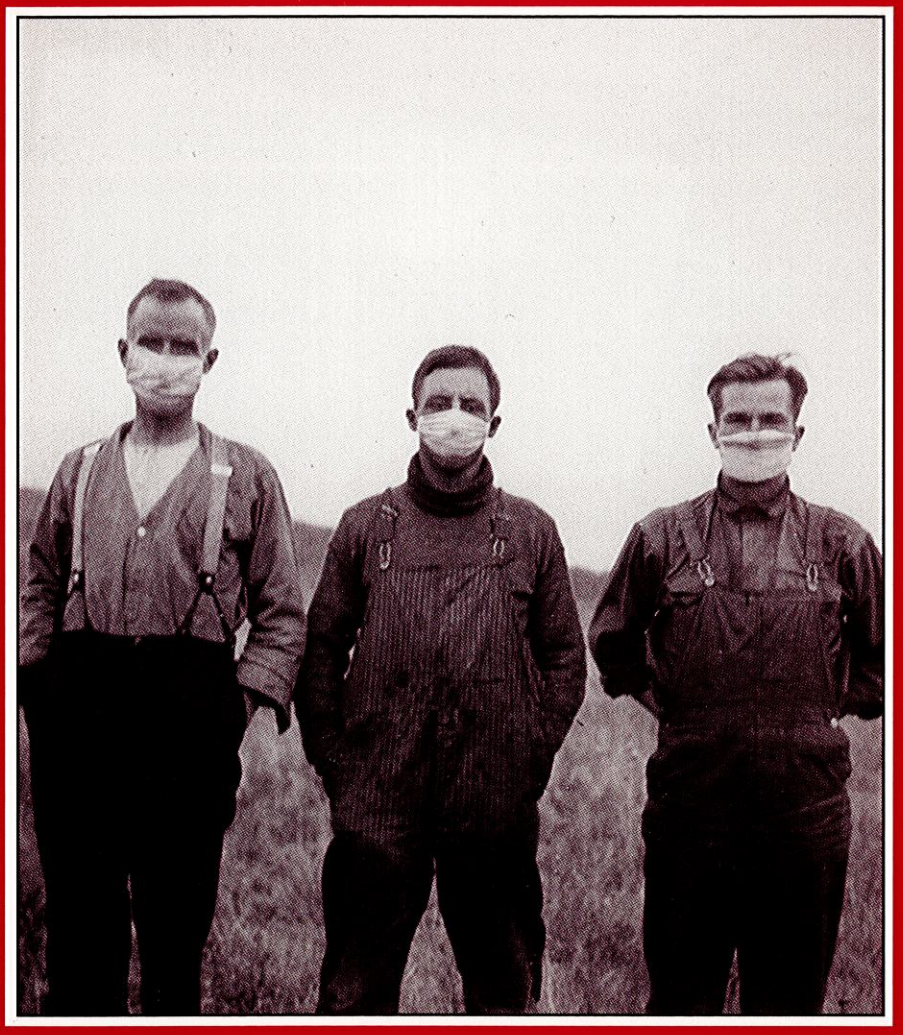
Saskatchewan History

Volume 49, Number 1 Spring 1997



Saskatchewan's Plague: The 1918 Flu Epidemic

Combining Across the U.S.A.

The Rebirth of Fort Walsh

The Photos of a Prairie Doctor

The Saskatchewan Archives Board

The Saskatchewan Archives Board was established by provincial statute in 1945. Under *The Archives Act* (RSS 1978, Chap. A–26) the Board is responsible for appraising, acquiring, preserving and making accessible documentary records in all media, from both official and private sources bearing on all aspects of the history of Saskatchewan, and facilitating the management of the records of government institutions. Two offices are maintained, affiliated with the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina, providing public access to a rich collection of archival materials for research and reference. The Archives Board comprises two representatives of the Government of Saskatchewan, one from each of the two universities in the province, and the Legislative Librarian. The Provincial Archivist serves as secretary.

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.

Saskatchewan Archives Board:

Front Cover: *Three prairie farmers try to fend off Spanish influenza.*

National Archives of Canada, PA 25025.

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The editors of *Saskatchewan History* welcome 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 a PC/DOS 360K floppy disk. The disk must be IBM compatible, preferably Word 6.0 or WordPerfect 6.0. Two hard copies are still required, and the print must be letter or near-letter quality. Manuscripts will be reviewed by qualified readers. The Saskatchewan Archives Board assumes no responsibility for statements made by contributors.

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Saskatchewan Archives Board:

News and Notes

Saskatchewan Archives Offers New Expanded Reference Service

The Saskatchewan Archives Board and its staff are pleased to announce that, effective Monday, March 3rd, hours of reference service will be expanded in both Regina and Saskatoon. Full reference service will now begin an hour earlier on weekdays at 9:00 a.m. Reading rooms will continue to close at 5:00 p.m. Limited service will continue to be available from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. and after 4:00 p.m.

The increased public hours at the Archives are made possible by a shift in staff resources to newly organized Reference units, headed by chief archivists Chris Gebhard and Maureen Fox. The Archives Board anticipates that this reorganization will result in better public access to holdings and improved reference services. Mr. Gebhard assumes the position in Regina after seventeen years as head of the Sound and Moving images program; Ms. Fox, with fourteen years experience in the Archives, has been appointed in Saskatoon. They are supported by a solid staff component, including Tim Novak, Shannon Stoffel and Susan Millen in the Regina office, and Nadine Small and Bev Fairburn in the Saskatoon office. All have extensive experience with Saskatchewan Archives and have a thorough knowledge of its collections.

The Saskatchewan Archives Board offers access to a wealth of textual, photographic, sound and moving image documentation relating to the history of the province. For more than fifty years its collections have provided a valuable resource to academics, family and local history researchers, broadcasters, and publishers. The public is encouraged to contact our Reference Units for advice on their own research projects:

Reference Unit
Saskatchewan Archives Board
3303 Hillsdale Street
Regina, Saskatchewan
Phone: 306-787-4068
Fax: 306-787-1975

Reference Unit
Saskatchewan Archives Board
Room 94, Murray Building
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
Phone: 306-933-5832
Fax: 306-933-7305

GRANTS RECEIVED

The Advisory Board of *Saskatchewan History* thanks the Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society and the Evelyn Eager Trust for their generous financial assistance.

(more News and Notes on page 14)

"The Bitter Flats":

The 1918 Influenza Epidemic in Saskatchewan

by Maureen K. Lux

University of Saskatchewan Archives, A-5709.

Funeral procession at the University of Saskatchewan for William Hamilton, influenza victim.

The general store at Paradise hill sat empty except for the dead bodies of the store-keeper and his wife. Inside a nearby tent there were three more victims. The eerie silence was only broken by the sounds of a young boy digging graves for his dead mother, father, brother and sister.[1] Sadly, scenes like these were not uncommon in Saskatchewan at the end of the Great War. Between 1918 and early 1920 more than 5,000 lives were lost in the province, not on any battlefield, but in their own homes, victims of a silent but deadly enemy.

Maureen K. Lux has an M.A. in history from the University of Saskatchewan and a Ph.D. from Simon Fraser University (1996). Her dissertation examines the impact of disease on prairie Native peoples from 1875 to 1930. This article is based on research from both her Master's thesis and her dissertation.

Viruses have a way of grabbing our attention. Without warning they descend, invade our cells, mutate, and spread. They rely on human cells for survival, but very often kill in the process. Despite our sophisticated medical technology, viruses seem to understand us much better than we understand them. Throughout history disease has created havoc on a grand scale, toppling empires and emptying continents, reducing many thousands to a quiet and desperate death. But by 1918 the most frightening epidemic killers, plague and smallpox, had been tamed. Then, in the midst of war, an epidemic swept the world, cutting down victims faster and more efficiently than even the massed might of the world's armies. Even more incredible, this new killer was influenza, the flu, la grippe—a common complaint as old as humankind, familiar and, until then, fairly harmless.

The so-called "Spanish" influenza killed between 50

and 100 million people worldwide.[2] At least 50,000 Canadians died from influenza, more than all the battlefield deaths combined. The epidemic crossed the Atlantic to Canada aboard the troop ships, and then made its way to the prairies along the transcontinental railways just as so many immigrants had before. It was carried by Canadian soldiers who, while being transfered from quarantined barracks in Quebec City to Vancouver, spread the virus along the way in Toronto, Winnipeg, Regina, Calgary and, finally, Vancouver.[3] From these centres the flu spread rapidly throughout the country.

The influenza epidemic humbled the medical profession, coming as it did on the heels of the conquest of the great contagious diseases. It was an apparently familiar disease run rampant. Attack was sudden. A "typical" case of influenza-pneumonia began with sudden weakness, pain, and chills. Coughing produced "quantities of blood stained expectoration or nearly pure dark blood ... the face and fingers cyanosed, active delirium came on ... the tongue dry and brown, the whole surface of the body blue, the temperature rapidly fell and the patient died from failure of the respiratory system."[4] The clinical nature of the description barely disguises the terror. Influenza's real threat was its propensity to develop into pneumonia, the great killer in the era before antibiotics. It was not until 1933 that the human influenza virus was isolated. Epidemic influenza also terrorized the world because it preferred young adults. In Saskatchewan more than sixty percent of those who died from influenza were between twenty-five to forty years old.[5]

Epidemic influenza sparked a crisis of another kind. Who was responsible for disease control? As late as August 1918 there was confusion between the federal departments of Immigration, Agriculture, and Marine as to who was responsible for containing influenza at the border. Once influenza began to spread it became a provincial responsibility.

The Saskatchewan Bureau of Public Health had been established in 1906 as a part of the Department of Agriculture. According to the provincial bureau, the "Three Great Methods of Combatting Disease" were sanitation, the publication of vital statistics, and personal precautions.[6] Municipalities, as health districts, were ultimately responsible for the enforcement of regulations of the Public Health Act (1909). The assumption was that good citizens took responsibility for their own health, and that disease favoured the careless, uneducated, lazy, and poor. The bureau provided anti-toxin for inoculation against diphtheria, whooping cough, and small pox, but more serious contagious diseases were left in the hands of volunteers such as the Anti-Tuberculosis League, St. John's Ambulance, Victorian Order of Nurses and women's church organizations. When the epidemic struck, the federal government passed responsibility to the provincial governments, that then relied on the municipalities, who in turn encouraged all citizens to be vigilant in protecting themselves. The crisis in public health came when neither individuals nor groups were able to cope with epidemic disease in Saskatchewan.

Influenza was considered a "crowd disease" that could be spread by casual contact. The provincial Liberal government under Premier W.M. Martin issued an Order-in-Council on 10 October that made Spanish influenza a disease to be reported, isolated, and placarded.[7] But overworked doctors were reluctant to report mild cases. They were also reluctant to subject families to the humiliating and at times dire consequences of placarding. Placards, nailed to front doors, warned that no one was allowed to approach the house, except to make deliveries, and that no one inside was allowed to leave. The consequence of such a placard was financial hardship or even ruin. In Edmonton, regulations enforcing quarantine meant that only sixty percent of influenza cases were ever reported. Some doctors expanded their client base and made handsome profits when it became known that they refused to placard homes.[8]

It was much easier for municipalities to comply with the other new provincial regulations that empowered boards of health to close places of amusement or entertainment. Municipalities throughout the province quickly shut down movie houses, bowling alleys, dance halls, and pool rooms. Before the epidemic such places may have seemed simply unsavoury, but during the epidemic they became a clear danger not just to the public morals, but to the public health. There was little public opposition to the closures, but when the province's churches agreed to enforce a ban on church services and Sunday schools, the epidemic began to affect not just the weak but the righteous as well.[9] It was assumed that the drastic measures would only be necessary for a week or ten days at the most.[10]

Regina was struck first on 16 October with 150 reported cases of illness and ten deaths. Malcolm Bow, Regina's Medical Health Officer (MHO), ordered the closure of all theatres, dance halls, and pool rooms that same day, and the ministerial association banned church services and public meetings.[11] The epidemic travelled by rail north to Saskatoon, but Mayor MacGillvray Young announced in the press that there was no cause for alarm.[12] Nevertheless, the next day Saskatoon's Mayor and Council imposed a ban on all public meetings, and closed churches, theatres and places of amusement. Schools were closed by the school board on 21 October. By Friday of that week there were eighty-one people sick with influenza. One man died. Saskatoon was advised that there was no cause for alarm because the dead man was from the country district of Meacham. Despite daily reports in the newspapers of the ravages of the epidemic from Toronto to Victoria, and from around the world, Saskatoon's MHO, Arthur

Wilson, assured Saskatonians that "Spanish influenza" was just the common and familiar flu. With little regard for logic, he determined that the only reason the disease caused such alarm was because it had received so much publicity.[13]

There was widespread reluctance to admit there was an epidemic. Health officers and bureaucrats had followed all the regulations respecting the control and notification of contagious disease. They were convinced that it was just a mere matter of time before the disease succumbed. Walter Scott, former Liberal Premier of Saskatchewan, announced in a press interview that there was altogether too much emphasis on disease and death. A cowardly attitude, he declared, was the greatest danger to good health:

> Fear of any disease only invites attack by the disease, and in my view an entirely unwarranted and unnecessary alarm is being increased, and is liable to add considerably to the death rate.[14]

Unfortunately, epidemic influenza circumvented all regulations intended to stop its spread.

Sunday, 20 October, was the first "churchless Sunday" in Saskatchewan. The ban on public gatherings forced residents to stay home and read sermons in the newspapers. Reverend Willie C. Clark of Saskatoon's Knox Presbyterian Church merely echoed people's helplessness and depression:

> During the past year large demands have been made on our courage. Our heart's strength has been tested. The end is not yet. We have had war, partial crop failure and today we are in the middle of pestilence.[15]

Over the weekend there were one hundred more sick in Saskatoon with influenza. But, according to Dr. Arthur Wilson, that number was surely an understatement because doctors were too busy to report all cases. When it was apparent that individual quarantine, placarding, and public closures were not effective, municipalities were forced to admit the presence of an uncontrollable epidemic. It was time to provide facilities and care for the sick and dying.

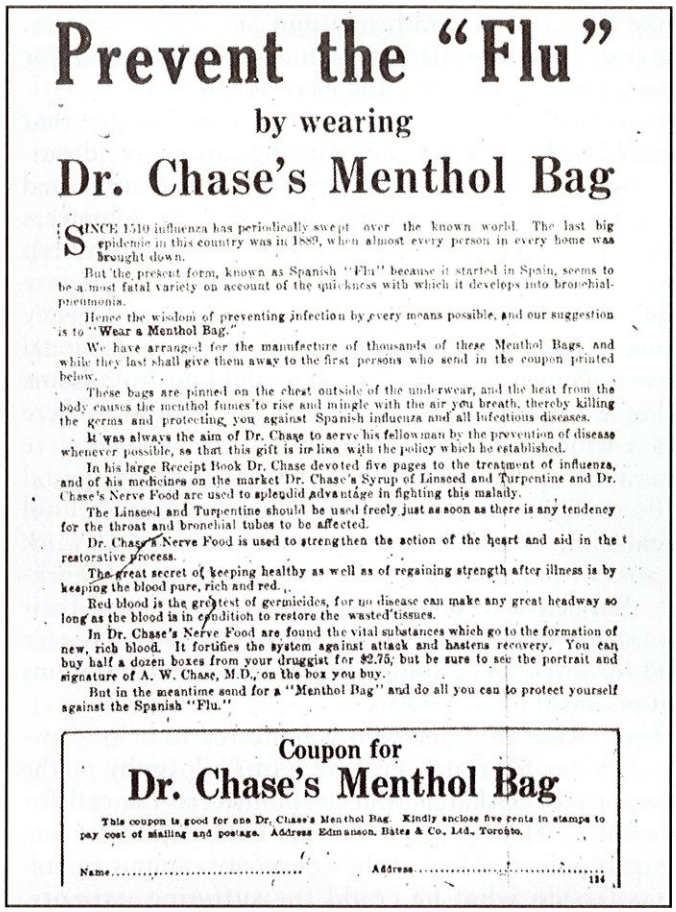
Saskatoon city council convened an emergency meeting on Monday, and Emmanuel College on the University of Saskatchewan campus was converted into an emergency influenza hospital two days later. Because of the war, there were only two resident students at the College. At the peak of the epidemic it housed 130 patients who, University of Saskatchewan president Walter Murray noted, were "packed in from attic to basement and for a time conditions were terrific."[16] Sutherland school was also fitted as an emergency hospital with a capacity for twenty to twenty-five patients. School nurses, teachers, and volunteers staffed the emergency hospitals. In Regina an Influenza Relief Committee established a central office in City Hall, and school nurse Grace Cooper organized nurses to staff the emergency hospitals at Strathcona and St. Mary's schools. The committee appealed through the press for volunteer nurses, nurse's assistants, and clerical help.[17]

Epidemic influenza was a debilitating disease that required bed rest, fluids, and nursing care to avoid serious complications such as pneumonia, which accounted for most deaths. The greatest need was for volunteers willing to go into homes and care for the sick, to keep fires burning, to provide clean linens and to prepare food. In calling for volunteers, municipal emergency committees stressed that they need not be professional nurses. Women were needed who could go from home to home and see that patients were not in need.[18] There was a widespread public perception that women were natural caregivers and that they alone had the special skills to fight the flu. Many volunteers were school teachers or telephone operators who were out of work because of the striking Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. Women who could not or would not leave their homes for fear of the disease were asked to prepare food for kitchens established by women's organizations that provided patient meals.

There were also men who volunteered to help. Reverend James Sharrard, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Saskatchewan, responded to the call for volunteers. He had taken a rather bold step by leaving the quarantined safety of the University campus to volunteer to do what he could for suffering patients. When he and another professor arrived at the Saskatoon central organizing bureau they were told that they were already doing everything possible by observing the voluntary quarantine at the University, and were assured, in any case, that "there is not a need for men but women."[19] Sharrard remarked: "It was a decided relief to us for we were feeling pretty selfish in reference to the need."[20] Although businessmen who owned cars were asked to chauffeur women to homes where help was needed, patient care was hampered by the prevalent assumption that women were innately suited to be caregivers and men were not.

Efforts to provide care were also hampered by a shortage of medical professionals and supplies, both commandeered by the Canadian Expeditionary Force in Europe. As of January 1917 there were 788 doctors in Saskatchewan, of whom seventy-four, or nearly ten percent, were on active military service.[21] Furthermore, those who did care for patients were among the first to fall ill or die from influenza. For example, of the fifteen women who volunteered to work at Emmanuel hospital, six became ill within the first week.[22] Saskatoon's Medical Health Officer, Dr. Arthur Wilson, was also very ill by late October.

Moose Jaw, Saskatoon, and Regina, along with hundreds of cities throughout Canada and the United States, advocated the use of gauze masks, but the regulation was unenforceable. Masks worn over the mouth and nose were supposed to be in place at all times while



Prevent the "Flu"

by wearing

Dr. Chase's Menthol Bag

SINCE 1510 influenza has periodically swept over the known world. The last big epidemic in this country was in 1889, when almost every person in every home was brought down.

But the present form, known as Spanish "Flu" because it started in Spain, seems to be a most fatal variety on account of the quickness with which it develops into bronchial-pneumonia.

Hence the wisdom of preventing infection by every means possible, and our suggestion is to "Wear a Menthol Bag."

We have arranged for the manufacture of thousands of these Menthol Bags, and while they last shall give them away to the first persons who send in the coupon printed below.

These bags are pinned on the chest outside of the underwear, and the heat from the body causes the menthol fumes to rise and mingle with the air you breath, thereby killing the germs and protecting you against Spanish influenza and all infectious diseases.

It was always the aim of Dr. Chase to serve his fellowman by the prevention of disease whenever possible, so that this gift is in line with the policy which he established.

In his large Receipt Book Dr. Chase devoted five pages to the treatment of influenza, and of his medicines on the market Dr. Chase's Syrup of Linseed and Turpentine and Dr. Chase's Nerve Food are used to splendid advantage in fighting this malady.

The Linseed and Turpentine should be used freely just as soon as there is any tendency for the throat and bronchial tubes to be affected.

Dr. Chase's Nerve Food is used to strengthen the action of the heart and aid in the restorative process.

The great secret of keeping healthy as well as of regaining strength after illness is by keeping the blood pure, rich and red.

Red blood is the greatest of germicides, for no disease can make any great headway so long as the blood is in condition to restore the wasted tissues.

In Dr. Chase's Nerve Food are found the vital substances which go to the formation of new, rich blood. It fortifies the system against attack and hastens recovery. You can buy half a dozen boxes from your druggist for $2.75, but be sure to see the portrait and signature of A. W. Chase, M.D., on the box you buy.

But in the meantime send for a "Menthol Bag" and do all you can to protect yourself against the Spanish "Flu."

Coupon for

Dr. Chase's Menthol Bag

This coupon is good for one Dr. Chase's Menthol Bag. Kindly enclose five cents in stamps to pay cost of mailing and postage. Address Edmanson, Bates & Co., Ltd., Toronto.

Name..... Address.....

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Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-1890-1.

As this ad from the Regina Leader *demonstrates, people were desperate enough to try anything to protect themselves from the epidemic.*

in public, but the nuisance and discomfort deterred most people. Regulations enforcing mask use were grounded in the belief that masks would stop influenza's spread. It was not long before public health authorities in the United States and Canada recognized that gauze masks, unless properly cared for (changed and disinfected every four hours), would create a perfect medium for bacterial growth, thereby causing respiratory infection.

Given the confusion surrounding the epidemic in the medical profession as well as in the public, people placed their faith, and their money, on tonics and "influenza cures." "Abbey's Effervescent Salt," a mild laxative, promised to safeguard users from influenza.[23] Strong smelling medications and oils were used to combat the stench that often accompanied epidemic influenza. Throughout North America, supplies of eucalyptus oil and camphor were quickly depleted. Home remedies and "cures" were headline news, and by December 1918 the Saskatoon *Daily Star* published "Flu Cure #876: eat a cake of compressed yeast a day." The Bureau of Public Health responded that the cure would only work because the yeast would kill the patient first.[24] Profiteers, as usual, emerged. Lemons, widely believed to hold curative powers, sold for thirty-eight cents a dozen before the epidemic, but soon jumped to $1.50 a dozen.[25]

The most popular drug, by far, during the influenza epidemic was alcohol. There was a long-standing and widespread popular belief in the medicinal benefits of alcohol. Because prohibition had been in effect since 1915, however, alcohol was available only from a druggist upon presentation of a doctor's prescription. Prescriptions cost two dollars for the eight ounce maximum daily dose. Country patients who lived more than five miles from a drug store were allowed to buy sixteen ounces at a time. Alcohol was used either as a preventative, a cure, or simply as a tonic. Some gave a tablespoon to their children before bed. Alcohol had a soothing effect, if not for the patient then at least for the caregiver. It also created the impression that something was being done. Doctors responded to their patients' demands for alcohol prescriptions to the extent that demand completely outstripped supply. Only two wholesale druggists in Saskatchewan were permitted to distribute liquor. Consequently, the price for the eight-ounce daily maximum prescriptions increased as the epidemic worsened.[26]

Premier Martin received compelling letters from terrified people who were without a doctor or druggist, and saw alcohol as the only cure for influenza. On 29 October the provincial government passed an Order-in-Council amending the regulations governing the sale of liquor. It became possible to buy the eight-ounce daily

JOLLY'S DRUG NEWS.

