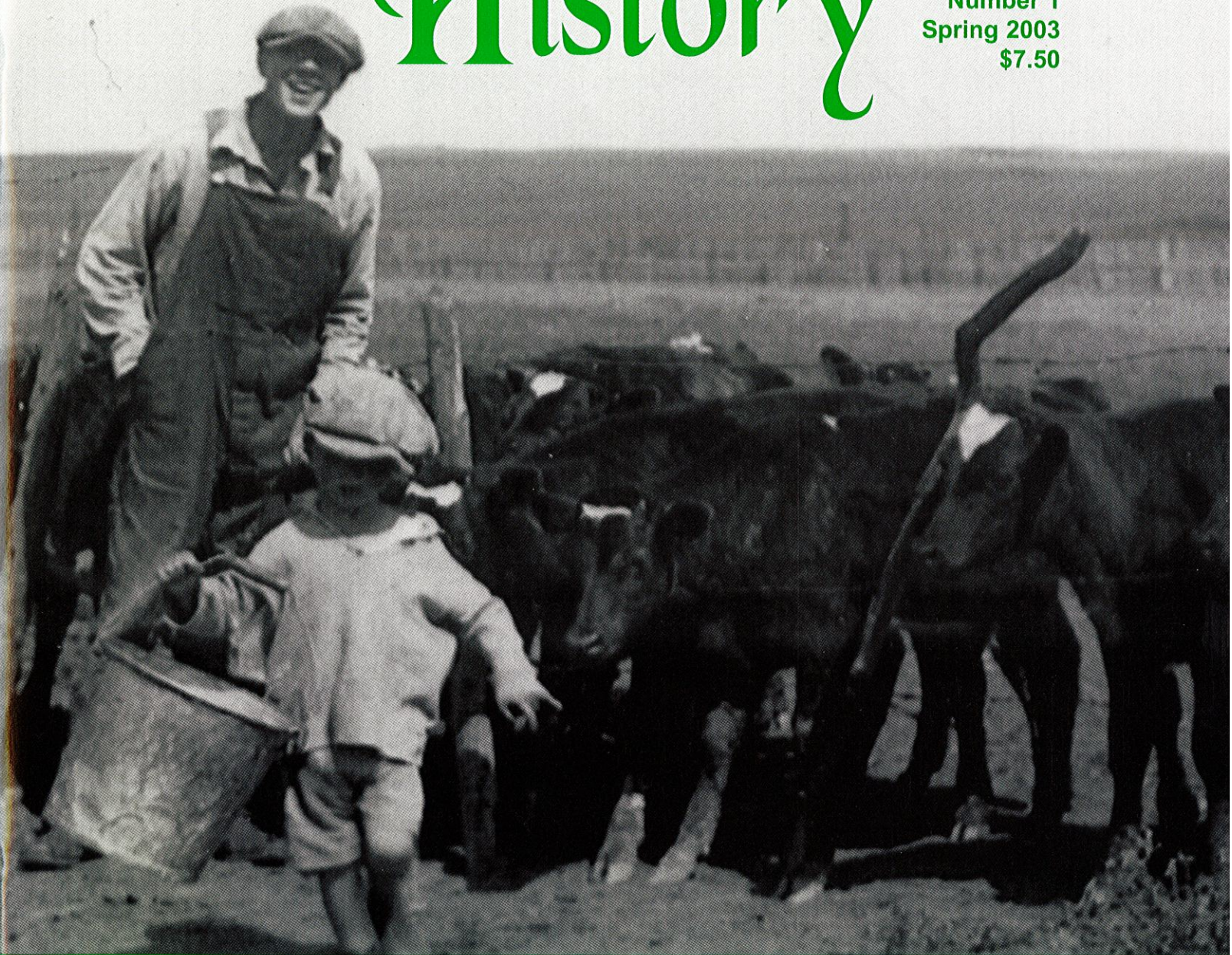


# Saskatchewan History

Volume 55  
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Empty Hills: Aboriginal Land Usage  
and the Cypress Hills Problem, 1874-1883

Were Jewish Farmers Failures?  
The Case of Township 2-15-W2nd

Onésime Dorval: "la bonne demoiselle"

# 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 on all aspects of the history of Saskatchewan as well as facilitating the management of the records of government institutions. Two offices, affiliated with the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina, are maintained to provide public access to a rich collection of archival materials for research and reference.