No Need To Catch Spanish "Flu"

Cutter's Respiratory Vaccine is a sure preventive.

We are completely sold out today but a very large supply is on the way.

It will come in serial doses and prophylactic syringe doses.

To the Busy Doctors

Telephone or telegraph your requirements and supplies will be forwarded to you immediately on arrival.

Jolly's Cash Drug Store

1821 SOUTH RAILWAY STREET, REGINA, SASK.

Phone 3668 Opp. Union Station

"The Safe Place to Send Your Prescriptions"

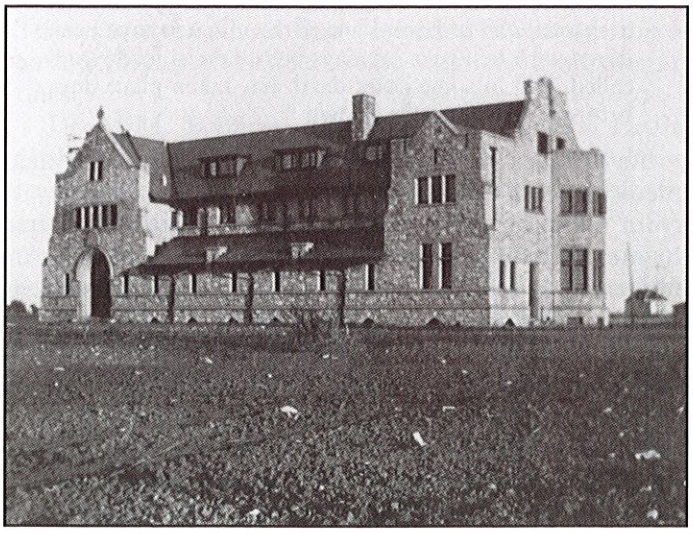
Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-A1890-2.

Trying to make a buck off the epidemic by selling a quack remedy — another ad in the Regina Leader.

dose without a prescription, provided the druggist was satisfied that the liquor was "urgently and necessarily required for medicinal purposes."[27] The amended regulations did not last a week. There was such a run on medicinal alcohol that by the following Saturday the government cancelled the Order-in-Council. Martin explained that the new regulations defeated the purpose of providing liquor to influenza patients; patients with doctor's prescriptions found there was no liquor available.

Although epidemic influenza re-opened the drink question once more, the debate did not focus on the wastefulness of liquor as it had in the past. Many had come to see liquor as an absolute necessity during the epidemic. It was demanded by desperate and frightened people, not drunks and loafers, and even organized medicine in Canada began to question prohibition. The Canadian Medical Association *Journal* maintained that liquor had therapeutic value and asked if it would "be regarded as always, everywhere, and in all circumstances, the unmitigated poison that many at present would have us believe it to be."[28]

With or without alcoholic "tonic," one of the safest places to be during the epidemic's onset was at the University of Saskatchewan. Although quarantine is rarely successful in containing contagious disease, the voluntary quarantine at the University protected all but one of the 120 faculty and staff from influenza. The University President, Walter Murray, quarantined the campus after everyone who wanted to return home had gone. With fully-equipped residences, food service, and its own farms, the University remained relatively unaffected by the epidemic that raged all around. Even when Emmanuel College at the University was turned over to the city of Saskatoon for use as an emergency hospital, strict measures were taken to protect campus residents. The sixteen women and four men who volunteered to staff the hospital stayed at the President's house with Mrs. Murray, while President Murray moved into residence with the faculty.



Saskatchewan Archives Board, S-B6715.

The University of Saskatchewan's Emmanuel College, 1925. During the epidemic it served as a temporary hospital.

Life at the quarantined University was boring, "a prison," according to Professor Sharrard. But when he ventured downtown to meet a young man at the Canadian Pacific Railway station whose sister had died at Emmanuel hospital he may have had a change of perspective,

> The town was like a city of the dead. Usually on Saturday night the streets are just lined with autos and people but I don't suppose I saw twenty altogether.[29]

On 16 November the University recorded its first resident influenza death.[30] William Hamilton died after a brief illness contracted while working at Emmanuel Hospital. President Murray used the most comforting analogy he could find in his condolences to the man's mother:

> Your son gave his life for others, and his sacrifice was as great as that of any soldier who died on the field of battle. It will ever be an inspiration for the young men and women who come to the University.[31]

Hamilton was a widower with three young children.

By any measure the University quarantine was a success. But soon after the University re-opened in January 1919, 150 of those who had been previously quarantined were sick, and six were dead.[32] The university population had no immunity to the disease. It was a dangerous time for the young, and it seemed influenza would take those the war had spared.

While urban Saskatchewan relied on physicians, nurses, and hospitals to treat the influenza patients, and charitable institutions and volunteers to slow the spread of disease, rural Saskatchewan was virtually unarmed in the fight against influenza. In 1918 the prairies were an unforgiving place where neighbours might be miles away, and the nearest town a long day's journey by horse and buggy. Medical help, usually in the form of a town doctor, was often beyond reach. Saskatchewan's Department of Municipal Affairs allowed rural councils to offer a scant $1,500 annually to lure a doctor, or $1,000 annually for a registered nurse.[33] Doctors who had let their qualifications lapse, or who were unqualified, were pressed into service to fight influenza.[34]

Hospital accommodation was unevenly distributed throughout the province. Although eighty-seven percent of the province's population lived in the country, only thirty-four percent of the hospital beds were in rural areas.[35] The province had taken steps in 1916 to provide facilities in rural areas through the Union Hospital Act, but by 1918 there were only eight Union hospitals operating in the province. Spanish influenza was a debilitating disease that required nursing care and bed rest for a complete recovery. Those who had access to medical attendance and hospital care were not as likely to suffer severe complications such as pneumonia. In

Saskatchewan Archives Board, S-B3969.

In 1905 this makeshift ambulance brought a patient sixty miles to a Yorkton hospital. Such conditions made the epidemic's impact on rural Saskatchewan much worse than its effect on urban areas.

Saskatchewan cities, where such medical attendance was available, the death rate was slightly more than six deaths per thousand population. But in rural municipalities the rate was nearly twice the provincial rate, or more than ten deaths per thousand.[36] In rural Saskatchewan volunteer and charitable organizations, so prominent in urban areas during the epidemic, were hampered by distance and poor communications. Long before the epidemic, rural Saskatchewan had led the call for home nursing courses in country districts, proper hospital accommodation, and the provision of municipal doctors. The cruel winter of 1918 created an urgency that could not be ignored.

The shortage of medical services was made horrifyingly clear in reports received by the Bureau from rural areas. Livestock was starving and fires had gone out. Icy homes revealed entire families that had been dead for weeks. Isolated homesteads were the rule in 1918, and the horror of families dying in such cruel circumstances had a devastating impact.

In the face of the epidemic rural people crowded together. The prospect of dying from influenza, isolated and alone, forced many to flee into villages and towns, but not to safety. By early November the epidemic was reaching its peak in Saskatchewan. These were the darkest days. The provincial government's Proclamation of 5 November 1918, exhorting people to call on their neighbours during the epidemic, frightened more than it reassured, and only confirmed people's worst fears:

> Instances have been reported from many points in Saskatchewan of homes where the inmates have been down with influenza for days before their neighbours called, and in some cases death has taken place days before the fact became known.[37]

As families fled into towns and villages to be near medical help, villages recorded the highest death rate from influenza in the province. Ironically, an isolated homestead was probably the safest refuge from influenza, providing the disease was not introduced by well-meaning neighbours.

This aspect of the influenza epidemic in rural Saskatchewan had a remarkable impact on the memory and imagination of the survivors. Novelist Wallace Stegner, a child in Eastend during the epidemic, re-created the drama and fear in his novels. Stegner's *On a Darkling Plain* described the terror felt by homesteaders caught in the path of the approaching epidemic. The flight into villages was "not so much a fear of the disease and death as it was fear of dying alone, of finding

[themselves] helpless and isolated, with no one to lean on."[38]

> It was upon them. No power on heaven or earth could keep the plague from coming those twenty miles within a few hours. Closing the roads, stopping the mails, shutting off all but the most necessary rail communication, couldn't stop it. It rode on the wind, blowing across the continent at a terrible speed. It might be—probably was—among them now. And with the certainty that it would come ... panic subsided into tight-lipped endurance.[39]

Stegner recalled being shut up with the whole town in the local school house which served as an emergency hospital. Only ten people were on their feet; all the rest were sick or dying.[40] The experience left a scar on his imagination. In his autobiographical novel, *Big Rock Candy Mountain,* he again described the predicament of frightened homesteaders:

> Suppose a whole family got sick with this flu, and no help around, and winter setting in solid and cold three weeks early?
> It was supposing things like this that drove in the homesteaders in wagons piled with goods, to settle down on some relative or friend or in vacant rooms. Three families had gone together and cobbled up a shack, half house and half tent, in the curve of the willows east of the elevator. Even a tent in town was better, in these times, than a house out on the bitter flats.[41]

Rural Saskatchewan did, however, have an advantage that cities did not. The isolation of towns and villages, often times a curse and a nuisance, was enlisted to help fight the flu. Town and village councils simply quarantined themselves against the world and gave notice to the railway companies that no passengers would be allowed to stop. On 31 October the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) reported that forty-five towns on its line were "closed," including Markinch, Dafoe, Cupar, Macklin, Lanigan, Sheho, Wynyard, and Langenburg. Towns on the Canadian National Railway line in Saskatchewan and Alberta also imposed local quarantines.[42]

Dr. M.M. Seymour, the provincial Medical Health Officer, immediately declared the practice of isolating towns and villages both illegal and "contrary to the approved methods of combating the disease."[43] Seymour attempted to override the quarantines, threatening the use of Saskatchewan Provincial Police to "open" the towns and allow rail traffic. But there was little he could do, given the determined resolve on the part of local authorities. The Provincial Police were understaffed and their numbers were further depleted by serious outbreaks of influenza within their own ranks.[44] Furthermore, during the epidemic the force was too busy attending to severe cases of influenza in country areas to aid the Bureau of Public Health.[45]

Towns and villages continued to isolate themselves despite Seymour's pronouncements. By 8 November, Amish, Elstow, Luseland, Churchbridge, Killam, Colonsay, and Unity had quarantined themselves. Train station platforms were blocked by vigilante citizen groups to prevent passengers from stopping. At Lloydminster and North Battleford the roads were patrolled to prevent travel.[46] In Tisdale the village council passed a resolution at the emergency influenza meeting asking all country residents to leave town as soon as possible after transacting their business.[47] The citizens' committee in Weyburn attempted to impose a quarantine, and was indignant when the provincial cabinet refused to authorize it. Seymour was called an autocrat and was charged with actually preventing the effective control of the disease.[48] The epidemic revealed an administration that placed financial and legal responsibility for health care with municipalities, but left them with little autonomy to make decisions.

There was an expectation that the epidemic would go away once the war was over, since the war and the influenza epidemic were linked in people's minds. The population was consequently optimistic that the worst was over on 11 November 1918, Armistice Day. A Saskatoon doctor proclaimed in the press that "The only effect this [peace] celebration is going to have on the influenza situation is to improve it."[49] Quite the opposite was true of course. Victory parades throughout the province began in the middle of the night when the news of peace was announced. Previously careful people, not yet exposed, poured into the streets for a night-long party that re-invigorated the epidemic. November was the worst month, with more than 2,500 influenza deaths recorded in Saskatchewan.[50]

Nevertheless, as the number of cases and deaths eased in the third week of November there were demands that the ban on public meetings be lifted. In both Regina and Saskatoon the ministerial associations led the protest. As early as 5 November, the Saskatoon association resolved to follow the urging of the local Emergency Committee, although it argued that there was little difference between large gatherings in shops and regular church services. The Regina association argued that the solace and comfort that church services provided far outweighed any danger to the public health.[51] In Saskatoon, Alderman Wilson was opposed to lifting the ban, and when Council overruled his opposition he observed that "the hearses are still going up and down the streets."[52] On 24 November, both Regina and Saskatoon lifted the ban on public gatherings. Saskatoon's Mayor Young conceded there was more opposition to lifting the ban than there was to imposing it in the first place.[53] Although the worst was over, the move to lift the ban was premature.

The influenza epidemic claimed 1,000 more Saskatchewan lives in 1919, and another 100 in 1920. In rural Saskatchewan, apart from the grisly task of burying the dead, there were farm losses to contend with; livestock perished when no one was well enough

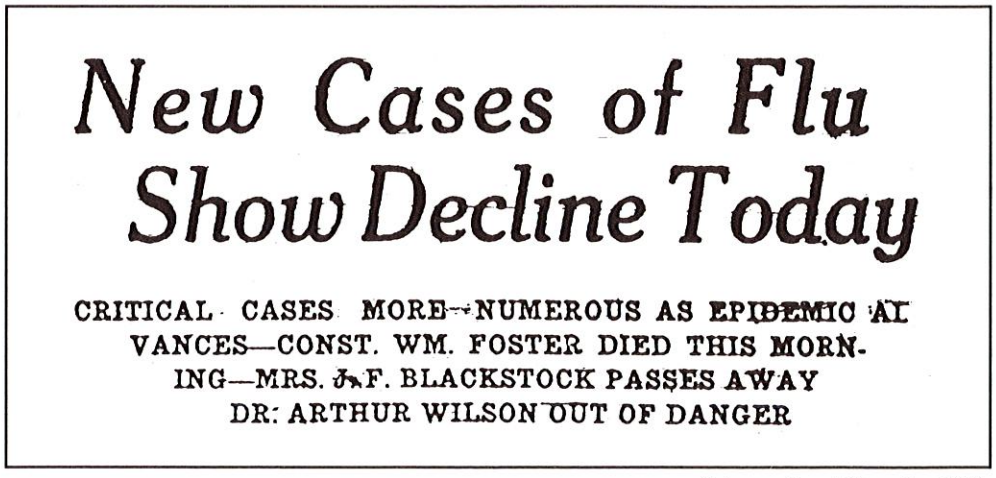
to do the chores and the harvest was incomplete. Because influenza was more likely to kill parents than their children there was a sharp rise in the number of orphans in the province. The Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent children reported a fifty-seven percent increase in the number of children admitted to the Children's Aid Society in Moose Jaw in 1919.[54] A new building was constructed in 1919 to accommodate the extra children. In Saskatoon the press appealed for volunteers to take in fifty children orphaned by the epidemic.[55]

Dead bodies were literally stacked up awaiting burial. Urban bylaws requiring either embalming or burial within twenty-four hours were unrealistic. In Saskatoon there was no morgue to store the bodies, and the local registrar of Vital Statistics, J.M. Lloyd, was overwhelmed by the demand for death certificates and burial permits. Saskatoon's cemetery caretaker was charged in early November with allowing burials without a permit, in violation of section forty-eight of the Vital Statistics Act.[56] The situation had become impossible by early November, and a number of burials took place at the Catholic cemetery without permits.[57] Local police in Moose Jaw rounded up loafers and unemployed men and pressed them into service as grave-diggers. At least one man refused and was fined twenty dollars plus court costs.[58] The miserable situation was compounded by a provincial Order-in-Council forbidding the transportation of bodies either within, or outside, the province. Bodies were to be buried in the nearest cemetery as quickly as possible.[59] Many grieving families lost track of their loved ones forever.

Although no one was safe from the flu, injustices and inequities found in life were reflected in death during the epidemic. In Saskatchewan cities the working poor, who had neither the time nor the money to recuperate from the flu, were easy prey. As were the Native people, who were particularly susceptible because of the poor and overcrowded living conditions on most reserves. Those closest to the subsistence level were the first victims of influenza; if they could no longer work, they no longer ate. While the more affluent Natives took to their beds with patent medicines, able nursing care, and a long convalescence, the poor struggled to keep themselves fed and the fires burning. Whole families were often struck at the same time, and they either starved or froze before influenza could claim them. A crude estimate of the mortality rate from influenza among Canadian Native people was 37.7 deaths per thousand. The death rate in Saskatchewan for non-Native people was 6.5 per thousand.[60]

The living conditions on many reserves were well below the standards that most Saskatchewan residents enjoyed. Although there was a promise made in the 1876 Treaty Six at Fort Carlton and Fort Pitt to provide a medicine chest at the agency office, the federal government consistently denied responsibility for health care for Native people. Over the years, however, the department of Indian Affairs reluctantly became involved in providing health care, if only to keep disease confined to reserves.[61]

During the epidemic, the Royal North West Mounted Police (RNWMP) were sent to reserves to enforce strict quarantines, preventing Native people from leaving reserves. These policemen found themselves involved in relief work. In a confidential letter to Newton Rowell, President of the Privy Council, the RNWMP comptroller expressed his shock that the agents at reserves had little sympathy with their charges "... and the work of looking after these unfortunate people who contracted influenza has been left almost entirely with our force and a few outside volunteers."[62] The health care needs of the Native people were never given high priority, and the epidemic did nothing to change that. In 1918, William Graham, commissioner for Indian Affairs, noted, with studied understatement, that the medical attention given to Native people "is not what it should be."[63] For the most part, health care, where it existed, was left to agents or well-meaning missionaries. Their assistance was not enough.



New Cases of Flu Show Decline Today

CRITICAL CASES MORE NUMEROUS AS EPIDEMIC ADVANCES—CONST. WM. FOSTER DIED THIS MORNING—MRS. F. BLACKSTOCK PASSES AWAY
DR. ARTHUR WILSON OUT OF DANGER

Saskatoon *Star*, 5 November 1918.

Headline writers wanted to believe the epidemic was declining in early November. The worst days, however, lay ahead.

On the Red Pheasant and Stoney reserves, influenza was in nearly every house. Although the government-employed field matron, Mrs. Weaver, administered salts, cough mixture, aspirin, and castor oil to the sick, by the end of November there were three deaths on the Stoney reserve and eighteen on the larger Red Pheasant reserve.[64] To make matters worse, all the able-bodied men were sick, so no farm work was done that fall. Throughout the next year the death rate remained high; for the period

April 1919 to March 1920 the death rate in the Battleford agency was 31.4 per thousand, or nearly four times the 1919 provincial rate of 7.9 per thousand.

It would not be until tuberculosis threatened to spread to spread from reserves to non-Native communities that discussions of Native health care took on any urgency. In 1924 the Canadian Tuberculosis association, with representation from all provincial associations, attempted to grapple with the issue. Association secretary, Dr. Wodehouse, called for action, citing "growing evidence of anxiety among the white population living adjacent to certain Indian bands ... ."[65] He also noted that Native leaders had been agitating for improved facilities for some time. Even then it was not until 1945 that the medical branch of the department of Indian Affairs was transferred to the department of health and welfare. The minister, Brooke Claxton, explained the need for more hospital facilities for Native people: "Neither law nor treaty imposes an obligation on the Dominion government to establish a health service," instead, he continued, "humanitarian reasons and as a very necessary protection to the rest of the population of Canada" motivated the government.[66]

Natives were not the only ones at society's margins to be drastically affected by the epidemic. The epidemic also struck labourers and wage-earners particularly hard. Most wage earners received no sick benefits, and those who were ill, or were forced to stay home to nurse family members were left with no income. The City of Saskatoon, for example, eventually agreed that hourly and daily employees who were absent through illness should be given two weeks pay.[67] Salaried employees, however, received full pay for the duration of their illness. The City paymaster received his usual pay for his one year stay in hospital as a result of the flu. In thanking Council for its consideration he added "I feel every employee of the City of Saskatoon gets a fair and square deal in all matters pertaining to their welfare at the hands of the City Commissioner."[68]

City Teamsters, however, were not happy with Council's policy on sick pay. By March 1919, Saskatoon's Teamsters had translated their dissatisfaction into concrete demands for pay increases. In a compelling letter to Council, the labourers pointed out that they were unable to live on the money they earned. "If sickness or any other unforeseen thing overtakes us, we either have to borrow or fall on charity, which does not seem fair after the long hours of toil we put in for just our daily bread."[69]

On 27 May 1919, the Teamsters walked out on strike along with 1,200 to 1,400 other wage-earners in Saskatoon in sympathy with the Winnipeg General Strike. The post-war labour unrest that culminated in the Winnipeg General Strike and sympathy strikes across the prairies had at its roots the high cost of living.[70] However, the lack of adequate housing and medical care for workers, highlighted by the epidemic, only made the situation worse. Although the influenza epidemic was not the cause of industrial unrest, it was surely the midwife.

The epidemic also stimulated many women to seek change. Those who were expected to treat the sick without any training, experience, or knowledge of medicine were in the forefront of a movement to improve women's understanding of nursing. As early as November, Violet McNaughton of the Saskatchewan Grain Grower's Association contacted the St. John's Ambulance in order to establish home nursing courses, especially in country districts.[71] By 1921 the Bureau Of Public Health responded to women's demands and initiated a program where two nurses travelled the province conducting classes on first aid and child care. "When sickness enters the home," the Bureau explained "only those living on an isolated prairie homestead far removed from medical aid, with limited transportation and communication facilities, realise their helplessness."[72] The Bureau relied on women's organizations such as the Red Cross Society, the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE), women's Grain Growers, and Homemakers Clubs to make all the local arrangements for the nursing classes. Individual helplessness in the face of the epidemic spurred Saskatchewan women into group action to ease their isolation and improve their communities.

For those in rural Saskatchewan the most significant impact of the epidemic was the re-invigoration of the municipal doctor program.[73] The Rural Municipality Act was amended in 1919 to allow an increase in salaries for doctors from $1,500 maximum annually to $5,000 annually.[74] The municipal doctor scheme allowed a rural municipality to hire a physician who provided medical services free to all ratepayers and their families and hired help. The scheme provided a secure and steady practice for doctors who all too often left rural practices because of the difficulty of collecting fees in poor crop years. The advantage to the municipality was obvious. The municipal doctor program was grounded in the practical need for proper health care by people who faced tragic and unnecessary losses to disease, both before, during, and after the epidemic.

The lack of hospital facilities in both urban and rural areas was also addressed once the epidemic passed. The Union Hospital Act was amended in 1919 to make it easier for rural and urban municipalities to co-operate to build a hospital. By 1923 there were forty hospitals in Saskatchewan, an increase of eleven percent. The number of hospital beds in the province increased by more than twenty-seven percent, or one bed for every 361 people, compared to one bed for every 415 before the epidemic.[75] The Red Cross also established ten nursing outposts in isolated areas of the province.

A killing epidemic on the heels of five years of war made for an ugly mood in Saskatchewan in 1919. The shocking loss of life in farm communities did nothing to quell the rising tide of agrarian unrest. The post-war,

post-epidemic period saw farmers entering politics and creating change according to their own agenda. Although Saskatchewan's Native people had little access to the levers of power or to the ear of government, they too turned to political action for redress. The League of Indians of Canada was established in 1919 in order to, in the words of its Saskatchewan president Edward Ahenakew, pursue "equality for the Indian," especially by initiating, he noted, "improved educational and health programs."[76] For workers, the issues of unemployment and the rising cost of living were brought to a head during the epidemic. Prolonged illness or the sudden death of the breadwinner spelled disaster for many workers' families. In the post-epidemic period workers demanded collective bargaining and a more secure future.

Disease and war have been called the upper and nether millstones that grind away at human existence.[77] The two came perilously close together in 1918. Historians have traditionally looked to the Great War as the cause of the social unrest of the period. But to recognize one millstone and not the other is to leave the story incomplete. The other half of the story, the story of a killer virus, is more difficult to tell. We, in the age of AIDS and Ebola viruses, are becoming familiar with epidemics that erupt and send us scrambling for a response. Often we hope to find the cause by examining the personal failings of the victims. At times our reactions would sound quite familiar to those who survived the influenza epidemic, such as Father Thomas Kennedy of Saskatoon's St. Paul's church, who urged his parishioners to see the hand of God in the epidemic:

> God who is seeking for our love, who is longing for us to turn to Him, is no doubt taking a violent means of detaching us from the apparent pleasures of this world and of making us think of the life to come. He is bringing trial and sorrow closer to us. Before many weeks nearly every home may have been afflicted. Are we going to resist the call of God?[78]

The story of the nether millstone, epidemic disease, is infinitely less glamorous to recall; there were few heroes, no medals, and no monuments to glorify the dead.

Endnotes

1 *Battleford Press,* 28 November 1918, 1.
2 The name "Spanish" influenza resulted from Spain's neutrality during the war. Spain, unlike other European countries, did not censor news of the epidemic's destruction.
3 *Report of the Department of Health,* Winnipeg, 1918, 11; Janice Dicken McGinnis, "The Impact of Epidemic Influenza: Canada, 1918-1919," in S.E.D. Shortt (ed.), *Medicine in Canadian Society,* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1981), 451.
4 E.A. Robertson, M.D., Cpt. CAMC, "Clinical Notes on the Influenza Epidemic Occurring in the Quebec Garrison," *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (hereafter CMAJ), vol. 9, February 1919, 156.
5 Saskatchewan Bureau of Public Health (hereafter SBPH), *Annual Report* 1917-1918, 79, Table LI. Of a total 5,040 reported deaths 32.7% were 20-29 years old, and 27.9% were 30-39 years old.
6 SBPH, *Annual Report* 1917-1918, 8.
7 *Saskatchewan Gazette,* 1918, 14; "Regulations Relating to Public Health," 31 October 1918, 2.
8 Dr. T.H.Whitelaw, MHO Edmonton, "The Practical Aspects of Quarantine for Influenza," *CMAJ* , (December 1919), 1073.
9 Regina City Archives, Council Minutes, 5 November 1918, 6.
10 Archives of the University of Saskatchewan (hereafter AUS), MG 905, file 11, Sharrard Papers, 16 October, 1918.
11 Regina City Archives, Council Minutes, 1918, 5 November 1918, 6.
12 Saskatoon *Daily Star,* 16 October 1918, 3.
13 Ibid., 19 October 1918, 3.
14 Ibid., 17.
15 Ibid., 19 October 1918, 5.
16 AUS, Jean Murray Collection, IV, 49, Oliver E.H. Murray to Oliver, 2 December 1918.
17 Regina City Archives, "Spanish Influenza Epidemic," Influenza Relief Committee, 24 October 1918.
18 Saskatoon *Daily Star,* 26 October 1918, 8.
19 AUS, MG 905, Sharrard Papers, file 12, Sharrard to Edith Sharrard, 3 November 1918.
20 Ibid.
21 Saskatchewan Archives Board (hereafter SAB), Martin Papers, M4, 36067-36074, "Physicians in Saskatchewan, 1 January 1918."
22 AUS, MG 905, Sharrard Papers, Sharrard to Edith Sharrard, 9 November 1918.
23 Saskatoon *Daily Star,* 28 October 1918, 9.
24 Saskatoon *Daily Star,* 11 December 1918, 3.
25 Ibid., 5 November 1918, 3.
26 Ibid., 30 October 1918, 3.
27 *Saskatchewan Gazette* 1918, 14, 31 October 1918, 4.
28 *CMAJ* "On The Therapeutic Value of Alcohol" 10, (March 1920), 290.
29 AUS, Sharrard Papers, 12, Correspondence 1918 (2), Sharrard to Edith Sharrard, 9 November 1918.
30 A week earlier a pharmacy student died after drinking methyl alcohol cocktails, and his companion was permanently blinded. Publicly the death was passed off as influenza in order to avoid a scandal. Ibid., 9 November 1918; for a fuller description of

the incident see Maureen Lux, "The Great Influenza Epidemic of 1918-20," University of Saskatchewan, *Green and White Magazine,* (winter), 1989, 14-16.

31 AUS, PP 1, A.28, Murray to Mrs. Hamilton, 16 November 1918.

32 AUS, *President's Report,* 1918-1919, 3.

33 R.D. Defries, *The Development of Public Health in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1940), 143.

34 SAB, A320 Neatby Family, Kate Neatby Nicoll manuscript "Paths They Have Not Known," 102. Ada Neatby, Hilda Neatby's mother, was the local midwife near Watrous, Saskatchewan. Her skills were pressed into service nursing neighbours during the epidemic. She subsequently contracted influenza which spread to the whole family.

35 The population of Saskatchewan in 1918 was 826,592 with 718,969 people living in rural municipalities. Twenty-five of the provinces' thirty-six hospitals were in rural municipalities, but those hospitals held only 608 of the provinces' 1 770 hospital beds. SBPH, *Annual Report 1917-1918, 32; Annual Report 1919-1920,* 73.

36 SBPH, *Annual Report* 1917-1918, 83.

37 *Saskatchewan Gazette,* "Proclamation 5 November 1918," 2.

38 Wallace Stegner, *On a Darkling Plain* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1940), 161.

39 Ibid., 156.

40 Richard Etulain and Wallace Stegner, *Conversations with Wallace Stegner on Western History and Literature* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1983), 31.

41 Stegner, *Big Rock Candy Mountain* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1938), 235.

42 Saskatoon *Daily Star,* 1 November 1918, 3. Quarantined towns on the CNR line included Kipling, Maryfield, and Mazenod.

43 Ibid., 5 November 1918, 3.

44 SAB, Department of the Attorney-General, Saskatchewan Provincial Police, B. Annual Reports, 1919 (2). In 1918 there were only 129 members on the force, or one officer for 5513 population.

45 Ibid., C. Divisional Reports, 1918 (2), 28 January 1919.

46 Saskatoon *Daily Star,* 8 November 1918, 3.

47 Tisdale, Saskatchewan, Village Council Minutes, 29 October 1918.

48 SAB, M4 Martin Papers, Influenza I.134, Murphy and Miller, Barristers and Solicitors, Weyburn to Martin, 6 November 1918; *Weyburn Review,* 9 November 1918.

49 Saskatoon *Daily Star,* 11 November 1918.

50 City of Saskatoon Archives, CO5, Box 54, file 242, Report of the City Commissioner Saskatoon, 9 November 1918.

51 Regina City Archives, Regina Ministerial Association, 21 November 1918.

52 Saskatoon *Daily Star,* 23 November, 1918.

53 Ibid., 22 November 1918.

54 SAB, 2.29 Bureau of Child Protection, 30 April 1919.

55 Saskatoon *Daily Star,* 25 October 1918.

56 City of Saskatoon Archives, CO5, Box 53, file 188, City Commissioner to A.G. Wright, 8 November 1918.

57 Ibid., CO5, Box 51, file 60, Cemetery, City Clerk to Father Jan, St. Paul's Church, 27 December 1918.

58 Moose Jaw *Daily News,* 22 October 1918.

59 *Saskatchewan Gazette,* 21 Regina, 14 November 1918.

60 Canada, House of Commons *Debates,* 138, 4062 (25 June 1919); SBPH, *Annual Reports 1918, 1919,* 126.

61 Maureen K. Lux, "Beyond Biology: Disease and Its Impact on the Canadian Plains People, 1880-1930," (Simon Fraser University, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1996), 273.

62 National Archives of Canada (NA), RG 18, Records of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, vol. 568, file 15-1919, Influenza-Indians Saskatchewan and Alberta, 1919, Comptroller RNWMP to N.W. Rowell, MP, 14 January 1919.

63 NA, RG 10, Records of the Department of Indian Affairs, vol. 4084, file 495,800, Graham to Scott, 2 November 1918.

64 Ibid., "Report of the Field Matron on the Red Pheasant and Stoney Reservations for October 1918."

65 NA, RG 10, vol. 3958, file 140,754-3, Wodehouse to Dr. D.A. Carmichael, 4 September 1924.

66 Canada, House of Commons, *Sessional Papers,* "Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons appointed to examine and consider the Indian Act, 1945," Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence, no 1, 28-30 May 1946, 65.

67 City of Saskatoon Archives, CO5, Box 62, file 338, Sick Pay, 30 January 1919.

68 Ibid., L.J. Walshe, paymaster to Mayor and Council, 30 December 1919.

69 City of Saskatoon Archives, CO5, Box 63, file 380, City Teamsters to Council, 17 March 1919.

70 Between 1908 and 1918 the cost of food in Saskatchewan increased by 84%, clothing 38%, fuel 73% and rent 61%, Glen Makahonuk, "Class Conflict in a Prairie City," *Labour/Le Travail* 19, (Spring 1987), 98-99.

71 Saskatoon *Daily Star,* 18 November 1918, 11.

72 SBPH, *Annual Report* 1921, 29.

73 The first municipal doctor contract was made in 1914. The 1918 convention of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities demanded the freedom to pay enough to attract a physician.

74 *Annual Report of the Department of Municipal Affairs* 1918-1919, (Regina, 1919), 6.

75 SBPH, *Annual Report* 1923, 56.

76 Edward Ahenakew, *Voices of the Plains Cree,* edited by Ruth M. Buck, (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1995), 85.

77 William McNeill, *The Human Condition: An Ecological and Historical View* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), 7.

78 Fr. T. Kennedy, OMI, St. Paul's Church, Sermon printed in the Saskatoon *Daily Star,* 26 October 1918.

Saskatchewan Archives Board:

News and Notes (from page 2)

Letter to the Editors

To *Saskatchewan History:*

May I be permitted to reply to Mr. Ross Innes's letter in *Saskatchewan History,* Volume 48, Number 2, Fall 1996.

I have to admit, and some readers have already told me so, that I have not proved conclusively that a man named Michaux was the tenth person killed at Frog Lake on April 2 of 1885 (see Allen Ronaghan, "Who was that ..." in *Saskatchewan History,* Volume 47, Number 2, Fall 1995).

The nub of my argument is, however, that through a study of the known burials we know that nine people had been accounted for by June of 1885: four in the church cellar—Delaney, Taford (check this name), Gawanbock and Marchand; two found in Pritchard's cellar—Gouin and Quinn; three lying buried in graves along the route of march and flight more than a kilometre to the north—Williscraft, Dill and Gilchrist.

A "fine young man" lying unburied and noted by two sources—Parker and Pennefather—was obviously not Gilchrist. Gilchrist could not be in two places at once.

We are in a better position to sort and evaluate the information than was possible in 1885. We must set ourselves that task if we are ever to understand what happened at Frog Lake.

Sincerely,
Allen Ronaghan
Edmonton, Alberta

"Your Word Is Your Bond":

Recollections of a Custom Combiner, Vernon A. Wildfong

by Thomas D. Isern

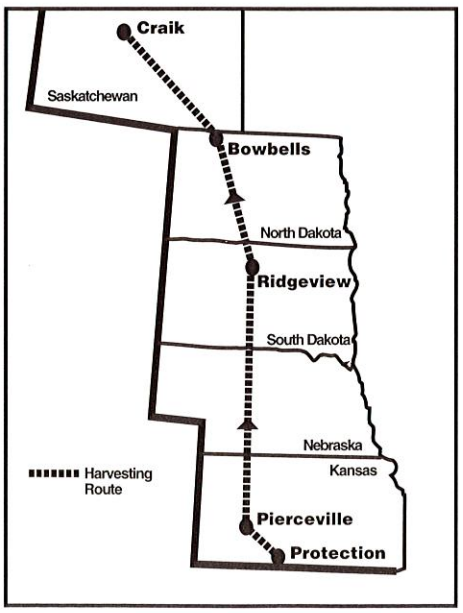
Photo courtesy of Vernon Wildfong.

The Wildfong crew in 1948. "Mother and Dad" – on the left end, back row – "came to the border to see us off." Bert Wildfong, in the back row, wears a pith hat. Vernon Wildfong is in the middle of the front row.

INTRODUCTION

Even as the combat veterans came home following victory in Europe in 1945, another group of veteran campaigners—professional wheat harvesters—was coming home to the prairie provinces from the wheat states of Canada's southern neighbour. Annually for the past few years entrepreneurial Canadians and their combines had gone south via Portal, Plentywood, Wild Horse and a dozen other entry points, making the long haul to the southern plains of Texas and Oklahoma, then working their way north and home to pick up their own grain. "I consider that we rendered sincere service to these people [American farmers]," remarked one of the returnees in 1945, "and they in turn treated us royally and paid us well."[1] The annual wheat harvest had become an international enterprise and, for many of its participants, a way of life.

Since then custom combining, or custom harvesting, has been a distinctive agricultural profession on both



Map created by Deb Tanner, NDSU Extension Communication

Map of the Wildfong harvesting route, 1947.

*Thomas D. Isern is Professor of History at North Dakota State University, Fargo, North Dakota. A specialist in the agricultural history of the North American plains, he numbers among his publications a history of custom wheat harvesting (*Custom Combining on the Great Plains: A History, *University of Oklahoma Press, 1981) and a history of threshing in the steam era (*Bull Threshers and Bindlestiffs: Harvesting and Threshing on the North American Plains, *University Press of Kansas, 1991).*

the Canadian Prairies and the Great Plains of the United States. It resembles, but in certain important respects is different from, the custom threshing of earlier practice. Custom threshing, the provision of threshing services by local capitalists who owned the requisite machinery and charged fees to their farmer-clients, dated from the earliest settlement of any locality on the prairies. It began with separators powered by treadmills and horsepower and progressed through the eras of steam engines and internal combustion engines. Custom threshing was at the center of an intricate web of local culture, as farmers organized threshing rings or pools which exchanged labor and contracted with threshermen.

What distinguished custom combining from custom threshing was, first, the use of the combined harvester, or combine. Adoption of the combine on the Prairies was slow in the 1920s until development of its complement, the windrower. The advent of self-propelled combines in the 1940s made the transition from stationary threshing to combining virtually complete—a technological transition that brought an end to the threshing ring as a community institution.

A second distinguishing feature of custom combining was that it sprawled over great distances. Threshermen generally had worked for neighbours in their own localities. Custom combiners loaded up their combines and fashioned harvesting itineraries stretching over hundreds of miles, and across many states and provinces. In the earliest years most of them were men travelling without their families. As the years passed, whole families, traveling with house trailers, were incorporated into the business. Children of the harvest assumed duties in the combine crews, grew into partnership, and eventually succeeded their parents in the business.

Travelling with the harvest entailed the third peculiar feature of custom harvesting: it arose as an international phenomenon. To employ their machinery to the fullest, and to take advantage of the geography of the wheat harvest, Canadian and American custom harvesters routinely crossed the Forty-Ninth Parallel and plied their professions in one another's homelands. The harvest lasted from May until snow flew and stretched from Texas to Saskatchewan.[2]

The exigencies of World War II brought this peculiar profession into being and opened the doors to international operations. The technology was ready. It was a helpful development when self-propelled combines appeared during the war, but tractor-drawn machines could also be transported readily by truck. Social and economic conditions were ripe for full employment of the machines. The war created shortages of farm labor and even more acute shortages of farm machinery. It seemed not only logical and profitable but even patriotic to get maximum benefit from every combine through custom work. Consequently, on 10 April 1942, Prime Minister W.L. Mackenzie King and President Franklin D. Roosevelt announced an executive agreement to facilitate the movement of custom harvesters across the international border.[3]

Custom combining flourished during the war and immediate post-war years, as the two respective national governments continued to provide for international exchange of harvesting outfits. They did this initially because of machinery shortages, and later because the custom harvesting business was established and had proven an eminently practical adaptation for the use of capital in a semi-arid region, characterized by cereal grain culture, which happened to be transected by an international border. Despite the risks of employing capital in an itinerant profession, and despite recurring border difficulties owing both to bureaucratic inertia and political pressures, a corps of Canadian custom harvesters, mostly farmers themselves, persisted in the business. International custom harvesting became a family enterprise, an inter-generational tradition. Their numbers dwindled over the years, however. Whereas in 1947 (the year the Wildfong outfit, the story of which is told in this article, took up the business) about 1100 Canadian outfits went south, by 1987 (the year of the interview here published) only about fifty were in operation.[4]

In 1987 I investigated the history of international harvesting by Canadian custom combiners, who had organized themselves into an organization called the Association of Canadian Custom Harvesters. Their president was Dave Watkins Jr., of Aylesbury, Saskatchewan. Dave and Lori Watkins not only extended hospitality but also facilitated my research by granting me access to relevant papers and by introducing me to acquaintances in the business. They introduced me to their neighbour, veteran harvester Vernon A. Wildfong, whom I interviewed at their house.[5]

Vernon Wildfong was born in 1924, the son of Arthur Roy Wildfong, an Ontario native farming at

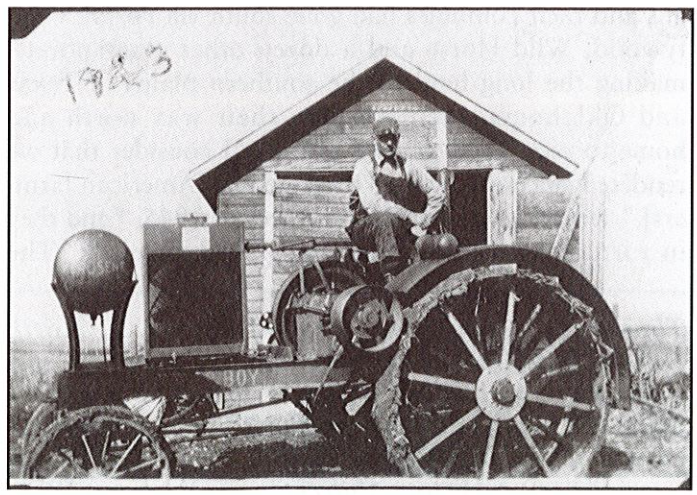


Photo courtesy of Vernon Wildfong.

Vernon's father Art, shown here on his Waterloo Boy tractor in 1923, would take a keen interest in the custom harvesting business as it developed in the 1940s.

Craik, Saskatchewan, and Ella Emma Hamann, daughter of a German-American family that had come to Craik from Minnesota. He grew up on a grain and cattle farm and, after taking a diploma in Agriculture from the University of Saskatchewan, became himself a farmer and custom harvester. In 1949 he married Hazel Maesner—a Holdfast, Saskatchewan native, a Royal Canadian Air Force veteran, and a former professional softball player who joined her husband on the harvest trail. (Hence it happened that their daughter, Karen, was born in Alva, Oklahoma, in 1950.) Hazel Wildfong died in 1984. Vernon continues with his harvesting route, now running just one combine, and still farms extensively in the Craik vicinity. His brother Bert, who figures in the story here published, has also been a farmer and custom cutter and has established a manufacturing firm at Craik. Bert's son Rick has written a published diary of custom harvesting.[6]

The interview on 22 May 1987 ranged over many subjects, including the diplomatic difficulties of doing business across the border, but the core of the interview, that part published below, drove home to me two points about custom combining in regional history. The first of these is that it is a grand story. Custom harvesting is, of course, a business since it must be profitable. The occupation, however, is more than that. It began as an adventure and evolved into a way of life. Vernon Wildfong's story is a type of travel narrative, an account of exotic places and singular events. The second point is that participation in this far-flung business gives custom harvesters a distinctive view of the world, a type of plains cosmopolitanism. Custom combiners are immensely self-conscious about what they do. They are proud of their profession. One source of pride is the feeling that they have seen things, have made acquaintances in faraway states, and have acquired a broader, international view of regional affairs. They feel a kinship between Oklahoma and Saskatchewan. Of his commencement in the custom harvesting business, Wildfong said, "I would say that if there was anything in my lifetime that has ever changed my way of life, that did it. ... . It broadened my scope in the farming community tremendously."

The way Wildfong sees it, the profession also is held together by character and honor, attributes that make it possible for farmers and harvesters of different backgrounds, even different nationalities, to trust one another across great distances with their most important economic affairs. As he says, "Your word is your bond."

THE INTERVIEW

TI: When did you first start custom combining?

VF: We started in 1947. We knew the custom harvesting business was going on for two or three years before that. Several people in Saskatchewan had been combining, but Dad took more interest in it probably than my brothers and I did. ... . At that time you had to have some combines and trucks, and up until the time that we went south, we had one combine Dad bought in '46. So when '47 showed up we had a combine and we had a truck and we were ready to go harvesting—my brother Bert and me, along with one of our neighbours, Jim Sloan.

TI: What kind of combine?

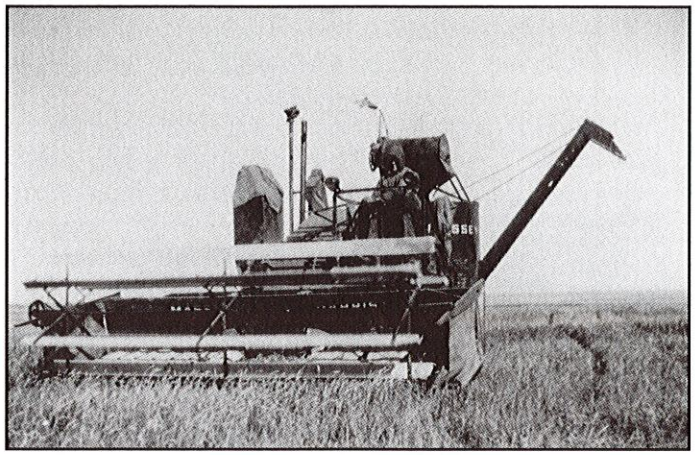


Photo courtesy of Vernon Wildfong.

In 1946 Art Wildfong bought this No. 21 Massey-Harris combine, shown here during full harvest near home that year.

VF: We had a 21 Massey combine. It was a canvas machine.[7]

TI: Fourteen-foot?

VF: Fourteen-foot, yes sir. And we had a 1946 Maple Leaf Chevrolet truck, cast-iron, six-cylinder job—the Maple Leaf insignia drew a lot of farmer attention in the U.S.—and we had a wooden frame trailer to live in.