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

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# Saskatchewan History

Volume 55, Number 1

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Saskatchewan, 3 Campus Drive, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan,  
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# Features

## Saskatchewan Archives Board News

### Award of the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal to Saskatchewan Archives Board Chairman, Board Member and Provincial Archivist

11/22/2002

Award of the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal to Saskatchewan Archives Board Chairman, Board Member and Provincial Archivist

The Saskatchewan Archives Board is very pleased and proud to announce the award of the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal to Dr. Brett Fairbairn, Chairman, Saskatchewan Archives Board, Board member Gwenn Ronyk and Provincial Archivist Trevor Powell.

These Golden Jubilee Medals have been specially struck to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Her Majesty's reign as Queen of Canada. The Medal is awarded to Canadian citizens who have made an outstanding and

exemplary contribution to the community or to Canada as a whole. It is part of the Canadian Honours System established in 1967.

The medal carries the current Canadian effigy of The Queen on one side. The other side features the design of a stylized maple leaf with CANADA at the bottom and the years 1952 and 2002 on the left and right of the Royal Cypher and Crown. The Medal is worn suspended from a broad royal blue ribbon, with red outer stripes, double white stripe and a red central stripe.

Dr. Fairbairn's Medal was presented by the Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan, Her Honour the Honourable Dr. Lynda M. Haverstock in Saskatoon on Wednesday, November 13, 2002, in recognition of his contributions to the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives and the Saskatchewan Archives Board.

Ms. Ronyk's Medal acknowledged her role as Clerk of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly.

Trevor Powell's award recognized his public and community service, long-term contributions to the Canadian and Saskatchewan archival communities and his leadership of the Saskatchewan Archives since his appointment as Provincial Archivist in 1986.

Ms. Ronyk's and Mr. Powell's Medals were presented in Regina on Friday, November 15, 2002 by the Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan.

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## 1906 Census of the Prairie Provinces

The Saskatchewan Archives is pleased to announce that the 1906 census of the Prairie Provinces is now available for research in both its Regina and Saskatoon offices. Researchers are encouraged to visit either office to peruse the microfilm copy of these records. Contact information is provided below.

These records will be immensely valuable to family, community and academic historians, and to other researchers interested in demographic studies. The 1906 census is a "portrait" of a region that, at the time, was rapidly changing as hundreds of thousands of people from around the globe and other parts of Canada were settling in the West. The provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta had just been established one year before the census was taken.

The release of the 1906 census returns is largely thanks to several years of representations made by historians, archivists, genealogists and private citizens to the



Government of Canada. Since restrictions to the records were lifted late in January, the National Archives of Canada has generously made microfilm copies of the census records available to several public institutions in Western Canada, including the Saskatchewan Archives.

There are 11 microfilm reels of the 1906 census covering Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. This census collected only limited "tombstone" information such as name, address, age, sex, marital status and origin. A finding aid is available, organized by census subdivisions, but as yet no nominal indexes have been prepared. Saskatchewan Archives has microfilm copies of the 1881, 1891 and 1901 census enumerations as well. The 1901 and 1906 census records are also available on-line at [www.archives.ca](http://www.archives.ca). Microfilm copies can also be purchased, or borrowed through interlibrary loan, from the National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

Under the provisions of the Census and Statistics Act (which received Royal Assent 16 May 1905) a general census of Canada was to occur in 1911, and every ten years thereafter, and a census of population and agriculture was to be taken in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta in 1906, and every ten years thereafter.

For further information contact:

Reference Services, Saskatchewan Archives  
93 Murray Building  
University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon, SK S7N 5A4  
Phone (306) 933-5832  
E-mail [info.saskatoon@archives.gov.sk.ca](mailto:info.saskatoon@archives.gov.sk.ca)

Reference Services, Saskatchewan Archives  
3303 Hillsdale Street  
Regina, SK S4S 0A2  
Phone (306) 767-4068  
E-mail [info.regina@archives.gov.sk.ca](mailto:info.regina@archives.gov.sk.ca)

## Saskatchewan Archives Backlog Project & the Release of New Guides

Since its beginnings in November 2001, the Backlog Project has undertaken the description of photographs, architectural drawings and maps, sound and moving image material, and textual records in efforts to bring together the pieces of evidence that tell the stories of history. Through electronic and paper formats we have described archival materials using new institutional descriptive standards.

BF 5 - Estevan Brick Ltd. fonds					
Textual File Listing					
Letter Series Series			1948-1966	40.6 cm	
<b>1. AR [Accounts Receivable] Sub-Series</b>			<b>1962-1966</b>	<b>5.5 cm</b>	
Acc. File No.	Box	File Title	Dates	Extent	Media
1. 1.	1	Central Mortgage & Housing Corp. 1953-1964	1963-1964	0.5 cm	
1. 2.	1	Stewart Reason Masonry products 1963, 1964	1963-1964	1.5 cm	
1. 3.	1	Accounts Receivable	1962-1966	2.0 cm	Architectural/Technical Drawing(s)
1. 4.	1	Coorman's Limited 1964	1964	0.5 cm	
1. 5.	1	Superior Brick & Tile Co. Ltd. 1963, 1964	1963-1964	0.5 cm	
1. 6.	1	Nadon Brick & Stone 1964	1964	0.5 cm	
<b>2. DBS [Dominion Bureau of Statistics] Sub-Series</b>			<b>1950-1963</b>	<b>0.5 cm</b>	
Acc. File No.	Box	File Title	Dates	Extent	Media
2. 1.	1	Employment Record Dominion Bureau of Statistics 1960-1961-1962-1963	1960-1963	0.5 cm	
<b>3. DMS [Direct Material and Supplies] Sub-Series</b>			<b>1950-1963</b>	<b>3.2 cm</b>	
Acc. File No.	Box	File Title	Dates	Extent	Media
3. 1.	1	Natural Gas and Propane 1958-1961 File	1954, 1958-1961	2.0 cm	
3. 2.	1	The Bonnet Co.	1950-1961	0.5 cm	Graphic Material(s)
3. 3.	1	General File - 1963	1962-1963	0.5 cm	
3. 4.	1	Direct Material and Supplies P-Q-R-S	1962-1961	0.1 cm	
3. 5.	1	Direct Material and Supplies T-U-V-W-X-Y-Z	1959-1962	0.1 cm	
<b>4. Gen [General] Sub-Series</b>			<b>1948-1962</b>	<b>5.5 cm</b>	
November 22, 2002				Page 1 of 10	

Page from the Estevan Brick Plant fond finding aid, one of the new guides available to researchers

As part of this process, a new institution-wide guides system (SAFA - Saskatchewan Archives Finding Aids) has been launched in conjunction with core programmes that brings together intellectually records and their creators. The first group of these new guides was released in January 2003, and more will be available later this spring. Some of the new guides in our Regina and Saskatoon offices include the Claybank Brick Plant fonds, Town of Leader fonds, the (Canada) Homestead Fiats for Patent series, the Narcisse Omer Cote fonds, the Jack Dennis fonds, the T.H. J. Charmbury fonds, the Herbert F. Robbins fonds, and the Estevan Brick Plant fonds. Researchers interested in consulting these or other new guides to our holdings should speak to the reference archivists in our offices for details on access to the records.

In the near future descriptions for many of these holdings will be available on the SAB's website, <http://www.archives.gov.sk.ca>. Many descriptions of existing and new holdings are also now available on-line through the Saskatchewan Archival Information Network (SAIN), <http://scaa.usask.ca/sain>, and Canadian Archival Information Network (CAIN), <http://www.cain-racia.ca>. Descriptions of SAB photographic records are also beginning to appear on the SAIN Photo Database and contributions will increase over the new few months.

# Correspondance, Notes and Comments

*Editor's Note:* In the Fall 2001 edition (Volume 53, No 2), Robert Lampard and Calvino Cheng presented a fascinating article on the winter travel of three Saskatchewan doctors in "Snow Problem? No Problem! Three Medical Men and Their Snowmachines." The article prompted Clarence Johns of Saskatoon to submit a short write up on the modes of travel used by Dr. W.P. Johns of Viscount, Saskatchewan. Mr. Johns' letter and complementing photographs are included below.

January 2002,

I would like to add another rural doctor and his snowmachines to the list of names and communities that had snowmobiles in prairie Canada.

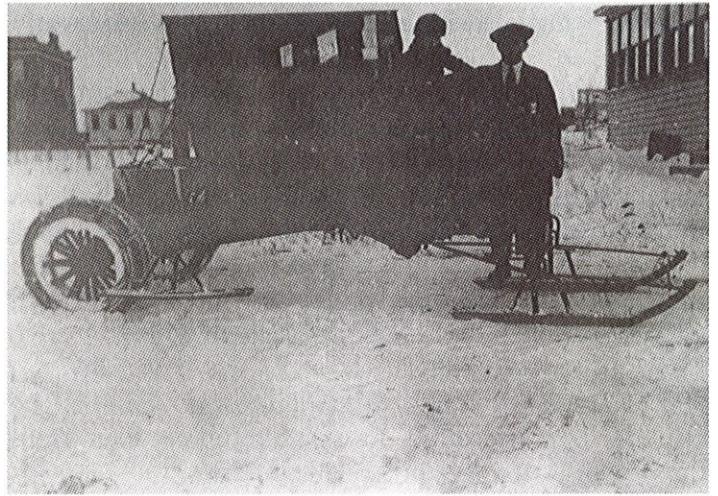
In 1923 Dr. W. P. Johns, who practiced medicine for the municipality of Viscount, Saskatchewan, commissioned Block's Garage in Viscount to build a snow machine (Figure 1). The machine was built from a Ford Model T