In those days, Tom, we had to get a permit to cross that border. The only way to get a permit in those days, you had to be first a veteran of the last war, secondly you had to be in a dried-out area the previous year, and thirdly you had to own some equipment. Through a contact in the Department of Agriculture here in Saskatchewan, [we learned] there were people who could qualify for this venture, going to the United States, but didn't wish to go. So what they were actually doing was buying up these permits, or making application and getting permits to go and then turning around and selling these permits to the people who wanted to go.

TI: That was all open?

VW: Yes. It wasn't underhanded or anything, it was common knowledge. And that's how come we got to go. We knew a man who had an extra permit, and I think we gave him $100 for it, and he was glad to have it. So we started out harvesting in 1947 under those circumstances.

Another thing, as I remember in 1947, my Dad contacted a person in Regina, a Saskatchewan harvester

who had harvested in the U.S. for a couple of years, and he was going to meet us at Alva, Oklahoma, and he was going to find us all the work we needed to do that summer. We were to give him ten percent of the gross income as a finder's fee. So when we crossed that bor-

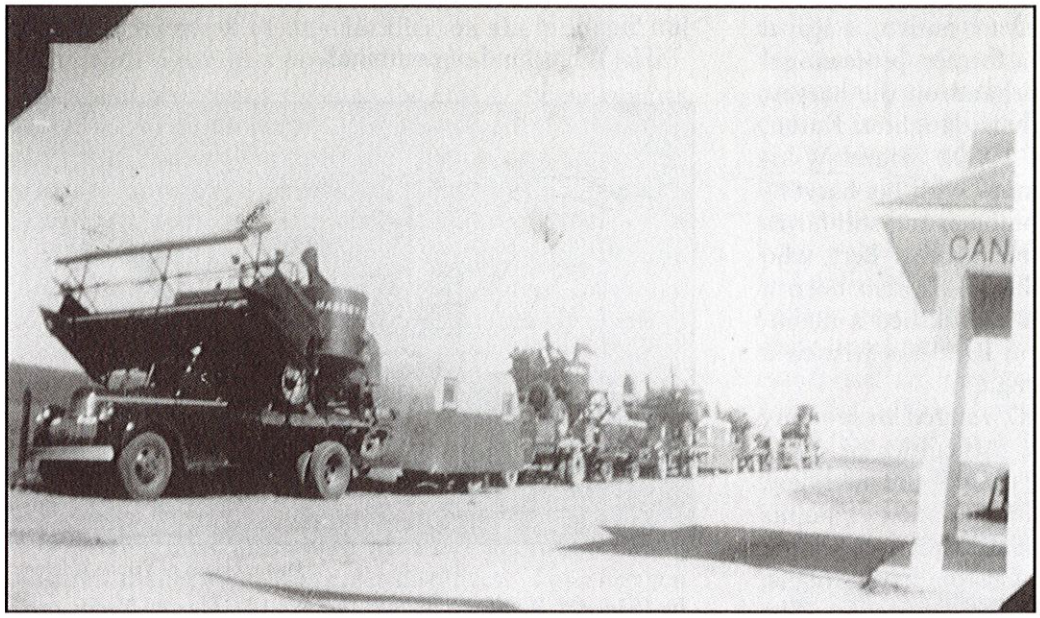


Photo courtesy of Vernon Wildfong.

The Wildfong outfit, and others, await clearance at the U.S. border, 1947.

der to go south, we had a map of the United States and we had Alva, Oklahoma, circled, and we had the road mapped out how to get there. ... . Once we got there, we thought our troubles would be over, because this fellow could take over and put us to work.

We got down as far as Coldwater, Kansas, which was seventy miles northwest of Alva. In the meantime this man was supposed to leave a message at the Co-op elevator there as to where to come when we got to Alva. Well sir, we stopped at that elevator—on the west side of the road going south through town—and there was no message left there for us; the people didn't know this fellow. Of course we were beat. We didn't know anybody; we didn't know where to find this fellow.

The elevator man said, "Are you looking for work?"

Bert looked at me and I looked at him, and we looked at Jim, and said, "My Gosh, I guess we are!"

"Well," he says, "Just go over there to the next town about twelve miles west"—a little town by the name of Protection—and he says, "I know they're looking for combines there this afternoon."

So we took off and went over there. As I remember we landed in the evening, raining, at a park on the north end of town, and ran into a fellow by the name of Max Colburn out of Pambrun, with his crew. What a breath of fresh air! After listening to our million-dollar problem, Max said, "Yes, tomorrow morning"—this was getting dark—"go on down the street with your combine and truck, and before you get to the other end, you'll have some farmers ready to hire you."

So the next morning we did exactly that. By noon we were unloaded and ready to start cutting wheat. I suppose we cut around 600-700 acres there in just a few days for different farmers. It was a Mennonite area, a beautiful district, and beautiful people to cut for. We were in business now—Man, this was living!

Before we got down there we had no means of transportation except for this two-ton Maple Leaf truck, which, by the way, Kansas farmers said after looking it over and kicking the tires, "It's just another six-cylinder cast-iron special." We had a few bucks in our pocket then, and we needed a pickup. So this farmer came along one day and he says, "I've got about 200 acres of wheat to cut over here, and I'd like to have you cut it." He was driving an International pickup, and we asked him if that pickup was for sale and he said, "No, not really, but I guess anything's for sale."

We said, "We'll come and cut your wheat if you'll sell us that pickup." So anyway, we ended up buying the pickup.

In the meantime this man we were supposed to hook up with originally in Coldwater, who was going to find us some work, came to see us in Protection. By this time we had a couple of weeks of work under our belt, and we felt pretty good about this, and we thought we could handle it ourselves. So we said thanks, but no thanks, you broke the agreement in the first place, and we feel like we can do it. We're on our own now, and we can do the job. In the meantime we phoned home to Dad. And he said, "You go back to this fellow." Well, I didn't think so, and Bert, it didn't matter to him; all Bert wanted to do was work.

So before we finished there, a man came down from Garden City, Kansas. I mean he was dressed up fit to kill, and he looked like a Philadelphia lawyer. He was a soft-spoken person and very mild-tempered. He said he had a little bit of wheat up at Garden City, and he'd like to have us come up and cut it. We said we were going through there in a couple of days and we'd probably stop and look him up.

Someone told us there was a lot of wheat up at Tribune, Kansas, and we needed to go to Tribune. That was where all the wheat in the United States was going to be that year. So we headed up that way and this man, Gene Ware, from Garden City, was waiting right

along the road when we were going through there. He stopped us; we got in the car with him and went up to look at his wheat. We got on one of those county roads going north out of Pierceville, and we drove I suppose fifteen or eighteen miles north, and there was wheat on both sides of the road as far as the eye could see. He got up there, and he said you can start anywhere here.

Well sir, we got off and tramped around in the wheat and found a dozen things wrong as to why we shouldn't be cutting this wheat fairly cheap, why we should be getting a lot of money to cut this wheat. And I can still see Gene Ware listening to us today; if Gene was living, he could tell you this story better than I could. ... . We thought we might be able to cut this stuff for about twelve dollars an acre, plus five cents for hauling and five cents per bushel for every bushel over twenty to the acre. Of course, Gene was back here kind of grinning to himself. He was one of those types of guys—you know if I was Gene I would have run Bert and me off, because we weren't very cooperative. He said in his soft tone of voice that he didn't think he should have to pay over eight dollars—everyone else was paying that. We said the ground was soft, what if the wind and rain blew the grain down, and the wheat had to be hauled God knows where. He kind of grinned and said, "The wheat goes there"—a hundred yards from where we were.

So anyway we took it on for eight dollars an acre and a nickel a bushel to put the wheat in the bin. We went to work for him. Now he said, "When you get done here, I'll take you over to the neighbours. I think they've got enough work there to keep you going for the next two weeks if you really want to stay." And of course we did. We cut every day, got Gene cut out, and he took us to Davis Brothers. Davis Brothers had scales and elevator on the farm. Man, this was living on a new planet.

But you know what? We were there three weeks, pretty near a month, and I don't think we missed one single day of cutting that I remember. Money! I never seen so much money in my life. I never knew what money was until—it was phenomenal. By this time, too, we had seen more combines, more trucks, more men, more wheat than we had ever dreamed of or ever hope to see again. It was mind-boggling. We were introduced to DX [American brand] gasoline for our equipment. It was not BP, Imperial Oil, or Royalite like it was back home. We had to smell it first, finally agreed it was fit to use.

As I talk about this today, I am sure Gene Ware and the Davis Brothers gathered as much new experience in meeting the Canucks as we did in meeting and working with such great people. Through the years Gene, particularly, would reminisce about 1947. I well remember, as he introduced us to other people, he would say we were from "Canada"—be damned if he could be bothered with "Saskatchewan," a tongue twister.

Of course, we got done with the job then, and this was after three weeks to a month. I suppose we all had about four or five suits of clothes to wear, and we recycled these things about four or five times during that time, and they were getting pretty dirty and salty. We got done and we thought, well, we've been out three weeks, pretty near a month now, if we go out on the road and run into the same situation, we better go to town and get a whole bunch of clothes before we go on. And we did. I guess we all wound up with about two dozen pair of pants and shirts apiece. And socks.

TI: Did you ever think of washing them?

VW: Never had time. So anyway we headed up the road, and got into South Dakota then. Met a fellow from near Craik, who knew Dad, at Agar, South Dakota. We were there for a few days and then got a job up on an Indian reservation at a place called Ridgeview, South Dakota, west of Gettysburg.[8] We worked up there for about two weeks. I think the cutting out there was $4, plus five cents hauling to the elevator and bins. It was quite a let-down, anyway. However, the food was good up there, and the people we worked for, they supplied us board.

One day late in July the temperature got to 114° F. at Ridgeview—hottest day in my life. As a matter of interest, radio station KGFX, Pierre, South Dakota, said on a certain day in July 1947 it was 114°. It was hot; it was a record for South Dakota on that day. Each time we came around the field we added water to the radiator. Massey-Harris combines had six-blade fans for their radiator. It was a rare find to buy an eight-blade. Eight blades made a difference.

From there we come on up to Bowbells, North Dakota; I suppose we cut around there for about a week. We got our first lesson in not trusting everybody you talk to in relation to the number of acres you cut for a person. This fellow said he had 100 acres for us to do, and it turned out to be just pretty near a full quarter. From that day to this day, Tom, I don't think that I ever run into a person down there that shorted us on acres. If it happened, I'm not aware of it. That's the only time in those forty years.

TI: That was the first year. You did get home that year, then.

VW: Oh yes, we got home in August. It was a tremendous and memorable experience. You know up until that time, Tom, we were farm boys back home here. We really didn't know a whole lot about what was going on outside of the Craik community. We thought wheat was wheat. But after going down there and coming back, that opened up a whole, brand-new world to us. I would say that if there was anything in my lifetime that has changed my way of life, that did it.

TI: What do you mean, changed your way of life?

VW: It broadened my scope in the farming community tremendously. You know we thought this was where all the wheat in the world was grown. We were

in areas all summer where other people grew a lot more wheat. The farming methods were different, as well as the weather. When something like that happens to you, you think in terms of, well, here's what I'm doing in my community this year, I wonder what they're doing in Texas, I wonder what they're doing in Oklahoma, or what are they doing in Kansas. And that stays with you. You never forget it. The other thing that impressed us that summer was the people that we met and continue to meet even to this day. I think they're the greatest people in the world. Great to do business with, and to visit with. I don't know of a class of people I'd rather do business with than the U.S. wheat farmer, as a whole.

TI: When you took off this first year, where in the world were you sleeping down there?

VW: That's a good question. We took a trailer along with us that was built out of plywood and 2 x 2s. It was 14 foot long and 7 1/2 foot wide. We had a carpenter build it for us. We had a set of springs under that trailer that would support a 10,000-pound load on the rear end. We hooked this behind the truck that was carrying the combine. In 1947 we had gravel roads for the most part. We'd hit these chugs going down the road, you know, chug-holes, and the springs being so stiff jarred nearly every nail out of that trailer.

On the way south that summer, we got into Mission, South Dakota, and it was our first experience with the rain. It rained like cats and dogs that night, and wherever there was a crack in the trailer, why of course water came through. We had mattresses, we had blankets, we had clothes, and they were soaked. Everything was wet. We got out of that trailer the next morning at Mission just like three drowned rats. After we got dried out, we continued on towards Valentine, Nebraska. We broke a spindle on this same trailer—hit too many chug holes and rough roads after the bad storm the night before. Of course we got our trailer fixed and started down towards the harvest with eager anticipation.

We were going to batch, too, that was the other thing. Mother sent along a three-burner hot plate and dishes and everything else that went with it, and we were going to buy our food down there. That lasted about one day.

TI: Wait a minute. Who was going to cook?

VW: Yes, that's right. Who was going to cook? Really, who was going to cook—that was the question. We got to drinking this Dr. Pepper down there, and we'd darn near make a meal out of that Dr. Pepper.

TI: Had you ever encountered Dr. Pepper before?

VW: No, we had no idea what it was. And the other thing, Tom, when we started working for these people, we generally had noon dinners with them. We got to drinking at the table at noon. I can remember the first time we sat down with these people, and Jim, Bert, and I were all sitting around the table drinking this stuff, and we had no idea in the world—it looked like wine, but we weren't too sure. Goldurn stuff was good, and it was quenching our thirst, but it wasn't doing anything to us, just quenching our thirst. So in the middle of the afternoon it got our curiosity and we finally asked the farmer there what in the world we were drinking. He said, "That's iced tea." Iced tea? What in the world was that? Is that anything like tea? Same thing, only put some ice in it. And that was our introduction to iced tea, and we drink it all the time down there now.

TI: And you've gone every year since?

VW: Yes sir, yes we have. The second year we went down we took three combines. We took a full crew down to complement the outfit. ... . Then in 1949, about that time the U.S. was starting to put restrictions on Canadians going into the United States. In other words, we couldn't go, was what it amounted to. [9]

So in the spring of '49 I got married, and Hazel and I went down. On our way down we ran into this fellow that was immigrating to the United States. I drove a combine for him part of that summer, a fellow by the name of Wally Altwasser, out of Regina. So we worked for him for about six weeks and then run into a fellow by the name of Taylor. And Taylor sold me one of his outfits. That was a way for us to get going on our own, and we did. That was about July this happened. From there we developed our own business and developed our own run and gradually built the business up to what it is today.

In all those years, Tom, I thought we had a period—you're talking about the good times and bad times in the harvesting business and talking about low prices and competition in the business—I thought the '50s were about as tough a decade as anytime I've been in the business.

What brought that on was it seemed like anyone who wanted to go combining, all they had to do was go down to the shop and buy themselves a combine. And the market and the know-how weren't there for all these combines that wanted to go out. Consequently, I saw a lot of hard times in the '50s among the cutters. To the extent where the Red Cross had to treat some of the boys and give them enough gasoline to drive home again. This happened at Kimball, Nebraska, and Dix, Nebraska, and Sydney, Nebraska. That happened during the middle '50s, and I remember those years. And all because there was a lot of money to be made there for a while. Of course the combines caught up with the demand, and they overdid it.

The good times, I thought, were through the '60s. Business kind of leveled off, people who were genuine operators were staying, the tail-enders were dropping out. Through the '70s I thought the people were becoming more stable than they were even through the '60s and being a little more professional in their work. Through the '70s I thought the business come of age. Today harvesters are a pretty solid business.

But through all these years you build a trust in the

people you work for, that's what I've found. By reason of this trust they made your work so darn much easier to cope with. You know you would think that farmers, the people who grow this wheat, they would pick and choose all the time who was going to cut their wheat, but that's not the case. They just settle in with one crew, and that person who was doing the work, if he was up-grading his equipment, up-grading his quality of work, and his word became his bond and it was genuine, they trusted each other.

This was something that I had to learn—I probably learned it the hard way in my earlier years; [I thought] that because I cut for this man last year, maybe I ought to go over and try another man next year. I didn't realize that you had to build up this trust and continuity. But that's one of the things you learn, and today that's the way you've got to operate. It took a long time for me to learn that. That is what happened through all those years, you built this trust on a continuing basis. I guess that's what makes this here business so darn appealing to me, because your word is your bond. If it isn't, you're not in the business.

Photo courtesy of Tom Isern.

Vernon Wildfong in the harvest field near Craik, Saskatchewan, 25 September 1995.

Endnotes

1 Saskatchewan Archives Board, Regina Office, Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture, Records of the Farm Labour Division, J.E. Snowball to M.E. Hartnett, 18 June 1946.

2 The histories of custom threshing and custom combining have been treated in my two books, *Bull Threshers and Bindlestiffs: Harvesting and Threshing on the North American Plains* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991) and *Custom Combining on the Great Plains: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981, and Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1981). For the transition from stationary threshing to combines see Thomas D. Isern and R. Bruce Shepard, "The Adoption of the Combine on the Canadian Plains," *American Review of Canadian Studies,* 16 (Winter 1986), 455-64.

3 The international aspects of custom harvesting are treated in *Custom Combining on the Great Plains,* Chapter 8, "Harvest Hands Across the Border," and in Thomas D. Isern, "Regional Agriculture and International Diplomacy: Canadian Wheat Harvesters on the North American Plains," paper presented to the Association for Canadian Studies in the United States, 1987, copy in author's possession.

4 This summary is based on the unpublished paper cited in note 3.

5 The research here mentioned was assisted by a grant from the Faculty Research and Creativity Committee, Emporia State University, and led to the paper cited in note 3. That study of the international aspects of custom harvesting was based mainly on documents in government and organizational files and interviews with leaders of harvesters' organizations in Canada and in the United States. The Wildfong interview was a welcome windfall, offering a participant's view of the history of the harvest, as told by one of the few individuals who had persisted from the 1940s to present.

6 Personal interview with Vernon A. Wildfong, 22 May 1987; field interview with Wildfong, 25 September 1995; *Craik: Friendliest Place by a Dam Site* (Craik History Book Committee, 1985), 543-47; Rick Wildfong, "Confessions of a Custom Combiner," *Grainews,* June 1984, 36-38, July 1984, 10-11.

7 Massey-Harris Company had released the No. 20 self-propelled combine in 1939 and followed with the improved No. 21 in 1940. The No. 21 SP, with a 14-foot header, was the favored machine of custom harvesters in the 1940s. The cut grain was moved along the platform of the No. 21 by a canvas apron.

8 Ridgeview, South Dakota, is located within the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation.

9 Owing to a decline in the price of wheat and to better availability of machines for farmer purchase, surpluses of combines prevailed in 1948-49. Consequently, the number of Canadian outfits permitted to enter the United States was reduced. In 1949, the U.S. Employment Service requested that no Canadian outfits be admitted. The only ones permitted entry were those, such as the prospective immigrant mentioned by Wildfong below, who were admitted under some special circumstance. See *Custom Combining on the Great Plains,* 52-55, 197.

Reconstructions of a Different Kind: The Mounted Police and the Rebirth of Fort Walsh, 1942-1966

by James De Jonge

> Fort Walsh has been dismantled and the police stationed there moved to Maple Creek ... . Very likely at some future day admirers of ancient ruins will rediscover its desolate mud chimneys and entwine them with romances such as the poetry loving people of the East believe to be the lot of every man who proceeded the Canadian Pacific Railway (*Benton Weekly Record,* 29 September 1883).

A Fort Benton, Montana newspaper proved remarkably accurate in its prediction that future generations might attach significance to the site of this North-West Mounted Police fort. The writer was aware of the aura already surrounding the Mounted Police, who had ventured into the Canadian Northwest in 1874 to assert sovereignty and establish "law and order." Fort Benton was a principal source of supplies for Fort Walsh, the frontier post erected by the Mounties in 1875 in the Cypress Hills area of present-day Saskatchewan. Despite its brief period of operation, Fort Walsh was long remembered by police and early settlers alike as a site that had witnessed important events in the history of the Canadian West. During the first half of the twentieth century, the appreciation of this historic place went far beyond a mere romanticization of ruins. Only sixty years after its abandonment in 1883, the fort was "reborn" as a historical reconstruction, a project undertaken by the Mounted Police themselves to re-establish a link with the early years of the force.

Today, thousands of tourists visit the site of the historic fort annually. The role of the police in the Canadian West during the turbulent years of the 1870s and 1880s is conveyed by interpretation panels set against a backdrop of reconstructed log buildings and a log palisade. These displays and re-created elements form an integral part of Fort Walsh National Historic Site, which has been administered by Parks Canada since 1968. Parks Canada's close association with the site today belies the fact that it had relatively little to do with the fort's early development. Visitors may not initially be aware that the log buildings were constructed by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police during the 1940s. Their accomplishment in resurrecting the fort is a fascinating chapter in the evolution of this national historic site. Fort Walsh has the distinction of being both an early example of a "reconstructed" historic site in Canada and one that had a peculiar, if not unique, purpose. Despite the immense work involved in re-creating the historic fort buildings in the 1940s, Fort Walsh was not meant to be a public attraction. Rather, the police designed it as an operational ranch or "remount station" for breeding and raising horses for ceremonial purposes. As envisioned by RCMP Commissioner Stuart Taylor Wood, the buildings were "historic shells" intended to evoke the character of the 1870s fort and thereby help the force maintain a link with its origins and traditions.

The log buildings at the site today probably tell us more about the Mounted Police in the 1940s than they do about the historic fort buildings of the 1870s, which they are supposed to emulate. It was quite an achievement for the police to establish a ranch in this relatively isolated location during the Second World War, and to carry out this activity using buildings that were also meant to be historicized shells. Unfortunately, the implications of this dual-purpose site were not fully thought out at the beginning, which created numerous challenges for the police and its commissioner in the years that followed. The events leading to the resurrection of Fort Walsh also form an interesting early chapter in the heritage preservation movement in Saskatchewan. The aspirations of various heritage-minded individuals and groups in the province coalesced during the 1930s, and became an important catalyst for raising and sustaining interest in this national historic site.[1] For all of these reasons, the modest log buildings at Fort Walsh merit a closer look.