*Figure 1. Dr. Johns (left) and Bill Northgraves (local farmer) with Dr. Johns' first snowmachine, circa 1923.*

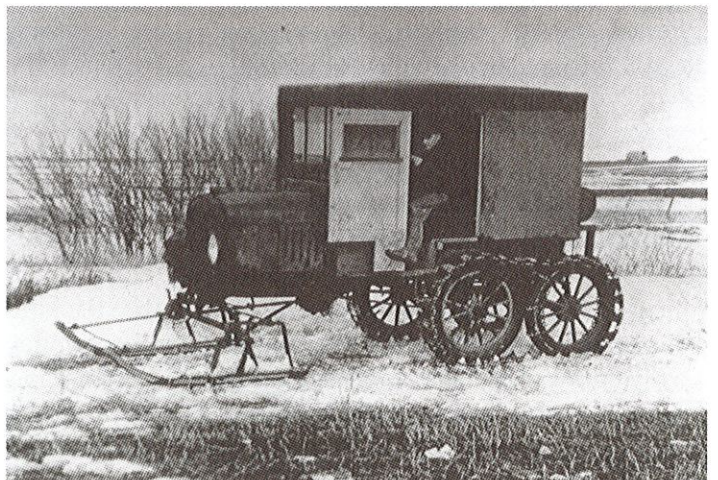
chassis and modified with a Ruxsteel rear axle. The Ruxsteel axle was manufactured for the Model T to provide a lower gear ratio that would give more power for muddy roads at the expense of speed. The axle width was shortened to match a standard bob sled track. The drive wheels were fitted with heavy-duty chains for traction. Wings were fitted in front of the rear wheels to give the snowmachine more stability on the rough sleigh trails. These wings were made from wooden barrel

staves. The original snow machine was modified a year or two later with a larger wooden cab and improved stabilizers (Figure 2).



*Figure 2. Dr. Johns and son Clarence with the modified snowmachine in front of his home/office in Viscount.*

In 1927-28 Dr. Johns had Block's Garage build a larger snowmachine (Figure 3). This machine had a larger extended cab and a tandem axle fitted with metal tracks that also fit a bobsled track. The tracks were not available in Canada and had to be ordered from a manufacturer in Minnesota. Dr. Johns used this snowmachine for several years. Its last use was on a country call to the Plunket district to deliver a baby. The snow machine ran low on oil on the way; a local farmer had no oil so Dr. Johns poured water into the crankcase to raise the oil level to keep the machine going. He was able to reach his destination but there was considerable damage done to the engine. Dr. Johns retired the snowmachine and never used it again. From then on he used a heated, horse drawn caboose to make his calls.

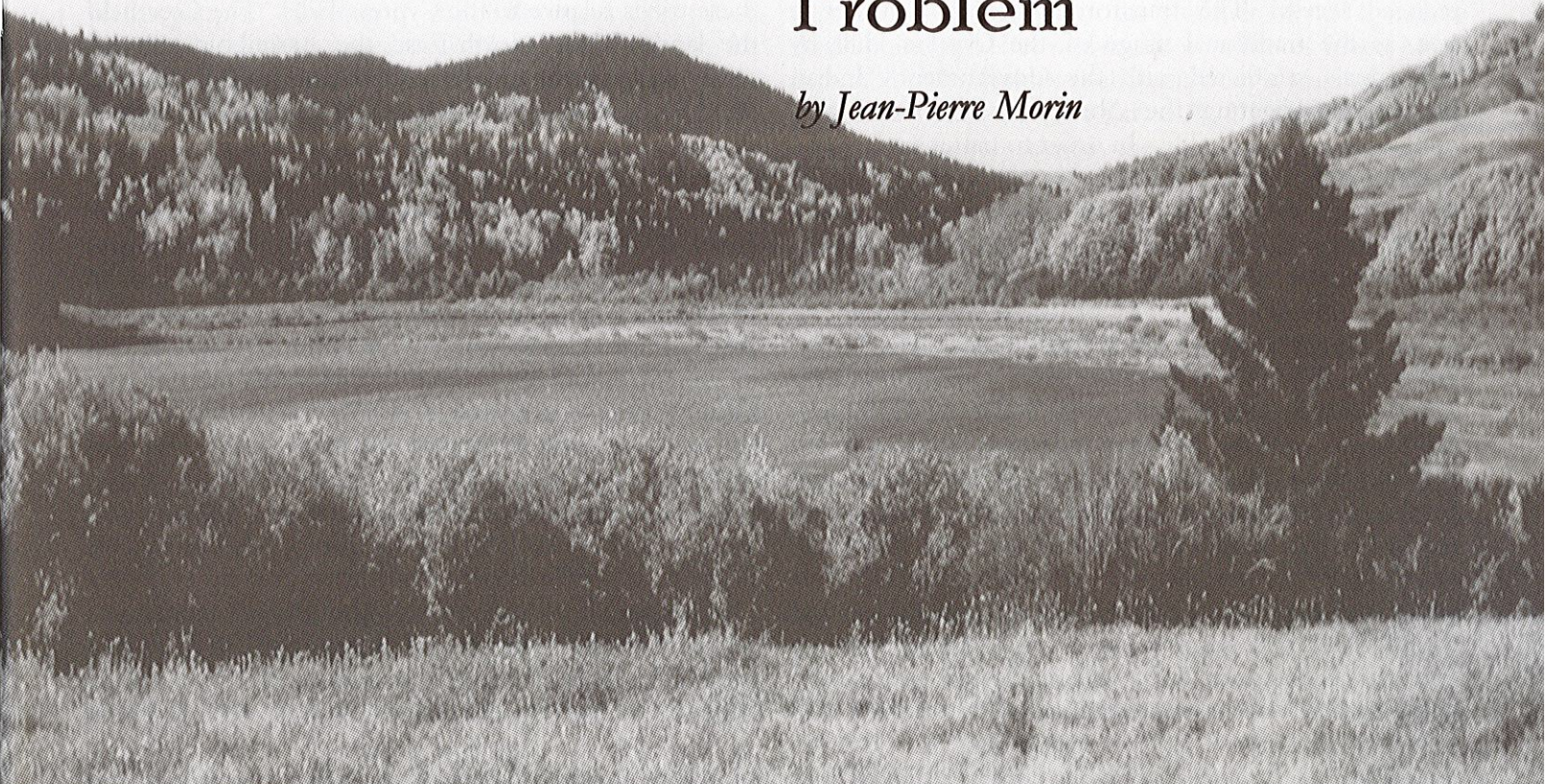


*Figure 3. Clarence Johns in the tracked snowmachine, circa 1928.*

## Articles

# Empty Hills: Aboriginal Land Usage and the Cypress Hills Problem

*by Jean-Pierre Morin*



Saskatchewan Tourism & Renewable Resources/SAB R-B 10534(3)

*Harris Lake in the Cypress Hills*

In south-western Saskatchewan, at the very heart of the Great North American Prairie, there is but one First Nation reserve.\* Situated on the north-eastern edge of the Cypress Hills near Maple Creek, the Nekaneet Cree Indian Nation Reserve, broken up into three separate parcels of land, is the only remnant of a long history of Aboriginal usage of the Cypress Hills and the surrounding prairie. Historical accounts from the mid and late 19<sup>th</sup> century show that this part of the Prairies was one of the areas most frequented by Aboriginal peoples. As one of the last refuges of the buffalo on the Canadian Prairie, the Cypress Hills attracted thousands of Aboriginal people in search of sustenance. Moreover, archaeological findings indicate a rich and diverse usage and occupation of these hills by a wide variety of peoples long before the decline of the buffalo herds.

---

*Jean-Pierre Morin completed his Master's degree in Canadian History at the University of Ottawa in 1999. He is currently an historian with the Treaty Policy Directorate at Indian and Northern Affairs Canada in Ottawa.*

In the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the traditional usage of the Cypress Hills was radically transformed. Included in the lands surrendered by the 1874 Treaty 4 to the Canadian Crown, the Cypress Hills were no longer the sole domain of Aboriginals. Aboriginal groups from across the prairie were no longer free to use the Cypress Hills as they had for generations. The Canadian Government, through both the Department of Indian Affairs and the North-West Mounted Police, began to restrict the usage of the Hills by these peoples. In fact, the imposition of the treaty boundary brought about a total transformation of the traditional Aboriginal usage of the Hills through a direct government policy of reduced access. This transformation was a deliberate one, as the traditional usage of the Cypress Hills by Aboriginals conflicted with the Government's Indian Policy of obligating the Aboriginal transition from nomadic to sedentary life. In order to better understand this transformation, it is necessary to examine the pre-treaty usage of the Cypress Hills, the boundaries created by the 19<sup>th</sup> century Numbered Treaties and the practices used by the Government to reduce access to them.