GENESIS OF AN IDEA

The fort that captured the attention of the police and heritage enthusiasts during the first half of this century

James De Jonge is an historian/architectural historian who works for the National Historic Sites Directorate of Parks Canada in Ottawa. This article arises from his ongoing interest in historical reconstructions and in the built heritage of the Mounted Police.

had been an important centre of police activity in the late 1870s and early 1880s. Fort Walsh was established in a strategic location near the site of the notorious Cypress Hills Massacre where Natives had been killed by American fur traders in 1873, following a misunderstanding over the missing horse of a trader. This nationally reported event served as a catalyst for the despatch of the police to the West, and influenced the choice of the fort's location in the heart of the fur trading region. During its brief eight-year history, Fort Walsh grew rapidly in size and importance. It became the headquarters of the force in 1878 in response to the presence of a large party of Sioux under Sitting Bull and other chiefs who migrated to Canada to seek refuge after they defeated Custer at the Little Bighorn. Fort Walsh remained a major centre for treaty negotiations and police activity until the early 1880s, when the headquarters were moved to Regina, near the line of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Within a few years, little remained of Fort Walsh and its adjacent trading settlement, as most buildings were dismantled or left to decay.[2]

Following its abandonment by the Mounted Police in 1883, the site of Fort Walsh became integrated into a ranch operation—one of several established in the Cypress Hills region of southern Saskatchewan during the 1890s. The physical remains of the fort gradually deteriorated, becoming overgrown with vegetation and increasingly obscured by the overlay of ranching activity. Still, the site remained a vivid memory for many local settlers, Mounted Police veterans, and former residents of the abandoned trading community adjacent to the fort. The first concerted effort to acknowledge and mark the site, however, did not arise locally; it originated with the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC). Established in 1919, this federal advisory body was composed of historically minded individuals whose approach to commemoration focused on sites that exemplified the process of colonial expansion, with a particular appreciation for the role of military force. Fort Walsh fit comfortably within this nationalist vision, and became one of a multitude of military sites across the country commemorated for their national significance by the HSMBC during its early years.[3] The federal government acquired title to the 1870s Mounted Police cemetery beside Fort Walsh, where it erected a cairn and unveiled the HSMBC plaque in 1927. Written by Professor A.S. Morton of the University of Saskatchewan, the commemorative plaque reinforced the predominant colonial perspective that the Mounted Police "imposed Queen's Law on a fretful realm" where hunting parties of Native people "met and fought."[4]

In view of the fort's isolated location and the limited financial resources at their disposal, the HSMBC and the Dominion Parks Branch (the administering body of the HSMBC) were not eager to become involved in further site development in the years that followed. The impetus to do more came from local individuals and organizations during the 1930s. In 1931 the Canadian Club of Govenlock and the Old-Timers' Association of Maple Creek placed concrete markers at the corners of the former stockade at Fort Walsh, which by then was all but obliterated.[5] Prominent in this endeavour were David Fleming, an RCMP sergeant and history enthusiast in charge of the Maple Creek detachment, and Horace Greeley, an "Old-Timer" who had clerked in one of the stores in the village adjacent to the historic fort.

Their activities inspired others to the cause of heritage preservation, notably George Shepherd, a farmer and rancher who lived near the fort in Maple Creek, and who would later become the first curator of

National Archives of Canada, C15281.

Fort Walsh around 1878.

the Western Development Museum in Saskatoon. In 1932 Shepherd attended a rifle shoot and picnic at Fort Walsh sponsored by the Canadian Club and the Old-Timers as a fund-raiser to pay for the concrete markers. Here, he met Horace Greeley and "fell under the spell of his gospel."[6] In his published memoirs, Shepherd recalled that his visit to the site converted him to the "pioneer history of the West ... rather like a man who had cast everything aside to enter the ministry of the church ... ." This interest in history and historical preservation was also rooted in the harsh realities of the Depression. The widespread hardship on the Prairies resulting from crop failures and prolonged drought prompted Shepherd and others to "escape the unpleasant realities of the thirties" and retreat to "the good old days of the past." Shepherd explained:

> I led two lives during much of the thirties. I lived in the world of yesterday: the heartaches, the anxiety, the hopelessness of the Depression. I also lived in the region west of yesterday: the glamour, the vitality, and the purposefulness of bygone frontier history.
>
> I desperately needed an escape from the frustrations of drought and dust. What better escape than a flight into the heroic past? It was not a long journey, for all about us in the south country were aging giants of an earlier day.[7]

The activities of Shepherd and Greeley underline the important role of local enthusiasts in raising public awareness about the province's heritage, and in buttressing the work of the few professionally trained academics like A.S. Morton during this period. Shepherd began to collect information on the fort's history and spoke at picnics and other local gatherings to raise interest in the site. In January 1933, after a trust company foreclosed the mortgage on the ranch at the Fort Walsh site, he requested that the Dominion Parks Branch in Ottawa intervene to ensure the preservation of the site.[8] Other groups, inspired by Shepherd, reinforced his request. The Canadian Club of Shaunavon and the Saskatchewan Grain Growers Association, which held its convention in Shaunavon in 1933, passed resolutions urging the federal government to reserve the fort property as a national historic site. In Ottawa, James Harkin, the commissioner of the National Parks Branch, was not keen to become further involved in Fort Walsh, given financial constraints and the absence of major physical remains at the site. He conferred with the sole HSMBC member from the West, Judge Frederick Howay from New Westminster, who had supported the erection of the original plaque and cairn.[9] Howay probably captured the sentiments of federal bureaucrats in his terse reply: "I do not see that Fort Walsh was of such outstanding national importance as to justify its being classed as worthy of this action."[10]

Shepherd elicited a more sympathetic response from Stuart Taylor Wood, the assistant commissioner of the RCMP stationed at Regina. Wood had become acquainted with Shepherd after reading newspaper accounts of Shepherd's research into the heritage of the force, and by 1933 the two were close friends. Wood, who had entered the force in 1912 and served at numerous outposts in western Canada and the Arctic, had also developed a keen interest in the history and traditions of the Mounted Police. He followed in the footsteps of his father, Zachary Taylor Wood, a distinguished officer of the force who was recruited in 1885 and rose to the position of assistant commissioner before his death in 1915.[11] Around 1933 George Shepherd accompanied Stuart Taylor Wood to the Cypress Hills area where, according to Shepherd, the assistant commissioner too fell under the spell of the historic fort:

> After his initial visit to the Cypress Hills it was a case of love at first sight. The historic significance of Fort Walsh struck Stuart Wood like a bolt of lightning and from this he never fully recovered. The Fort had been built in 1875 in the beautiful Battle Creek Valley and Wood never rested until he had purchased the fort site... .[12]

For the remainder of the decade the fort remained in private hands, while Wood considered ways for the force to acquire the site. His affinity for the traditions of the force continued to grow as he gradually ascended to the position of RCMP commissioner in March 1938 at the age of forty-nine. He was influential in the establishment of the RCMP Museum at Depot Division in Regina in 1933, took steps to form a musical band, and subsequently commissioned an official history of the force, undertaken by John Peter Turner during the 1940s. His particular interest in Fort Walsh became evident soon after his appointment as commissioner, when he made an agreement with the National Parks Branch to look after the Mounted Police cemetery near the site of the historic fort. By 1939, using George Shepherd as a go-between, Wood was actively negotiating for the purchase of the fort site with Frank Nuttall, the owner.[13]

Since he lacked a mandate to purchase the property solely on the basis of its historic significance, Wood's strategy was to link the acquisition to the equestrian needs of the force. An experienced horseman himself, the commissioner was keen on preserving the force's equestrian tradition, which had been a characteristic feature of police work in the late-19th and early-20th centuries. Despite the advent of the automobile, the police still used horses on occasion into the 1930s for patrols and for the "control and dispersal of mobs and unlawful assemblies." By this time, however, the practical benefits of horses had become secondary to their symbolic role in promoting a positive popular image of the force. The importance attached to the mounted tradition was evident in the force's concern over the quality of its saddle horses, which in 1939 included about 150 mounts concentrated in Ottawa and Regina. That year the police secured a suitable stallion and began breeding mares in the existing stable facilities at Depot Division

in Regina.[14] Commissioner Wood devised a plan whereby Fort Walsh would be transformed into a horse-breeding station, a facility that he argued was essential for providing sufficiently large saddle horses that were of a consistent black tone—a colour that contrasted effectively with the force's scarlet uniforms.[15]

After making a tentative agreement with Frank Nuttall in 1939-40, Wood sought federal approval to acquire the Fort Walsh site. A cut in the force's budget for 1941 prevented the commissioner from securing the deal, but he persevered the following year. In his justification for purchasing the site, Wood blamed the shortage of saddle horses on the American and French governments, which had been buying horses since the outset of the war. He also claimed that mounted patrols were becoming increasingly attractive in the face of gas rationing. As an added measure, he sought the political support of James Gardiner, the former Premier of Saskatchewan who was now the federal Minister of Agriculture. In the end, the Privy Council succumbed to his plan and authorized the purchase in August 1942, which included over 700 acres of deeded land and nearly 1700 acres of leased grazing land.[16] Wood's accomplishment was noteworthy, given that the force's principal ceremonial function for its horses, the famed Musical Ride, had been temporarily suspended in 1939 because of the war, and would not be reinstated until 1948.[17] Nonetheless, for an initial investment of $10,000, the RCMP would get its black horses, and the commissioner his historic site.

ARRIVING AT THE APPROXIMATE, 1942-1948

Commissioner Wood and the Mounted Police wasted little time in re-creating Fort Walsh as a specialized detachment for breeding horses. His intention, however, was not simply to develop a conventional ranch near the site or to renovate the existing buildings from the Nuttall ranch. The commissioner had in mind the far more ambitious goal of actually reconstructing log buildings from the original fort. These replicas, erected on their original sites, would accommodate the various operational needs of the remount station. While historical reconstructions were by no means a new phenomenon, the dual purpose behind Commissioner Wood's plan for Fort Walsh was quite unusual. Officially, the site was not intended to be developed as a tourist attraction. Instead, it would be an operational police detachment, albeit one with a unique character that would provide a tangible link with the force's origins and traditions.

Wood's private motives appear to have been the driving force behind the project, though he apparently never articulated his vision in writing in any comprehensive way. George Shepherd's account leads us to believe that Wood's interest in the site was akin to a religious conversion. The commissioner's enthusiasm may also have been rooted in the changing nature of police work in the 20th century, which was increasingly focused on urban areas and issues such as labour unrest. Commissioner Wood, like Shepherd, may have been trying to escape some of the realities of the time and reinforce the connection with frontier policing and the early years of the force. Still, an obvious question that remains is who exactly was supposed to benefit from the considerable effort invested in the reconstruction? Given the isolated location of the remount station and its specialized purpose, this was a site that relatively few members of the RCMP would ever see. Moreover, the remount station was not intended to be a tourist destination.

Wood's overall approach was to re-create the fort as it would have appeared around 1877 to 1879, but in a manner that combined the principle of practicality with vague and generalized notions of the past. To facilitate the operation of the remount station, it made sense not to strive for a faithful replica of Fort Walsh, but merely a stylized and sanitized shell of the original. The police did not reconstruct all the fort buildings, just those that would be useful to the functioning of the remount station. Hidden behind the romanticized image of the frontier police fort was the stark reality that this had not been an especially attractive or desirable place to live during the late 1870s. Dirt, discomfort and disease were characteristic features of the early forts, but these elements did not fit well with the popular and idealized view of the past.

Using the ranch buildings adjacent to the fort as a base of operations, the police engaged several constables and civilians in 1942 and 1943, including Frank Nuttall, the former owner of the ranch, who began cutting logs and preparing the site.[18] Nuttall supervised much of the day-to-day work and conferred closely with RCMP Sergeant David Fleming, whose passion for the history of the force rivalled that of the commissioner. George Shepherd was also consulted frequently. Despite their enthusiasm, the police had only scant historical evidence to guide the reconstruction work. In the absence of accurate plans of original buildings and their arrangement, they relied heavily on recollections of veterans of the force who had served at Fort Walsh, and on a few surviving historical photographs. This information was supplemented by some "pick and shovel archaeology" undertaken by individuals with no formal training in excavation.

Determining the appearance and location of each of the original fort buildings proved to be a challenging task, complicated by the numerous structural changes made to the fort during its brief period of operation. As Commissioner Wood summed it up in January 1943, a few months before work was to begin on the first buildings, "the further we go the more confused it gets."[19] The following year the police were still unable to determine the precise evolution of the fort. John Peter

Turner, the historian employed by the force, noted: "We cannot nail down a plan to fit in with all the various changes that went on from time to time, and it will be necessary, to a great extent, to arrive at the approximate."[20]

The operational dictates of the remount station undoubtedly influenced the reconstruction concept and contributed to the unique character of the site. The stylized and sanitized nature of the buildings was, however, consistent with reconstruction projects of the day that were specifically built as tourist attractions. During the 1930s various levels of government funded the reconstruction of buildings at historic sites, in part as Depression relief projects; notable examples were the Port Royal Habitation in Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley, and Fort York and Fort George in Ontario. In all of these projects, historical evidence was used when available and when it suited the underlying predisposition to present and evoke a generalized "pioneer aesthetic." Scant site-specific data was readily supplemented by conjectural knowledge of the "typical" whenever detailed evidence was lacking.[21] The exposed log structures at Fort Walsh fit nicely within the prevailing contemporary view that pioneer buildings should convey a rugged, woody aesthetic.

Another and more direct influence on the Fort Walsh reconstructions was the rustic building programs that had evolved in the national parks in western Canada during the opening decades of the twentieth century. With its emphasis on peeled-log construction and natural stone surfaces, the rustic design approach was popular for the construction of park administration and recreational buildings. Rustic park buildings harmonized with the natural surroundings and evoked the virtues of a rural pre-industrial era.[22] The overall aesthetic was similar to that conveyed by the reconstructions at Fort George and comparable historic sites. The Mounted Police took advantage of the knowledge and construction experience accumulated by the national park administrators.

In Ottawa, using historical photographs as a guide, Commissioner Wood had some rudimentary drawings prepared for several Fort Walsh buildings in 1943. The execution of the design, however, was left largely to the discretion of skilled logmen recommended by the National Parks Branch who had constructed many buildings at Prince Albert National Park in Saskatchewan in the preceding years.[23] Specific construction details were not a priority, as evidenced by the use of off-the-shelf windows and building hardware from a nearby outlet store of the Beaver Lumber Company in the town of Maple Creek.[24] Commenting on the rough drawings for the first three buildings to be erected in 1943, Wood emphasized that they were to be used as a rough guide, supplemented by historical photographs and by the foreman's own judgement:

> Wherever there is any doubt, keep as close to the original design of the buildings as possible in regard to the windows, interior layout, doors, etc., as I can only indicate to you my ideas in a rather rough way; in other words, follow the photographs as closely as practicable. I leave it to your own good judgement in the majority of questions, as you know the policy I have discussed from time to time.[25]

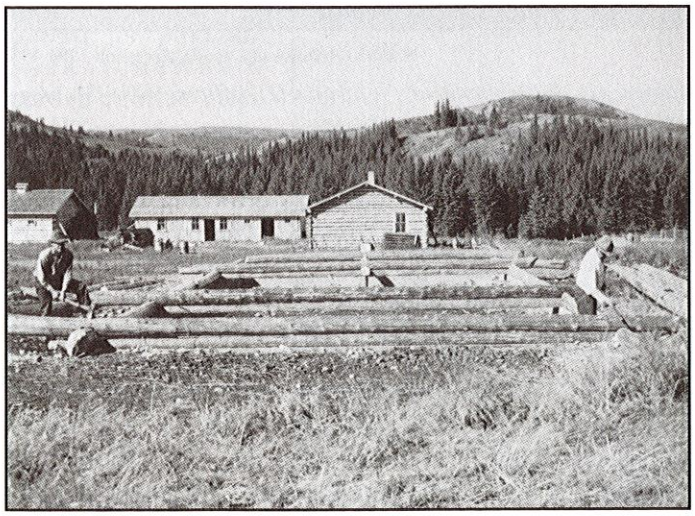
From 1943 to 1948 the police constructed eight buildings on the site of historic Fort Walsh (see photo on page 28). All but one (the artisans building) were built using horizontally laid logs, connected at the corners with saddle-notched joints and covered with low-pitched gable roofs. Log cross walls divided the interiors into rooms. Although this traditional construction technology had been employed on the original fort buildings, the 1940s reconstructions were set on concrete foundations, with cement or plaster chinking between the logs in place of the clay-based mixtures applied to the originals. The horizontal log-work beneath the gable ends was continued up to the roofline even though the historical photos available to the RCMP showed many gable ends covered by vertical boards. The roofs were supported by log purlins, rafters, boards and an exterior cladding of red asphalt shingles. By contrast, the roofs of barracks and workshops from the original fort had been clad with split poles laid flush from a central ridge pole to the rafters, on top of which was placed a layer of clay to serve as insulation, and a final covering of overlapping planks. Wood-shingle roofs were reserved for storage buildings where the extra expense could be justified on the basis of preventing goods from being damaged by water.[26]

The overall aesthetic of the remount station was more reminiscent of the rustic buildings in the national parks, from which many of the design elements were borrowed. In this way the RCMP avoided several unpleasant aspects of the original fort, including leaking roofs, infestation by vermin and a prevailing dampness, which had caused a virulent and recurring fever in the late 1870s and early 1880s. To remedy this problem the police had routinely whitewashed and fumigated the barracks with burning sulphur and pulled up the floors to dry out the interiors.[27] The historic ambience of the 1940s remount station was also affected by utility poles and overhead powerlines that brought electricity to the various buildings.

Despite numerous concessions to modernity, Commissioner Wood attempted, where possible, to use the remount station buildings in a manner sympathetic to the functions of the historic fort buildings they represented. An obvious functional link between past and present was evident in the large log stable for the remount station, which was located near the site of a horse stable from the 1870s fort. Adjacent to the stable the police constructed a vertical-log artisans building that accommodated a carpenter's shop, blacksmith's shop and sick horse stable for the remount station. It too was situated in the same general area as buildings

from the original fort which had served similar functions. The vertical-log design was historically appropriate for workshop buildings of this kind, although the logs would have been set directly into a trench in the 1870s. The vertical logs of the 1940s version were set on, and toe-nailed to, a timber base which rested on a concrete foundation in order to prevent their decay.

The residence for the ranch foreman, located as it was on the site of the quarters of Superintendent James Morrow Walsh, the commanding officer of the historic fort, also demonstrated the link between past and present. Probably the most interesting building was the reconstructed quarters of A.G. Irvine, assistant commissioner of the Mounted Police during the Fort Walsh era. This was one of the first buildings erected at the remount station in 1943, and it initially served as a residence for the ranch employees. Around 1951 after his retirement from the force, however, Wood used the building as his summer retreat, in an obvious effort to establish a link with his predecessor. Wood may have been contemplating his retirement plans already in 1943 when he reviewed the design drawings for the commissioner's residence. He requested that the workmen strive for accuracy in replicating the building's dimensions, construction materials, and window placement, but was pragmatic in stipulating the inclusion of conventional hardwood flooring and an attractive stone masonry fireplace in place of a utilitarian and historically appropriate woodstove. Wood noted that, "Only



National Archives of Canada, Accession 1996-400

The "Officers Mess" under construction at the remount station, Fort Walsh, 1948.

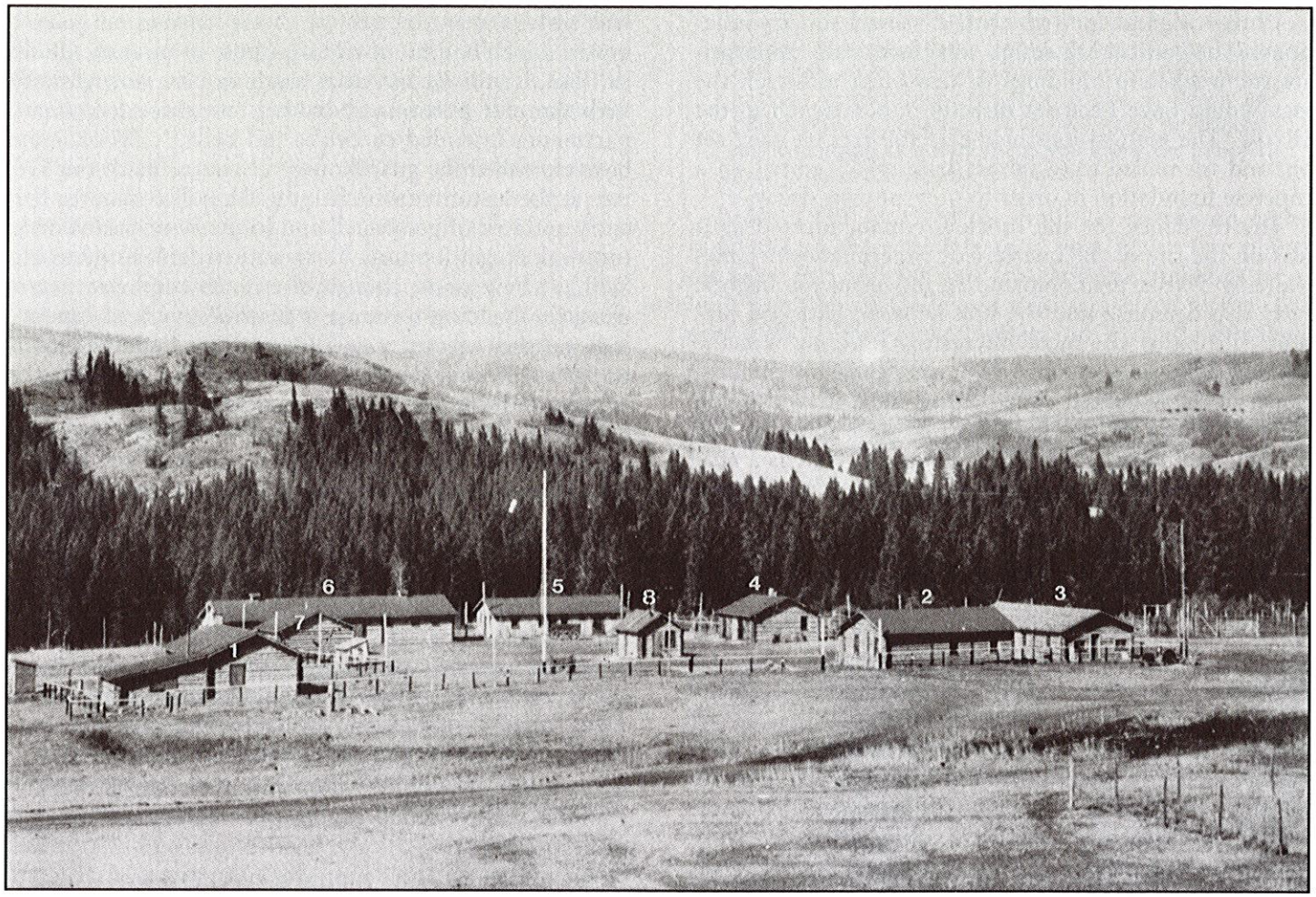
the builder can advise whether it is more practical to build the fireplace on the outside of the building, the inside, or build it into the wall. Any of the three will suit me ... . I am not particular as to the size of the fireplace, other than that it take wood from 3 1\2 to 4 feet long ... ."[28]

Some of the remount station buildings lacked obvious counterparts from the original fort. The historical fit was awkward in the case of the reconstructed guardhouse, which had no obvious purpose at a ranch. Built in 1943, it initially served as a granary for storing oats, with the rear portion subdivided into three feed compartments intended to evoke jail cells.[29] Wood may have cherished the guardhouse because of its distinctive role at the historic fort in helping the police monitor the entry and exit of personnel, and for its associations with internal discipline and "law and order" in general. Within a few years, though, the ranch employees were using the building to house a gasoline-powered generator, and they erected a new log granary building closer to the stable on a site loosely corresponding to that of a bakery and kitchen from the original fort.[30] It must have required quite a stretch of the imagination for the ranch hands to refer to the remount station's two-vehicle garage as the "Magazine" simply because it was built of logs and situated near the site of the historic fort building used for storing gun powder and armaments.