Extending more than 1280 metres above sea level and more than 300 metres above the plains, the Cypress Hills are the highest point of land between the Rocky Mountains and the Atlantic coast.<sup>1</sup> This elevation provides for a climate and ecology remarkably different from those of the prairie. The Hills' 300 metre elevation causes orographic rain fall (rain formed by elevated land masses) and cooler year round temperatures. Winters are longer and more severe, while summers are shorter and cooler than on the surrounding prairie. The higher levels of moisture support lush vegetation while springs and creeks radiate out onto the prairie.<sup>2</sup> The Cypress Hills also maintain a rich diversity of fauna, some of which are not typical of the open prairie but rather of the foothills and more mountainous regions. Elk, deer, grizzly bears, formerly buffalo, and a wide variety of smaller game animals have been reported throughout the area. The wooded hills and abundant water supply make the Cypress Hills into one of the best refuge areas of the prairie, especially during the harsh winter months, both for animals and humans.

Just as the prairie extends around this outlier formation so did the traditional territories of several Aboriginal peoples. In all directions, the Cree, Assiniboine, and Blackfoot Confederacy tribes occupied territory in pursuit of their traditional nomadic livelihood. These three major groups, each with their own language and customs, lived off the Prairie's primary game animal, the buffalo. Each had adapted its lifestyle in pursuit of the buffalo, following the herds, developing hunting techniques and incorporating the buffalo into every

aspect of their lives. Prior to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there existed relatively little historical documentation regarding these bands. Thus, archaeological evidence must be used to record the lives of these peoples prior to written historical accounts.<sup>3</sup>

There is considerable historical debate surrounding the exact boundaries of the territories of the Cree, Assiniboine and Blackfoot.<sup>4</sup> Such debate is not surprising in light of the relatively fluid and shifting territorial boundaries of peoples dependent upon the migrating herds of buffalo. On the whole, it is possible to make a general description of the territory held by these tribes relative to the Cypress Hills. The Cree held the lands to the North-East, the Assiniboine shared some of its territory East of the Hills with the Cree and controlled the lands to the South-East, while the various Blackfoot Confederacy tribes encircled the Hills on the western side, the Gros Ventre to the South-West, the Blood and Peigan to the West and the Blackfoot to the North-West. As for the Cypress Hills themselves, various historians have placed these hills either within the territory of the Assiniboine<sup>5</sup> or within the territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy.<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that in the last decade, prior to the signing of Treaty 4, the Cypress Hills were largely considered to be the eastern boundary of the Blackfoot Confederacy.<sup>7</sup> The few historical documents which predate the 1870s, however, seem to indicate that territorial control of the area around the Cypress Hills did not completely limit access to them. Several accounts from American and Hudson's Bay traders, American military and British expeditions reported seeing Cree, Assiniboine, various members of the Blackfoot Confederacy, Crow, Sioux, and Métis in the Hills.<sup>8</sup>

In the historical debate surrounding the traditional territories of these tribes, the Cypress Hills have long been, for the most part, described as "neutral ground" or 'no-man's land' between hostile 'tribes' or confederations of Indians" and a "natural game preserve because of their borderline position."<sup>9</sup> In their ethnohistorical survey of the Cypress Hills, Robson Bonnicksen and Stuart Baldwin believed that this was a false representation of the Hills' usage. The Hills were not deserted but rather used by a variety of different Aboriginal groups for hunting, wintering and warfare. Instead of a "no-man's land," the Cypress Hills should be considered an "any-man's land", an area contested and used by the surrounding groups.<sup>10</sup> This concept has not gone unnoted and has been incorporated into other histories of the Cypress Hills.<sup>11</sup>