The decision not to reconstruct the palisade limited the effectiveness of the remount station in evoking the atmosphere of the original fort. The police built a fence around the site's perimeter along the line of the circa 1878 palisade, though this probably reinforced the site's attributes as an operational ranch. Moreover, the relatively small number of reconstructed buildings did not readily convey the impression of a military site capable of accommodating a large garrison, in contrast to the original fort with its numerous, hastily constructed buildings. Still, by following a gradual program of erecting a few buildings each year, the police had by 1948 completed work on the ranch and achieved the commissioner's goal of re-creating, in a generalized manner, the historic fort. Set among the scenic Cypress Hills, the dual-purpose breeding ranch/historical reconstruction was the culmination of one man's vision. Combining these two functions at one site had required considerable energy and imagination on the part of Commissioner Wood and the RCMP. Reconciling these rather disparate purposes at this remote location, however, would prove equally challenging in the decades to follow.

THEY RAISE HORSES, DON'T THEY?

Despite the historicized appearance of the remount station, its primary purpose until the mid-1960s was to breed and raise horses for police work. In 1943 the police transferred brood mares, colts, and a stallion to Fort Walsh from Depot Division in Regina, where they had been breeding mares for several years. In late 1944 the commissioner noted there were about fifty horses at the site, though the number would fluctuate from year to year.[31] Each spring about fifteen foals were born at Fort Walsh, where they remained until the age of three. At that time the police transported those deemed suitable for equestrian training to Depot Division, and sold



National Archives of Canada, Accession 1996-400

Remount station at Fort Walsh, ca. 1948-50, showing commissioner's residence (1), superintendent's residence (2), officers mess (3), magazine (4), artisans building (5), stable (6), bakery/granary (7), and guardhouse (8).

the remaining horses or transferred them to other government agencies.[32] Managed by a permanent staff of two or three employees, the ranch fulfilled its mandate of supplying the RCMP with the horses it required for ceremonial purposes. An article in the Globe and Mail in 1958 boasted that Fort Walsh had provided twenty-nine of the thirty-six "perfectly-matched blacks used in the world-famed RCMP Musical Ride."[33]

The success of the remount station did not come easy, however. Commissioner Wood, who spent his summers at Fort Walsh after retiring in 1951, no doubt enjoyed his evenings contemplating the traditions of the force in front of his fireplace in the reconstructed quarters of Commissioner Irvine. But those responsible for day-to-day operations confronted a less-romanticized reality, namely that Fort Walsh was not an ideal place for raising horses. In part, the difficulties stemmed from the severe winter climate, isolated location, and rough terrain, which caused twisted joints, sprains, and broken hooves to the horses. The ranch staff complained about the poor quality of the well water and had to contend with log buildings that were cracking and rotting in places by the early 1950s.[34]

Moreover, a report prepared by the Swift Current Experimental Farm around 1954 criticized the feeding value of the range grass in the locality, which was believed responsible for the slow maturation of the horses. The police responded in the late 1950s by moving two log buildings close to the stable to be used for storing and preparing feed supplements for the horses. The police had constructed these two buildings around 1945 south of the ranch at Battle Creek to serve as an ice house and meat house for the remount station.[35] In their new locations within the fort, they were simply positioned on the approximate site of a large barracks building from the original fort, perhaps to reduce their inappropriateness to the site as historical reconstructions.

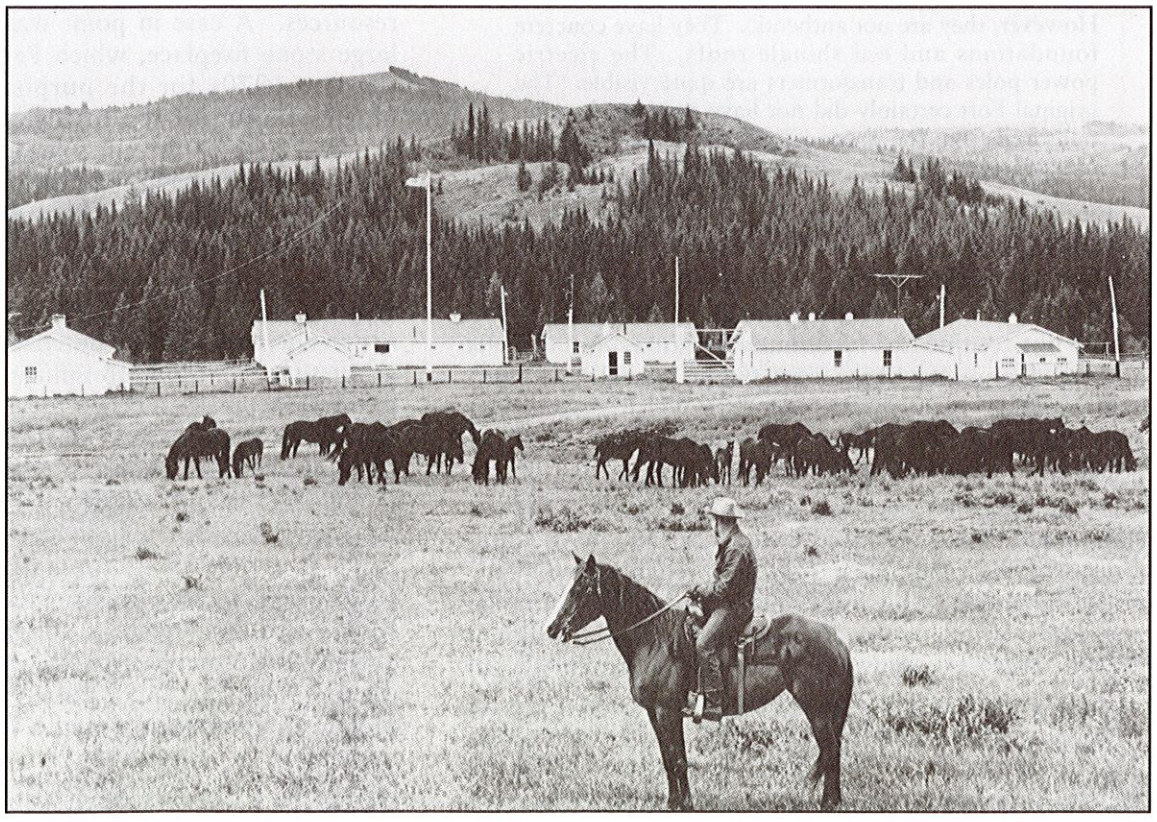
The large log stable also proved insufficient to the needs of the remount station. During the late 1950s several of the single standing stalls were removed and replaced with more commodious box stalls used for foaling, and the ceiling was lowered and lined with planks to minimize heat loss during the cold winter months. The ranch hands still found the interior confining for the horses, but ex-Commissioner Wood scuttled

plans to build an extension to the stable, on the grounds that this would impair the building's historical character. He did, however, sanction the addition of a doorway in the southern end in 1957 to permit access by a team and wagon, and thereby facilitate the handling of feed and manure.[36] Eventually, in 1962, the police built a new frame foaling stable behind the log stable to resolve the situation. Time and time again, modifications to improve the functioning of the remount station had to be reconciled with the site's historic character, whether real or imagined. Although the balance seemed to shift gradually in favour of the practical needs of the horse ranch, the ever-watchful ex-Commissioner Wood strove to maintain an appropriate historical ambience.

Although climate, geography, and the functional qualities of the buildings created problems for the operation of the remount station, probably the greatest challenge was the influx of tourists. The police had never intended the remount station to become an attraction, but once the historic fort was rebuilt it was probably inevitable that tourists would come. In the early years, visitors occasionally came to this curious site to see how the police had resurrected the old fort to raise horses. During the 1950s, interest in the site increased with the development of Cypress Hills Provincial Park in the vicinity of the fort, and also in response to a growing public interest in historic sites generally in the post-War era. In 1955-56 the profile of Fort Walsh was raised by the provincial government, which included the site in a tourist guide published as part of Saskatchewan's golden jubilee celebrations. As more and more visitors arrived, the novelty wore off for the ranch's permanent staff of two, who were not prepared to deal with upwards of fifteen cars a day during the weekend in the summer months.[37]

The remount station became the focus of public attention in 1956 when an editorial in the *Maple Creek News* complained about the poor reception and inadequate facilities reported by several disgruntled visitors. The issue embarrassed the police and no doubt raised larger questions about the mandate of the remount station. Was this merely an operational RCMP detachment, or a legitimate tourist destination? The official police line was to emphasize that the force was not in the tourist business, and to express regret that the remount station did not meet the expectations of those who chose to journey there.[38] The problem was not easily resolved, however, and the police increasingly viewed tourists as an irritation they were anxious to avoid. They posted a sign outlining the history of the site to visitors but emphasizing that none of the buildings had any historic value. At one point the police apparently suggested that provincial heritage officials ask the press not to write about the fort, though a senior provincial bureaucrat pointed out that such a tactic was impractical and likely to reflect adversely on the RCMP.[39]

While neither the federal or provincial governments actively promoted Fort Walsh as a tourist attraction in the late 1950s, interest in the site peaked in 1960-61, following the filming and release of the Twentieth Century Fox production of "The Canadians," segments of which were shot on location at the site and in the vicinity. The public was understandably confused about this site, which seemed to possess the obvious attributes of an historical attraction, yet was practically inaccessible to visitors.[40] An editorial article in the *Calgary Herald* in November 1960 captured the growing frustration with the RCMP:



National Archives of Canada, Accession 1996-400.

Ranch hands monitoring horses at Fort Walsh, probably early 1960s.

> There is good reason why the public should not stream through the ranch buildings. At the same time the ranch is in an area of great beauty that is an historic site. In time word-of-mouth advertising will defeat the government's intention to keep it hidden. For better public relations the full story, past and present, should be told at Maple Creek.[41]

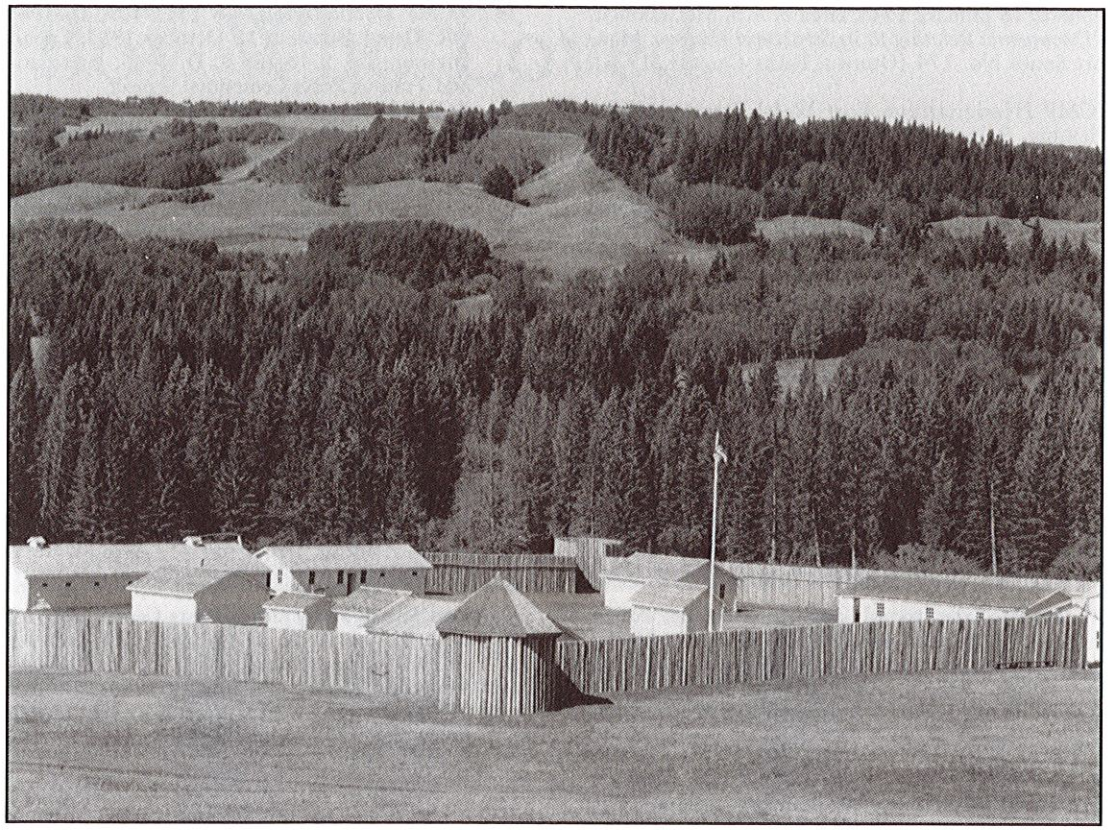
The public, indeed, could not be deterred from visiting the site. In 1960-61 the police and its federal bureaucrats lobbied heritage and tourism officials at the federal and provincial levels to provide seasonal guides to deal with visitors to Fort Walsh. Their efforts proved unsuccessful, however, in large part because the remount station was officially an RCMP detachment, which nobody, including the Mounties, had a clear mandate for developing as an historical attraction.[42] In the summer of 1965 about twenty cars arrived during the weekdays and forty to fifty on the weekends. The continuing influx astonished the ranch hands who must have found it difficult to carry out their duties efficiently while coping with tourists intent on seeing the "historic fort." An RCMP property engineer who visited the site that year was dismayed by the poor quality of the reconstructions. His report had parallels with the fable of the "Emperor's New Clothes," in which someone finally stepped forward to point out that the emperor was not exactly dressed in the finest attire:

> It is evident that we will get tourists at the Fort. What are they going to see? The buildings as they stand are well constructed, white washed and clean. However, they are not authentic. They have concrete foundations and red shingle roofs. The electric power poles and transformers are quite visible. The original Fort certainly did not have concrete foundations and from the photographs, the roofs were split logs covered in mud, probably sodded.[43]

Ex-Commissioner Wood might not have been amused by this assessment, but by then his involvement in the site was coming to an end. By the time of his death in 1966 the police had already concluded that Fort Walsh would not continue to accommodate horses and tourists at once. Conscious of the site's public appeal, they initiated plans in 1965 to develop Fort Walsh as a tourist attraction to celebrate Canada's centennial. In 1966 the police announced their decision to relocate the horse-breeding operation to Pakenham, Ontario, close to their stables and riding school in Ottawa.[44] Despite the limitations of the remount station as a reconstruction, the police enhanced its historical character by rebuilding the non-commissioned officers quarters from the original fort to serve as a museum/interpretation building, and by erecting a palisade along one side of the site. In addition, they reconstructed the two nearby fur trading posts (Soloman's and Farwell's) and developed amenities for the convenience of visitors. This work was done with the knowledge and partial collaboration of the National and Historic Parks Branch which agreed in principle in January 1966 to take over administration of the site at a future date. The RCMP, not anxious to remain in the historic sites business, completed the transfer in 1968.[45] The details of the site's second makeover as a historical attraction for Canada's centennial fall outside the scope of this paper, though this redevelopment, like that initiated by Commissioner Wood decades earlier, has left an imprint on the site to this day.

The transfer of the remount station to Ontario in 1966 marked the end of the unusual function that Fort Walsh had served since 1943. In one sense it brought to an end Commissioner Wood's vision of raising horses there, but this had always been a means to his primary aim of safeguarding this historic site and the traditions it embodied. Parks Canada's administration of the site over the past decades has resulted in the construction of a larger, more imposing palisade and an enhanced interpretation program. Though adapted for exhibits and administrative uses, most of the remount station buildings from the 1940s have survived and still contribute to the site's distinctive rustic character.

Over the years, Parks Canada has wrestled with the question of how best to manage the resources inherited from Commissioner Wood and the RCMP. On the one hand, efforts have been made to modify the roofs and other elements of these buildings so that they better reflect the 1870s era. This approach has been tempered by a concern that the remount station's historical "imperfections" may in fact possess value as cultural resources. A case in point was Commissioner Wood's large stone fireplace, which Parks Canada removed in the late 1970s for the purpose of enhancing public understanding of the historic 1870s period. In the process, part of the site's legacy from the 1940s was lost. With the passage of time, at least two buildings—the stable and the commissioner's residence—have been determined to possess heritage value because of their unique associations with the Mounted Police in the 20th century. Indeed, Commissioner Wood's vision for the site in the late 1930s, limited though it may have been at the time, continues to influence the visitor experience today. His precise motives for initiating the project may always be open to speculation. Was the Fort Walsh reconstruction in essence a powerful man's act of self-indulgence, or did it reflect a broader concern to reinforce a link with the past for the benefit of the whole force at a time when the nature of police work had shifted away from frontier law enforcement? The RCMP and their remount station are part of the rather curious and complex story conveyed to visitors interested in the evolution of Fort Walsh. These unassuming buildings continue to provide a link to the early development of this national historic site. They also form an interesting episode in the history of the Mounted Police and the evolution of the heritage preservation movement in the province of Saskatchewan.



Parks Canada.

Fort Walsh in 1982, showing palisade reconstructed by Parks Canada.

Endnotes

1 This paper grew out of a heritage evaluation report on the remount station buildings prepared by the author in 1989 for the Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office (FHBRO). See James De Jonge, "Ten Buildings, Fort Walsh National Historic Park Saskatchewan," FHBRO Building Report, 88-68.

2 Studies on the early history of Fort Walsh include: A.B. McCullough, *Fort Walsh National Historic Site: An Administrative History* (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1994) and Papers Relating to the North-West Mounted Police and Fort Walsh, Manuscript Report Series No. 213 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1977); Philip Goldring, "Whisky, Horses and Death: The Cypress Hills Massacre and its Sequel," *Canadian Historic Sites: Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History,* No. 21 (1979), 41-70; and Ellen McLeod, Fort Walsh, Saskatchewan, Manuscript Report Series No. 62 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1969).

3 Shannon Ricketts, "Cultural Selection and National Identity: Establishing Historic Sites in a National Framework, 1920-1939," *The Public Historian,* Vol. 18, No. 3 (Summer 1996), 24-25. On the evolution of the heritage preservation movement in Saskatchewan see, Don Kerr, "In Defence of the Past: A History of Saskatchewan Heritage Preservation, 1922-1983," *Prairie Forum,* Vol. 15, No. 2 (Fall 1990), 277-300. Kerr discusses early commemorations by the HSMBC in the 1920s, but not the efforts by individuals and organizations in the province to preserve the site of Fort Walsh in the 1930s.

4 National Archives of Canada (hereafter NA), RG84, Records of Parks Canada, Vol. 1385, HS-10-10, pt. 1. Fort Walsh was one of only eight sites in Saskatchewan designated by the HSMBC prior to 1951.

5 Ibid., pt. 2, Fleming to Starnes, 4 March 1931; George Shepherd, *West of Yesterday* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965), 115-18.

6 Shepherd, *West of Yesterday,* 115-16.

7 Shepherd, *West of Yesterday,* 116.

8 NA, RG84, Vol. 1385, HS-10-10, pt. 2, Shepherd to Harkin, 20 January 1933.

9 Ibid., Harkin to Howay, 26 July 1933.

10 Ibid., Howay to Harkin, 15 September 1933.

11 G.T. Hann, "Ex-Commissioner Stuart Taylor Wood, CMG," *RCMP Quarterly,* Vol. 17, No. 1 (July 1951), 4-9; George Shepherd, *Brave Heritage* (Saskatoon: Modern Press, 1967), 122-26.

12 Shepherd, *Brave Heritage,* 124.

13 McCullough, *Fort Walsh National Historic Site: An Administrative History,* 18, 39.

14 *RCMP Annual Report* (1936), 32; (1939), 30; (1940), 24.

15 Sergeant R.R. Van Patten, "Police Remounts," *RCMP Quarterly,* Vol. 16, No. 4 (April 1951), 287.

16 McCullough, *Fort Walsh National Historic Site: An Administrative History,* 19.

17 S.W. Horrall, *The Pictorial History of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1973), 159-60.

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The Boy Who Loved James Fenimore Cooper

by Cherie Smith

My father, Iser Steiman, had a reverence for learning and a great sense of history. When he retired in 1975, he greeted with enthusiasm my suggestion that he record his life, especially since it meant we could spend a day doing this together. Wednesday, Mother played bridge. We'd be alone in the house. When I arrived in the morning at ten, he'd have the kettle boiling to make tea, Russian-style, clear with a dollop of mother's strawberry jam or blackberry varenye. We'd sit at the kitchen table. I'd flip on the tape recorder and he'd start reminiscing. For lunch, he'd bring out a tin of Baltic sardines (of which he was inordinately fond) or herring with sour cream and sliced onions. Of course, nothing tasted as good as he remembered it did when he was a boy in Latvia.

He had been born in Dvinsk in 1898, a year before his step-uncle Robert left for America. It seemed that his entire childhood was punctuated by Robert's letters from Winnipeg, which was obviously a suburb of San Francisco. As Jews, my father and his family had suffered the indignities and hardships as a result of an anti-Semitic state policy. They were forced to live within the "Pale of Settlement." But in spite of all the restrictions imposed by the Czar, his father had done fairly well as a representative for W.H. Böker, a German cutlery manufacturer in Solingen. He could well afford to send his son and older daughter to the Gymnasium, or secondary school, where they studied Greek, Latin, French and German. His father believed that only losers, or ne'er-do-wells like his step-brother Robert, emigrated. When his son expressed an extreme desire to go to America, he suggested that he continue his studies in Germany. But Iser had read the Russian translations of American writer James Fenimore Cooper, especially *The Last of the Mohicans,* and had fallen in love with Cooper's new world vision of space of freedom. There was no stopping him.

Cherie Smith was born in Saskatchewan and graduated from the University of British Columbia. She lives in Vancouver with her husband, two children and three grandchildren. "The Boy Who Loved James Fenimore Cooper" has been excerpted from Mendel's Children, *a book length account of four generations of Russian Jewish immigrants on the Canadian prairies, to be published soon by the University of Calgary Press.*

In 1912, at the age of fourteen, my father left his family in Latvia, crossed an ocean and a continent by himself, and landed in Winnipeg. He worked hard to learn English and earn his board and keep. Eventually, he graduated from St. John's High School with the top marks necessary for acceptance into medical school at the University of Manitoba. He'd made the quota. It was well-known within the Jewish community, as well as outside of it, that there were implicit quotas on the number of Jewish students accepted by the country's medical schools. Moreover, Jews were not appointed to important positions in Manitoba. There were no Jewish judges, no Jewish professors. Jews were banned from joining some private clubs and from living in certain residential areas of Winnipeg, and such Jewish doctors as the university graduated could not get hospital appointments.