Archaeological evidence and written historical accounts of the Cypress Hills indicate four primary activities in



the Hills prior to the signing of Treaty 4: wintering and refuge, hunting, warfare and religious ceremonies. Faced with the rugged prairie winter, nomadic Aboriginal people “would seek out a location providing wood, water, horse pasturage and sheltering topography as the site for a winter camp.”<sup>12</sup> These camps survived the harsh winters by relying on the abundance of big game such as buffalo, elk and deer seeking shelter in the Cypress Hills. As the largest outlier formation on the Canadian prairie, the Cypress Hills also provided large quantities of berries and other fruits in summer, as well as fresh water.<sup>13</sup> As game was relatively plentiful, hunting in the Hills was part of the natural cycle of the nomadic plains people. Hunting in the Hills was a year round activity due to the varied available game; however, the Cypress Hills, situated along the migratory route of the buffalo herds, became a central location for the buffalo hunt. The importance of the Cypress Hills greatly increased as herds diminished in the later half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Hills were one of the last areas to have concentrations of buffalo north of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel.<sup>14</sup> The same factors which facilitated hunting in the Hills - concealment and ready-made observation posts - also provided good conditions for warfare and scouting. War parties were also attracted by the large concentration of enemy camps and several battles have been recorded between the various groups surrounding the Cypress Hills.<sup>15</sup> In regards to the sacred nature of the Cypress Hills, several groups used the Hills for sacred ceremonies such as sun dances and vision quests.<sup>16</sup>

Warfare amongst Aboriginal groups in the Cypress Hills and on the prairie increased in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as they competed for the dwindling buffalo herds; remarks on the reduced size of herds were made as early as 1846. As the herds retreated westward, Cree

and Assiniboine hunters followed into traditional Blackfoot territory. In what John Milloy describes as a “heavily armed migration,” Cree and Assiniboine bands moved into the Cypress Hills in search of the buffalo.<sup>17</sup> By 1869, the Hudson’s Bay Company trader Isaac Cowie reported that he had encountered between 2500 and 3000 Crees and Assiniboines camped in the Cypress Hills, with about 500 warriors.<sup>18</sup> As the new arrivals pressed west through the Hills, numerous battles were fought, culminating in the 1870 defeat of Cree warriors against a more heavily armed camp of Blackfoot warriors at the Battle of Belly River.<sup>19</sup> Peace was made between the Cree-Assiniboine warriors and the Blackfoot Confederacy in the summer of 1871, but as Assiniboine and Cree oral tradition indicates, it was often breached by both sides as shown through years of horse-theft and occasional war parties.<sup>20</sup> By the early 1870s, several accounts related the continued presence of Blackfoot, Cree and Assiniboine bands throughout the Hills, although with an increased usage by the Assiniboine. When the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) passed through the Hills in 1874 and established Fort Walsh in 1875, the usage of the Hills was largely divided between the Cree and Assiniboine in the east and the Blackfoot in the west.<sup>21</sup> The disappearance of the buffalo herds and the conflicts this entailed had an impact upon the use of the Cypress Hills. Its role as a “buffer zone” between Aboriginal groups was reduced as more and more people moved into the area in search of buffalo and other game. This increased usage, however, shows the shared nature of the Cypress Hills and emphasises the fact that no one group could lay full claim to them.

*The Cypress Hills were the last refuge for the bison on the Canadian Prairies. Several First Nations groups moved to the Cypress Hills during the late 1870’s to hunt these remaining herds.*

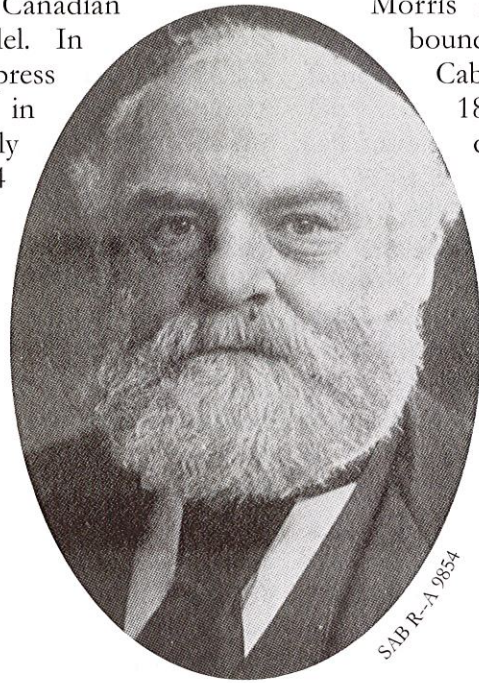


As relative calm returned to the Cypress Hills, the Canadian Prairies were being reorganised by the new Dominion of Canada. Following its acquisition of the Rupert's Land Charter from the Hudson's Bay Company in 1869, the Dominion of Canada proceeded to open the west to increased settlement through a series of treaties, commonly referred to as the Numbered Treaties. Between 1871 and 1921, eleven treaties were made between the Crown and the Aboriginal peoples of the Northwest Territories so as to transfer land title to the Crown, to open the territory to agricultural settlement and to establish Canadian authority north of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. In the general area around the Cypress Hills, three treaties were made in 1874, 1876 and 1877, respectively Treaties 4, 6 and 7. While Treaty 4 totally encompasses the Cypress Hills, the signing of all three treaties had an impact upon the people using and occupying the Hills.