Meanwhile, in 1916, news from the front filled the newspapers every day. My father was distressed. He had joined the Canadian Officers Training Corps (COTC) and tried to enlist, but could not get parental permission because his parents had been exiled to Siberia and were unreachable. As he was writing his exams, his friends were part of the heroic Canadian force that took Vimy Ridge. He decided that he, in conscience, could not go back to university in the fall, but instead had to find a job that allowed him to serve his new country in a meaningful way. An official in the Manitoba Department of Education, a Mr. Ira Strachan, offered him a teaching post in one of the more isolated corners of the province that would test the mettle of any patriot.

The one-room Moose Bay School, grades one to eight, was forty miles by rough road from the nearest railway station at The Pas, which was the closest town. The store was seven miles away. The price of food was sky-high because of the inaccessibility of the place. And the mail, when it happened to get through, was delivered by horse and buggy, or by sleigh. The school district's population was nearly one hundred percent Ukrainian farmers, whose strongly anti-Russian heritage resulted in the public expression of pro-German sympathies during the war. In fact, they had torn down the Union Jack from over the school and had refused to send their children to be taught by the previous teacher, an Englishman. Iser accepted the challenge and spent two years there before returning to his medical studies.

In 1924, my father graduated and then faced the

problem of finding a suitable location to set up practice. Word had already spread via the Jewish telegraph that he wanted to set up a rural practice. He soon received a call from a man who ran the grain elevator in the small town of Benito, Manitoba. The man told him that the resident Doctor Baldwin, who was in his seventies, was over-worked, and that a doctor who could speak Russian and German would be welcomed there by the many Doukhobors, Mennonites and Jews in the area.

One summer's evening, with a diploma and three dollars in his pocket, Iser, now twenty-six years old, stepped onto the railway platform in Benito where he was met by the elevator operator and several of the man's friends. On their advice, he rented a room above the Chinese restaurant and, as protocol required, presented himself the next morning to Dr. Baldwin, who dryly assured him that he had no objection to his setting up practice there. Baldwin asked if he had rented an office yet, and Iser told him he had heard that the former tailor's shop on the main street was available. Feeling confidant about the future, Iser returned to Winnipeg the next day to gather up his personal belongings and medical supplies. Two days later, he was back in Benito, only to find that Dr. Baldwin had seen to it that the tailor's shop had been rented, along with every other previously-available accommodation, except for his bedroom over the Chinese restaurant.

Patients, however, were already anxious to consult the new young doctor, office or no. A friendly storekeeper came to his rescue by offering (for fifteen dollars a month) a room above his store. Iser was more than delighted and, using a kitchen table for examinations, immediately set to work. Occasionally, the friendly elevator operator drove him out to make house calls; otherwise he used the services of the drayman. The fee for house calls was a dollar a mile, so he did very well.

As a new young doctor, he had some distinct advantages. He had boundless energy and he could speak Russian, German and Ukrainian. But most of all, he had a talent for humanity, as Chekhov put it. He soon fell in love with the land and felt at home with the people who worked it. Consequently, it was not long before he became enormously popular, successful and respected.

He had only been in Benito a month when two Jewish merchants from Aaron, just across the Saskatchewan border and a whistle-stop away along the Canadian National Railway (CNR) branch line, convinced him to set up office there one or two days a week. Since the town was not large enough to support a full-time doctor, Iser arranged to rent a small back room in the post office for ten dollars a month.

In the late fall of 1924, he was able to purchase an ancient Model A Ford, complete with struts and side curtains, and allowed himself the small luxury of a Kodak box camera. As he tootled along the bumpy roads, he would stop now and then to capture an incomparable prairie scene. On calls to remote farms, he photographed his patients – an old Ukrainian woman spinning, a work-worn mother standing with her child at the door of a thatched cottage, a farmer carrying a pail, a woman leading the cows home. There was time in those days – time to sit down with his patient's family, to enjoy a bowl of borscht with freshly baked bread, to talk, to take a picture or two. Back in town, he would develop the film in his darkened office with chemicals he mixed himself. Some years later in Kamsack, he used more sophisticated equipment in the darkroom he set up in the King Edward Hospital for processing x-rays. His lifelong love of photography was rivalled only by his devotion to books.

Early in 1925, Iser moved his main office from Benito to Pelly, a town of 257, some ten miles west of Aaron. He had never been able to overcome his distaste for Dr. Baldwin and his cohorts, whose influence pervaded his town like a miasma. It may also have been that Iser now saw his medical future in Saskatchewan rather than in Manitoba.

In Pelly he had the good fortune to meet Laura Shatsky whom he married in 1926. Shortly after their first child, Marcie, was born in 1927, he was invited from time to time by Dr. Tran, who was the only resident doctor in Kamsack, to assist with surgery at the Kamsack General Hospital. Even though it could take as many as seven hours travel to make the trip, or even a whole day if one got stuck in the mud, this was an opportunity that could not be missed. Still, Iser wanted to operate in conditions that were more than makeshift. He was, after all, a surgeon as well as a physician. It was this experience that soon convinced him that he needed hospital facilities if he were to give his patients the best of care.

At that time the booming town of Kamsack, which was a divisional point on the CNR, had a population of about 2,000. Often as many as 200 boxcars loaded with cattle and horses from Alberta would pull up to its stockyard feeding stations. On Saturdays Ukrainians, Doukhobors, Mennonites, Jews and Indians from the Cote Reserve mingled on Main Street with the Anglos. So, in the fall of 1928, Iser moved his family to Kamsack, the place of my birth, where he began developing a new practice. He made arrangements to do his surgery at the Kamsack General which, although owned by Dr. Tran, was administered by the formidable two-hundred-and-fifty-pound Mrs. Russell.

The events that followed are the stuff of melodrama. After a couple of years in Kamsack, he became uneasy about rumours associated with the Kamsack General. It would appear that everyone, except my father, had come to the conclusion that Mrs. Russell was performing illegal abortions, a scandalous procedure at that time. In an effort to ascertain the truth, he confronted Mrs. Russell who flew into a rage and threw at him the nearest object at hand, which happened to be a basket with a brick in it, used as a doorstop. It grazed his head

and a little blood was lost. His friends in town convinced him to lay a charge against her. After a farcical inquiry, the magistrate fined her one dollar for common assault.

Now denied use of the hospital, he considered leaving Kamsack but, as he had become somewhat of a local hero, the townspeople rallied around him. As luck would have it, a large well-built brick house at the corner of Second Street and Fifth Avenue, directly across from the Kamsack General, was about to become vacant. Three stories high with a verandah on three sides and surrounded by large trees, it had become the property of the town when the old couple who owned it had been unable to pay the taxes. When Iser approached the newly-elected Kamsack town council, they not only offered it to him at a very reasonable price, but promised a moratorium on taxes for as long as it remained a hospital. He named it rather grandly the King Edward Hospital (not to be confused with the King George which was a local hotel and beer parlour), and it was opened and legally accredited in November 1932.

Iser moved everything from his office into the new hospital. He transferred his x-ray and fluoroscope to a room in the basement which he designated the laboratory, and he bought second-hand equipment for the operating room. The town council gave Iser the ten beds, blankets and other equipment they had purchased during the influenza epidemic of 1919. Laura made curtains and set up the nursery and kitchen. The large empty lot on the south side of the hospital was turned into a vegetable garden, the harvests from which were used in the hospital kitchen. No one was ever denied treatment in this hospital. Often, cash-strapped farmers paid their bills in chickens and eggs.

Miss Lucille Watson was recruited as the matron. In the beginning she was the entire nursing staff. A little later, Iser purchased another house and had it moved onto a foundation next to the hospital. This became the nurse's residence. At this time, graduates of the Toronto and Winnipeg hospitals were in plentiful supply during the Great Depression and eager to come to work in Kamsack for twenty-five dollars a month. There, many distinguished medical careers were started as he ushered young graduates into the demanding world of rural practice. To cover the large territory in winter, he and his assistants employed an early version of the snowmobile powered by a pusher propeller.

As the King Edward Hospital flourished, the Kamsack General deteriorated. It simply couldn't compete. Dr. Tran finally decided to move away to set up practice on the west coast. This obviously did not suit him because he returned not long afterwards, suffered a stroke in 1934 while attending a patient, and was admitted to the Kamsack General where he died at the age of sixty.

The records for 1938 show that the King Edward Hospital had a most successful year. Three sets of twins were brought into the world and seven hundred and fifty one patients treated. By the time the Second World War broke out, the King Edward Hospital was operating smoothly with twenty-five beds. It had a good staff and was so busy that Iser had to hire Mr. Harvey, a former mayor of Kamsack, as a business manager. It would have been easy for him to sit out the war, enjoying the peace and plenty that his years of hard work had earned him, had he been so inclined. He was forty-one, married and the father of two children – not a prime candidate for military service. But the very idea of staying at home when others were going off to battle the evil forces of Nazism was repugnant to him. He wrote to the Canadian Army about joining the medical corps, and when he did not receive a reply, he caught the train for Regina in early January, 1940, to volunteer in person.

He was assigned the rank of First Lieutenant and told to go back to his practice and sit tight until called to active service. This was not good enough for him. He went to Winnipeg where he transferred to the Royal Canadian Air Force (R.C.A.F.), a service with an immediate need for doctors. Iser's first duties were at the R.C.A.F. recruiting centre in Winnipeg, giving physical examinations to the hundreds of young men who were flocking to enlist as pilots and air gunners. After several months of this, he was transferred to #7 Bombing and Gunnery School, ten miles east of Dauphin, Manitoba. The school was nothing more than a couple of runways and some hastily thrown up barracks on what had been some farmer's wheat field. As medical officer, he was responsible for keeping the Canadian and British bomber and ground crew fit. To the homesick young pilots, the steadying hand of a good and sympathetic physician meant everything.

Iser's real interest at this time was aviation medicine, an enthusiasm sparked by a month-long course in Toronto. There were no English-language texts on this subject because, after the First World War, interest in aviation was confined almost entirely to the civilian sphere. On leave in New York City, however, Iser discovered a Russian textbook on the subject while combing the used book stores. His hair stood on end as he read about the research on high altitude physiology, motion sickness, and other subjects reported in great detail. He alerted his commanding officer at the Bombing and Gunnery School in Paulson, Manitoba, and Wing Commander, J.K.W. Ferguson at the School of Aviation Medicine, in Toronto, to this discovery. He was eventually seconded to Yale University by the leading American physiologist, professor John F. Fulton, who arranged for him to translate the book, now classified top secret. His translation, *The Fundamentals of Aviation Medicine,* was published in 1943 by the National Research Council. From then on, Iser specialized in frostbite and military medicine.

After the war was over, the King Edward Hospital

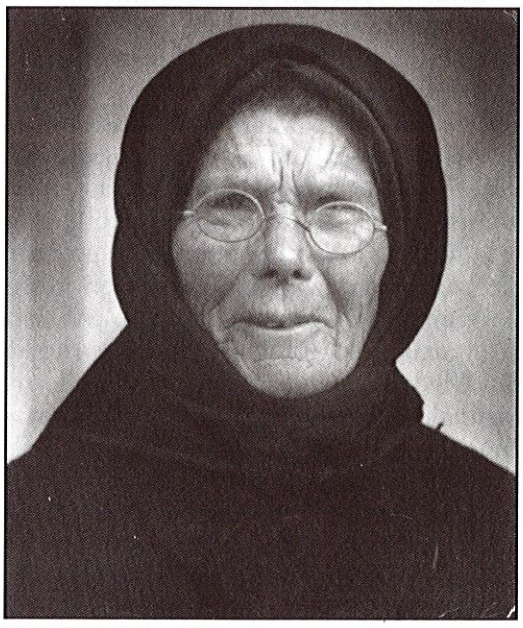
was sold to the socialist government of Tommy Douglas. It was time to head further west, to Vancouver, where he threw himself into the task of building a city practice with the same pioneering spirit that he had brought to Benito, Pelly and Kamsack. He worked longer hours and with greater concern for his patients than ever, taking on, in addition, the thankless, occasionally rewarding task, of rehabilitating chronic alcoholics, from society matrons in their sprawling mansions, to fallen workers, professionals and business magnates in sordid east end hotels.

It was not long, however, before Doukhobors, White Russians, war refugees and new Canadians, also found their way to his office door. His long experience in pioneer communities had endowed him with a bedside manner which breathed confidence into the sick and their distraught families. He retired at the age of seventy-five, but continued to research Russian medical history until he died in 1981 at the age of eighty-three.

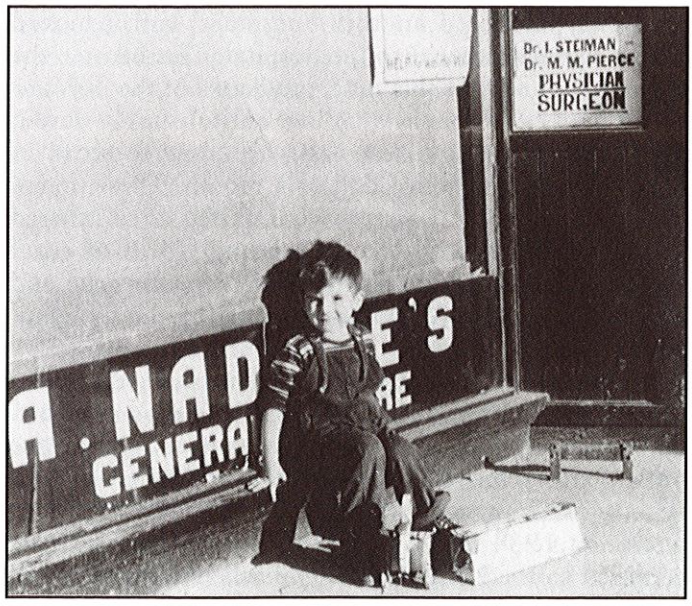
Today, the King Edward Hospital no longer exists. In its place stands the large modern Kamsack Union Hospital, opened in 1950. While nearby towns have declined, Kamsack continues to thrive, due, in my opinion, to this fine medical facility. My father's memorial lies within its foundation.

Photos by Dr. Iser Steiman

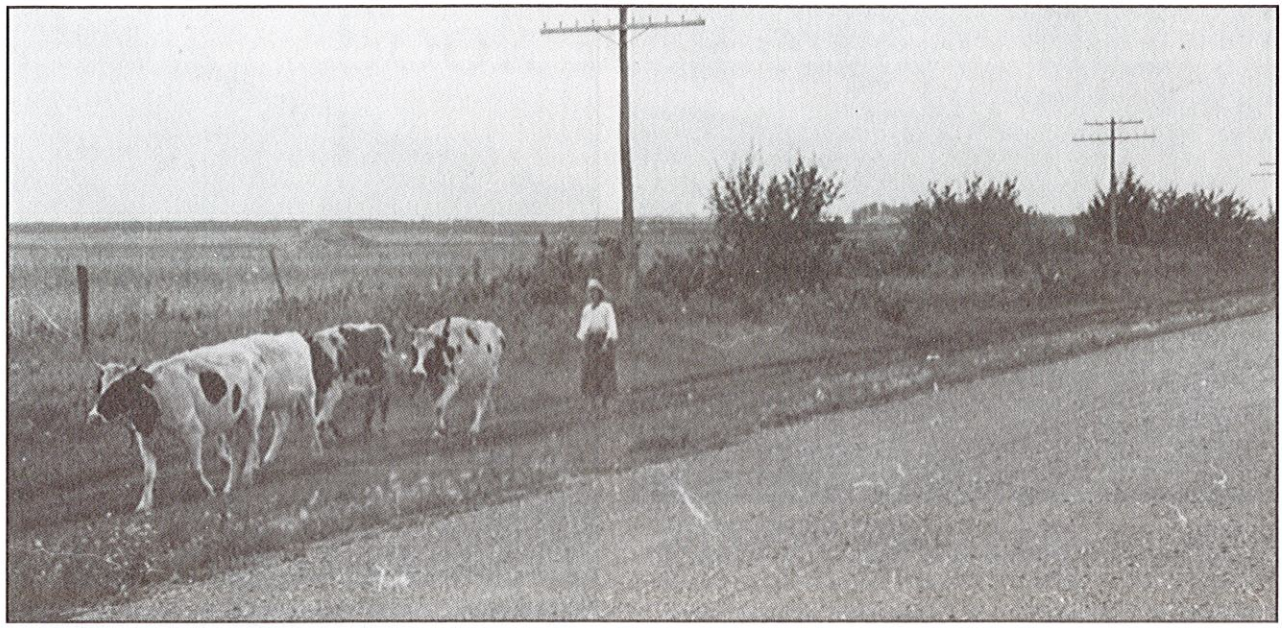
Clouds on the horizon.



The black babushka.



Ralph Rabinovitch, the dentist's son, sitting before Nadine's General Store. The poster on the wall reads Help Win The War.

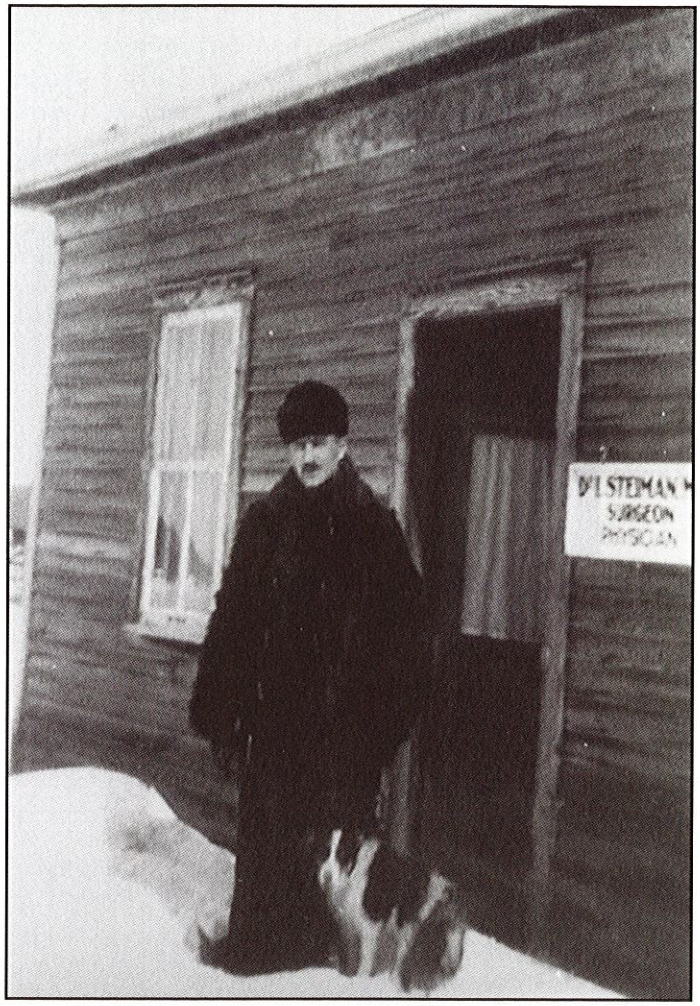


Milking time.

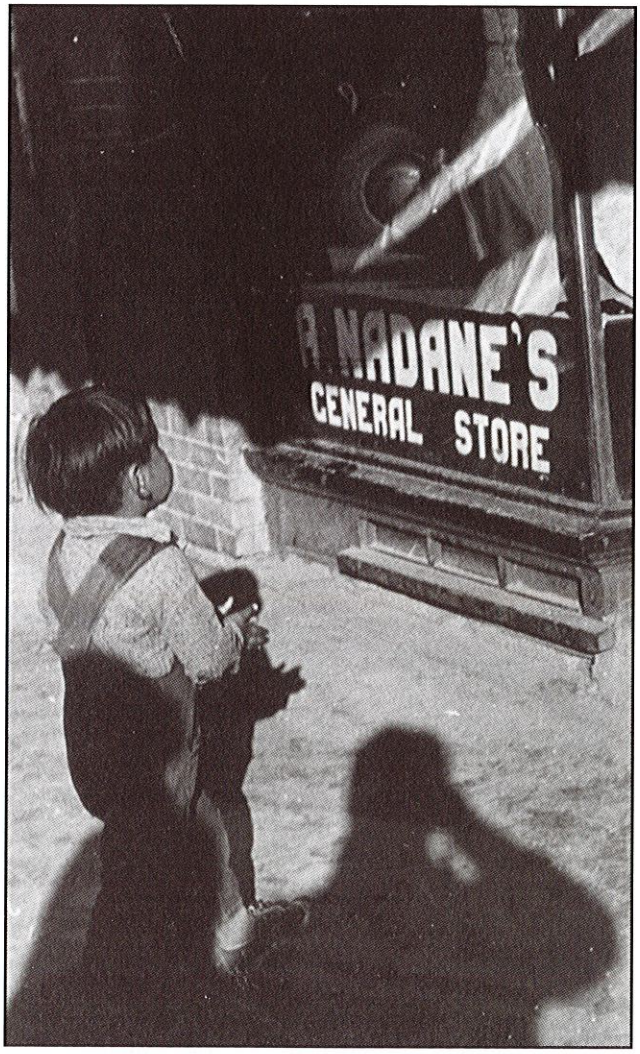
Wild roses near Kamsack, 1939.

At the spinning wheel.

The King Edward Hospital, Cherie in foreground, Kamsack, 1936.



Dr. Steiman's office in Pelly, 1925.



Indian boy dreaming in front of Nadine's General Store, Kamsack 1930s.

Iser and Cherie Steiman and John Doochenko with the Silver Streak snowmobile ambulance, Kamsack 1938.

Book Reviews

The Secret Lives of Sgt. John Wilson: A True Story of Love and Murder.

By Lois Simmie. Vancouver: Greystone Books, 1995. Pp. 224. Illustrations. $14.95 (paper).

IN 1993, Saskatoon writer Lois Simmie made the kind of discovery of which most historians and biographers only dream. While doing research in the National Archives in Ottawa on a story which had intrigued her for years, she found four large boxes of files on what still remains one of the most sensational trials in Saskatchewan history. Because the case involved the only member of the Royal North West Mounted Police or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police ever to be executed for a crime, the files have been kept intact for more than five decades; and there can be few more remarkable and full records of a man's descent into corruption and murder.

In February, 1920, John Lindsay Wilson, a member of the Royal North West Mounted Police, was tried in Saskatoon and found guilty of the murder of his wife, Polly. The Wilsons had been married in their native Scotland in 1908, and four years later John emigrated to Saskatchewan, largely to escape financial obligations incurred through mismanagement of funds. In 1914, he joined the Mounted Police, and was soon stationed in Blaine Lake, where he met an attractive young woman, Jessie Patterson. Wilson became infatuated with her, and Jessie with him, and he promised to marry her, but Polly's unexpected arrival in Regina in April, 1918, threatened to destroy this romance. On a deserted road near Blaine Lake in September of that year, Wilson blew the top of Polly's head off with a shotgun blast and buried her body in a culvert. Incredibly, he married Jessie two days later, and for more than a year he avoided arrest, until the persistent enquiries of Polly's sister in Scotland eventually sparked an investigation.

The official record of the investigation and trial—comprising crime reports, correspondence, telegrams, autopsy reports, statements by Wilson and others—gave Simmie a wealth of information. Much more remarkable, however, were letters from Wilson to Polly's family, others he had forged and sent to Jessie as if from his relatives, and most especially a great many impassioned love letters he had written to Jessie and had foolishly kept even as he increasingly became a suspect. Few murderers can have left such a thorough documentation of their deceit and moral collapse.

The story of John Wilson, Polly, and Jessie is the stuff of novels, and Simmie might well have turned it into fiction. The sheer wealth of specific archival material, however, almost demands that it be treated as, and given the authority of, history. What *The Secret Lives of Sgt. John Wilson* gives us is something between the two approaches, what Truman Capote, referring to his book *In Cold Blood,* called a "a non-fiction novel."

In her preface, Simmie warns that "although great care was taken not to attribute to the characters suggestive thoughts or dialogue unless substantiated by evidence, in many cases thoughts and speech are based on what I believe would be natural in the situation." This strategy may disturb the purely academic historian, but it works well here. Simmie has read the documents assiduously, studied the period, thought deeply about the situations of each of the characters, and performed the novelist's role of putting herself imaginatively and sensitively into the minds of each of them. At times, nonetheless, she is prepared to step back and confess that no one can know what someone was thinking—as, for example, what thoughts haunted Wilson in the seventy-seven days between his sentencing and his hanging. The result is a lively and absorbing narrative of human behaviour which does not seem to violate the historical record.

Simmie's caution preserves the credibility of her account, but so too does her particular sensitivity to Saskatchewan life in the early part of the century, an awareness gained through reading but also through her own family's Scots-Canadian background and her own life spent in the province. Thus her characters are lifted from archival pages into a prairie landscape, though set in the past, which will be familiar to anyone who has lived in the west. We know the sky that Polly Wilson must have looked out at on her train ride from Regina to Saskatoon, and we can almost feel the brush of weeds and grass against the legs of police officers searching the culvert for her grave.

The Secret Lives of Sgt. John Wilson is a compelling murder story, one which deserves to be filmed. More than that, however, it is a fascinating look at the loneliness of the immigrant experience for many people, the emergence of law enforcement in western Canada, and of a world before televised trials, DNA testing and "Dream Team" lawyers.

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Realizing Community: Multidisciplinary Perspectives

Edited by L.M. Findlay and Isobel Findlay
Saskatoon: Humanities Research Unit and Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, University of Saskatchewan, 1995. Pp. 200. $15.00 (paper).

AS GLOBALIZATION and globalism assume dominant positions in the politics of space and place, it is noteworthy that identities, local places, and communities have likewise re-emerged as key constituents of public discourse. In 1992 the Humanities Research Unit at the University of Saskatchewan hosted a multi-disciplinary conference to explore (un)common conceptions of community, and to discuss possibilities for imagining and creating new forms of community. Among other tasks, contributors were asked to consider what kinds of communities can we/should we construct? This volume reflects the broad range of perspectives brought into focus for that discussion. The ten contributors bring insights from scholarly communities—those of history, anthropology, literature, philosophy, and law, to begin with—and from life experiences in other more or less visible locations. While these experiences transcend borders, there is a (Western) Canadian flavour to the book. Many of the papers, essays, and poems provide rich detail from contemporary and historical Canadian contexts.

All this is no accident. The editor-convenors are explicitly involved in a project to make universities better communities of scholarship, while encouraging a serious and critical appreciation of the centrality of community as a human and humanizing condition. L.M. Findlay leads with a discussion of universities as learned and learning communities. He directs attention to the role of language in the construction and renewal of communities, and to the obligation for responsible use of language among those leading the debates. In an analysis of the politics surrounding a racially-controversial exhibit at the Royal Ontario Museum, Linda Hutcheon provides a topical but sober tour of issues of imperialism, representation, and interpretation in the context of multiculturalism. Daniel Ish uses his legal eye to examine impediments to the realization of community ideals within co-operative institutions—organizations with the potential to reconcile purposes economic and social in a framework of democratic participation.

Working from community of memory and from aboriginal perspectives, Maria Campbell and L.B. Halfe-Skydancer revisit the community domination and community resistance that have occurred around the imposition of European cultures and administrations in Canada. George Melnyk provides a historical analysis of factors in the relative success of utopian community building efforts by Doukhobors, Hutterites, and organizers of co-operative farms on the Canadian Prairies. T.D. Regehr considers the transformations that occurred in Prairie Mennonite communities as the centre of gravity of group life moved from rural to urban settings. Phil Dwyer leads an examination of tensions between individuals and communities, this time in the form of a philosophical treatise on privacy and rule-following. Alan T. Campbell rounds out the field on a passionate note: "Thou Shalt Not Commit Category." Building on Benedict Anderson's Imagined Communities, and drawing on his own field experience, he reminds us that all communities are inevitably imagined to some degree and in some manner. This may not be a problem except where it leads to ethnocentricity: imagined individuals—ourselves and others. This degenerates quickly in terms of thought and social practice.

If there is a message it is that we must reinvent communities that emancipate even as they protect, nurture, and transmit—communities that preserve the best of group life while avoiding other venerable traditions of inequality and xenophobia, not to mention fantasies of separateness or superiority. We cannot retreat to localized villages, nor should we settle for gated communities dedicated to exclusion of unwanted groups or activities. Rather we must struggle to imagine and construct places for living that are sustainable, just, and worthy of humankind.

There is plenty of room for more books around and about these topics. Such projects could be refocused in a number of ways. Decisions could be taken as to intended audience and as to a particular subset of topics targeted for transdiciplinary treatment. Scholars from cognate disciplines such as geography, sociology, and political studies could be added to the mix. The present volume is exploratory and introductory, but may have some challenges addressing—and being recognized by—established audiences. As a teaching tool, there is also some question as to the level of sophistication required of readers. The papers range from uncomplicated historical description, to fairly advanced dialogues presuming some appetite for debates in sub-fields of particular disciplines.

Overall, this is a challenging and toothsome collection offering substantial coverage of perennial and pressing issues. The smallish volume is attractively packaged and cleanly edited. It has served quite adequately as a text-reader for an undergraduate sociology course on community, and it belongs on the desks of many other students, citizens, and critics. Read stem-to-stern or selectively, the papers provide stimulus and nourishment on issues of identity, group life, collective action, and nationhood—the stuff of community wherever we encounter ourselves and the rest of humanity.

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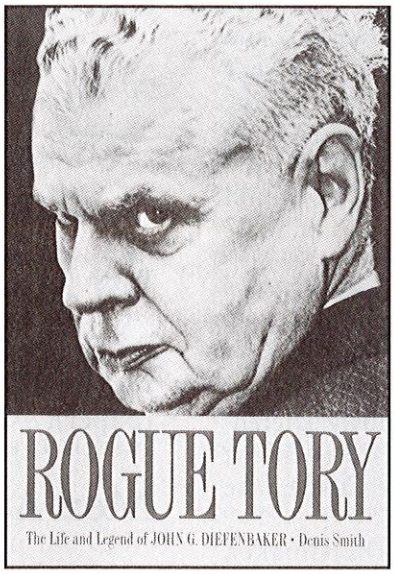
Rogue Tory: The Life and Legend of John G. Diefenbaker

By Denis Smith. Toronto: MacFarlane Walter & Ross, 1995. Pp. 702. Illustrations. $24.95 (paper).

DENNIS SMITH has struck an important blow for the genre of political biography in Canada. *Rogue Tory: The Life and Legend of John G. Diefenbaker* is by far the best piece of Canadian political history to appear in some time. The story of John Diefenbaker is nothing short of bizarre, and Smith has done an admirable job of capturing the essence of this fascinating figure. The task was by no means easy. The circumstances surrounding Diefenbaker's rise to power were abnormal, to say the least, and his fall from power was just as dramatic and controversial. In the almost twenty years since his death, "the Chief" has already become the subject of what Smith refers to as "legend-making," and the goal of the book, in many ways, is to expose the man behind the myth:



> The man lived a long public life, but it was a life of turmoil, rebuff, failure, disappointment, and bitterness more than of triumph and satisfaction. Yet out of it Diefenbaker built the legend of a morally triumphant underdog, the representative Canadian common man. The country took to the legend even as it rejected John Diefenbaker the politician (xii).

Smith sets out to explain the extraordinary career of Diefenbaker, and in doing so, to help illuminate the strange attraction he held over the Canadian public.

John Diefenbaker was an anomaly, of this there can be little doubt. As Smith clearly demonstrates, his early career was mired in failure. From his school exams (and the undeniable temptations of an ice-cream parlour), to his university days, to his mysterious military career during the First World War, the Saskatchewan youth was by no means the success story typical of a future prime minister. He suffered defeat in provincial, federal, and even municipal elections prior to 1940. It was, in fact, only for a brief period of time in the late 1950s and early 1960s that his star shone brightly, and then fizzled out just as quickly.

Smith never hesitates in exposing the many warts on Diefenbaker's personality. He spends considerable time, for example, discussing Diefenbaker's relationships with his first and second wives, Edna and Olive, and his weak-willed brother, Elmer. Through these relationships the reader is allowed revealing glimpses into the character of the man. In particular, the nature of the rapport between Diefenbaker and Edna (epitomized by Edna's pleading letter for release from a psychiatric hospital) highlights the politician's insecurities and, at the same time, his selfishness.

One of the interesting surprises of the biography is the amount of attention Smith spends on Diefenbaker's legal career. The reader is offered an almost case by case account of the politician's small-town law office in Wakaw, and later, in Prince Albert. The result is an in-depth look at the Saskatchewan justice system during the inter-war period.

Not surprisingly, the majority of the book centres on Diefenbaker's political career and his rise to the prime minister's office. Smith focuses some much needed attention on the history of the provincial Conservative party during the zenith of the Saskatchewan Liberal "machine." Diefenbaker's perseverance is remarkable. At this point, however, Smith could have done more to explain the background of Diefenbaker's political thinking. One is left wondering why, for example, he chose to run as a Conservative in such a "Liberal" province, where defeat was almost assured. It was not just coincidence, or due to the power of the Liberal "machine," that the Tories had such an awful time in Saskatchewan. The party seemed to have a knack for embracing distinctly "anti-western" policies, such as their stance on tariffs, freight rates, and the Hudson's Bay Railway.

Throughout the book Smith portrays Diefenbaker as a regional politician but never adequately explains his position on the prevailing "Prairie" issues that dominated the Saskatchewan hustings. Biographies of other Prairie politicians, such as Jimmy Gardiner and John Bracken for example, spend considerable time explaining their subject's stand on these essential issues. Smith offers little more than several statements indicating that Diefenbaker became a Tory during the election of 1911 because "he was stirred by the Conservative brand of Canadian nationalism, with its still-heady mix of local and imperial sentiments" (42). To argue that his "faith was a peculiarly personal one that did not wholly fit the party to which he now gave his permanent allegiance," (43) does not explain his eventual position and popularity as "defender of the West."

It is Smith's discussion, or rather lack of discussion, on provincial and regional issues that is the most disappointing aspect of the book. The author may boast in the dedication about being raised a westerner, but Saskatchewan and the Prairie region are largely neglected during Diefenbaker's years as prime minister. There is little discussion, for example, on Diefenbaker's reaction to the emergence of the Co-operative Com-

monwealth Federation in his home province. It is merely assumed that the Prairies served as Diefenbaker's base of support, without question. As his popularity began to unravel, amid the many glaring blunders, again it is assumed that the West remained unquestionably loyal. Why? Surely Diefenbaker's identity as a "western boy" was not enough, in itself, to command Prairie support. Smith does not explain the prime minister's approach or handling of western issues.

Smith also fails to provide an adequate discussion of Diefenbaker's reaction to essential questions affecting the nation in the 1920s and 1930s. It is clear that Diefenbaker holds R.B. Bennett as a political hero and model but there is no attempt to decipher Diefenbaker's reaction to the critical issues of the day, such as the Anglo-Canadian relationship. There is also no explanation of Diefenbaker's views toward Quebec and the French-Canadian question. This background would help the reader understand the Chief's attitudes on these issues when he reached Ottawa.

Nevertheless, this is a well-written book, and the author moves through the dramatic election campaigns, the Coyne Affair, the Avro Arrow fiasco, and defence policy in general, with uncommon ease and clarity. Canadian-American relations, and obviously Diefenbaker's antagonistic relationship with President Kennedy (culminating in the Cuban Missile Crisis), take their proper piece at the centre of the story.

But in analyzing the career of John Diefenbaker, Smith cannot help but come to the unavoidable conclusion that Diefenbaker was, quite simply, a historical mistake:

> The country he was chosen to govern was not the country that had formed him....As a westerner, an outsider, a romantic parliamentarian of the Edwardian era, he was a man out of time and place in late twentieth-century Ottawa. (xii-xiii)

Diefenbaker would have been more comfortable dealing with the imperial issues of the inter-war period, than the Cold War dilemmas of the post-1945 era. His relationship with Great Britain and the United States make this all too obvious. Throughout his life he was concerned with the question of ethnicity and citizenship, and Smith does well to explain Diefenbaker's sensitivities about his surname. He would receive praise for his Bill of Rights, but his desire to "fuse clashing differences" (160) to produce "hyphenated one-Canadianism" were out of step with the moves the country was already taking toward "deux nations." There would never be any significant understanding between Diefenbaker and Quebec, despite his short-lived electoral successes in the province. He was a "fiscal conservative unaffected by any scent of Keynesian economics" (164). To make matters worse, his difficulties in working with colleagues caused serious rifts in the party, caucus, and cabinet. Complaints about his "insecurity, indecisiveness, lack of trust, erratic and uncontrolled temperament, disorganization, unreflectiveness, and unrestrained zeal for power" (578) were all too common. The main problem for Diefenbaker was that by the time his hour finally arrived, he was out of touch with the nation and its problems, and those around him knew it. The Conservative party, so desperate to emerge from the wilderness it had wandered so long, rode the westerner's strange, yet powerful, charisma to power in 1957. They were only too willing to discard the anomaly by 1966.

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In Palliser's Triangle: Living in the Grasslands, 1850-1930

By Barry Potyondi. Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 1995. Pp. 144. Map. Illustrations. $18.50 (paper).

Men Against the Desert

By James H. Gray. Saskatoon: Saskatoon and Calgary: Fifth House Limited, 1996. Pp. 263. Illustrations. $12.95 (paper).

The PALLISER TRIANGLE is a cornerstone of Canadian prairie history. From the time that Captain John Palliser explored, charted and described the prairie west, the expanse of dry grassland, later called the Palliser Triangle, has been the subject of debate and myth, and the victim of reality. Books by Barry Potyondi and James Gray offer quite different historical perspectives on this infamous triangle in the south-west corner of Saskatchewan.

The differences begin with the definition of the Palliser Triangle itself. The area between the Missouri Coteau and the Cypress Hills, and between the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) mainline and the forty-ninth parallel is the triangle defined by Potyondi. On the other hand, Gray extends the area further north to include Saskatoon. The time frame for the books vary as well. Potyondi traces the history of the triangle before 1930 while Gray concentrates on the "Dirty Thirties" and the following decade.

The two authors also have different interpretations of the relationship between humankind and nature. Potyondi offers a version of the triangle as a place where people, particularly the Aboriginals, worked in harmony with nature. The buffalo, the fox, the wolves

and humans were all part of one ecosystem. The coming of the Métis hunters, followed by the European ranchers, brought some change, but the prairie was left basically undisturbed. The arrival of the settlers with their plows, however, irreversibly altered the land, bringing the "environment of ruin." With the plow and the breaking of the sod came the destruction of the aboriginal way of life. The settlers brought a "collision of nature and human forces." The cooperation and harmony between people and nature was disrupted and disturbed. Before long, the soil became a dry powder, and eroded in the wind. Many settlers left the triangle in frustration and economic poverty long before 1930.

It was not only the settlers, however, who brought this change. Potyondi argues that when the Aboriginals and Métis took up commercial ventures, life changed for them forever. The hunt for furs and buffalo robes disturbed the ecosystem, leading some species, such as the swift fox, into extinction. The rapid disappearance of the buffalo brought an end to an independent life style for the Aboriginals, led to a life of dependency, and helped convince them to sign a treaty with the federal government. Potyondi, in a novel interpretation, draws a close link between culture and the environment. If the ecosystem is out of balance, so will be the culture. The Aboriginals had abused the resources that had given meaning to their culture.

The settlers came to the Palliser Triangle on the advice and urging of the federal government, the CPR and the land developers. Potyondi argues that the advice was misguided. Most of the land in the triangle should not have been broken. The engineers were trying to bend nature which led to environmental and cultural ruin. Potyondi nostalgically concludes his book with the wish that the triangle could be returned to the original state, a grassland with grass "stirrup-high."

One drawback to the book, however, is Potyondi's overstatements without footnotes. For example, he makes the bold assertion that the American government promoted the massacre of the buffalo to ensure the destruction of the Aboriginal way of life, speeding the process of assimilation. This may be true, but declarations such as these deserve and demand justification.

James Gray, the master story teller, added *Men Against the Desert* to his list of works about prairie history, including *Booze, Red Lights on the Prairies*, and his own life story of living in Winnipeg during the 1930s, *The Winter Years*. This study, originally published in 1967, was reprinted in 1996 with the foreword written by Bill Waiser of the University of Saskatchewan. When *The Winter Years* was originally written, Gray included chapters on the effect of the drought on the Palliser Triangle. The editors cut these chapters only to be faced with criticism from reviewers. The deleted chapters formed the nucleus of Gray's *Men Against the Desert.*

Gray's work is a history of the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA). In contrast to Potyondi, who fondly writes of returning the Palliser Triangle to grass, Gray praises the efforts of the government to return the desert to productive farm land. The title of his book illustrates this theme. Gray argues that Canada could not survive unless the prairie west, including the triangle, was returned to productivity. Some infertile land could be community pasture, but the remaining land should be farmed. Like the building of the CPR, the rehabilitation of the prairies to farmland was a Canadian success story. The history of the PFRA is a story of the fight to control the wind, to conserve scarce moisture, to stop soil erosion, to change farming practices, and to protect the farm yards and fields with shelter belts. The program also promoted the development of experimental farms, new varieties of grains resistant to rust and adapted to shorter growing seasons, and advanced methods of tilling the soil. It was a combined effort by government and individual farmers to control nature in the Palliser Triangle.

By late 1937, agriculturalists began to win the battle to reclaim the Palliser Triangle. The winds were being controlled and the rains returned. The region again became the productive garden it once had been. Because the PFRA's transformation of the land was slow and gradual, the story was ignored and forgotten. It is for this reason that Gray wrote his book noting the achievements of the men who fought the desert and won.

Potyondi and Gray offer two interpretations or approaches to the same triangle of land. Potyondi argues that it was humanity's inability to work with nature and to preserve the delicate ecosystem that led to an environmental disaster and the destruction of a culture and a way of life. Gray, on the other hand, does not believe that prairie farmers had been defeated in the Palliser Triangle. He argues that the history of the PFRA is a success story that has been forgotten by the Canadian people.

Whether it was an environmental disaster or a success story, these two accounts of the history of the Palliser Triangle are both well worth reading.

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SASKATCHEWAN HISTORY & FOLKLORE SOCIETY INC.

Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society

History on the Road – 1997

Once again the Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society (SHFS) will be conducting hosted motorcoach tours to various heritage locations throughout the province. The mandate of SHFS's motorcoach tour program is to provide members of the Society, as well as interested members of the general public, with an opportunity to experience aspects of our province's heritage and history that they may not otherwise have the opportunity to visit and learn about. Although our tours visit many of the well publicized heritage sites, SHFS works very hard at researching and directing our tour participants to the less well known points of interest in the areas being visited. As in the past, the price listed for our tours are all inclusive—transportation, meals, coffee breaks, accommodations, and attraction entrance fees.

1997 will see SHFS conducting three tours:

Tour # 1—NWMP Trail & Its American Connection-
June 21 to June 24 ($590 Non SHFS Member Cost)

This tour will be leaving from Regina and visiting the rich heritage of the southwest portion of our province and then stepping across the border into the state of Montana. One of the main focuses of this tour will be a combined examination of some of SHFS's own history and its relationship with the NWMP. As mentioned in a previous article for this page, SHFS's first president (Everett Baker) provided the primary role in having the Wood Mountain to Fort Walsh trail marked (both posts will be visited on this tour). During this tour we will learn about the effort required to mark a trail and then discover the significance of this trail and how its marking plays a vital role in better understanding the heritage of this area. Although the most famous use of this trail may have been by Sitting Bull in 1877, when he travelled from Wood Mountain to Fort Walsh to meet with General Terry, it must not be forgotten that the NWMP continued to use this trail in their regular patrols until 1912. While visiting this area, History on the Road participants will learn about the other aspects for which this trail was used by the NWMP. By visiting Fort Benton in Montana, we will be able to learn first hand about the impact this early American trading centre had on shaping the development of western Canada and especially the area around Cypress Hills.

Tour #2—The Uprising of 1885 Revisited-
July 25 to July 27 ($370 Non SHFS Member Cost)

Leaving from Saskatoon, the first part of this tour will be spent in the relaxing and breathtaking natural heritage site of the Prince Albert National Park, with ample time being given to enjoy the warm summer afternoon and evening in Waskesiu. This tour will partake in some of Saskatchewan's artist heritage by visiting Rosthern's Station Arts Centre and taking in Connie Kaldor's play "Dust and Dreams." An in-depth tour of historic Prince Albert will provide History on the Road participants with a new appreciation for this northern Saskatchewan city's heritage from the influence of the Cree, to Peter Pond's establishment of a trading post in 1766 and, eventually, to the permanent settlement by Isbister and Nesbit in the mid 1860s. The final day of this tour will be spent examining many of the sites involved in the uprising of 1885.

Tour #3—Kelsey Country-
August 14 to August 16 ($370 Non SHFS Member Cost)

The final tour of SHFS's History on the Road for 1997 will visit the north (relatively speaking) east portion of our province. This area, named after its first non-native visitor Henry Kelsey (1690/91), is home to a diverse historical, artistic, and industrial heritage. Renowned potter Peter Rupchan established his studio south of the reserve. While all that remains are his kilns, we will see some of his work in area museums. In Hudson Bay we will visit the Al Mazur Heritage Park and tour Saskfor MacMillan Ltd. facilities. While travelling west, a stop will be made at the Pasquia Palaeotological Site where a crocodilian fossil was discovered. This tour will then conclude with a leisurely trip back to Saskatoon, visiting many of the heritage sites along the way: St. Brieux museum, McCloy Creek trestle bridge, St. Peter's at Lepine, one of Saskatchewan's more spectacular churches, and several other sites.

Should you require any additional information about these tours or any of SHFS's other activities contact our office at 1860 Lorne Street, Regina S4P 2L7, 780-9204 or 1-800-919-9437.

Saskatchewan Archives Board, StarPhoenix Collection, S-SP-B2466-2.

An "electronic computer" at the University of Saskatchewan, 1957.

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