In 1874, Alexander Morris, Lieutenant-Governor of the Northwest Territories (NWT), along with David Laird, Minister of the Interior, and other commissioners, were assigned to make a treaty with the Aboriginal peoples throughout the Qu'Appelle Valley and in the vicinity of the Canada-United States border. Although the Government had decided to wait until the land was required for settlement before making treaty in this region, it conceded to increased demands and appeals from the area's Aboriginal population and the Northwest Territories Council. As pressure increased on the diminishing buffalo herds, Cree, Assiniboine and Saulteaux tribes called upon the Crown to make treaties as it had done in Manitoba and at the North-West Angle. Some of their major concerns were the arrival of Métis and Canadian settlers in the area and the increasing number of buffalo hunters on the prairie prior to the signing of a treaty.<sup>22</sup> As for the NWT Council, it wanted to resolve Aboriginal land title so as to permit easier settlement throughout the territory.<sup>23</sup> The Government had hoped that the requesting bands would simply adhere to Treaty 2 covering south-western Manitoba, but prior knowledge of the much more favourable terms of Treaty 3 ruined this much less expensive plan.<sup>24</sup> In September 1874 after negotiations at Qu'Appelle and Fort Ellice, the treaty commissioners and the chiefs

agreed to use the same terms as those in Treaty 3 with little variation.<sup>25</sup> Through this treaty, the Aboriginal population ceded their title to the land along the border from the western edge of Treaty 2 to the western side of the Cypress Hills.

The actual Treaty 4 boundary was the subject of some debate. The NWT Council recommended that the western boundary of the treaty should be the 110<sup>th</sup> meridian, the same as the current border between Alberta and Saskatchewan.<sup>26</sup> Lieutenant-Governor Morris recommended the Council's proposed boundary to David Laird, and it was approved by Cabinet prior to the treaty negotiations in 1874.<sup>27</sup> When treaty negotiations were completed, the treaty's western boundary was further west than the 110<sup>th</sup> meridian so as to include all of the Cypress Hills within Treaty 4. It has been suggested that Commissioner W.J. Christie, recently retired HBC official and former chief factor of the Swan River District, had some influence in the modification of the treaty boundary. He may have recommended this change so that the treaty encompassed the entire district of Swan River, which extended west of the Hills. This extension of the boundary would assure that any Aboriginals seeking assistance would be the responsibility of the Government and not the Hudson's Bay Company.<sup>28</sup>



*It may have been at the suggestion of Treaty Commissioner W.J. Christie, pictured above, that the Cypress Hills be included in the boundaries of Treaty 4 when it was signed in 1874.*

The making of Treaty 4 was not without its criticism. Within Aboriginal groups, some chiefs refused to sign Treaty 4. Most notable was Piapot, chief of a mixed band of Crees and Assiniboines. He believed that the treaty signatories needed increased farm implements and that the Crown should provide mills, blacksmith and carpentry tools, and instruction for farming and trading.<sup>29</sup> Piapot refused to sign Treaty 4 for one year, but did sign in September 1875. Criticism of Treaty 4 was not reserved to its Aboriginal signatories. In 1875, the Commissioner of the NWMP, Colonel French, wrote to the Minister of Justice concerning the inclusion of the Cypress Hills within the boundaries of Treaty 4. In his letter, he stated:

I think it is my duty to inform you that from my experience in the Cypress Hills, I am satisfied that the Crees and Saulteaux had no exclusive rights to the Cypress Hills Country...This country is the recognized hunting grounds and

war path of the Sioux, Assiniboine and Blackfoot tribes.<sup>30</sup>

The NWMP commissioner also expressed concern that surrender of the Cypress Hills by Treaty 4 signatories would provoke adverse reactions and animosity against the Government from the Blackfoot Confederacy, who also had a traditional right to the Hills. In the departmental response to the Department of Justice, Deputy Minister of the Interior Meridith stated that the commissioners, one of whom being the Minister of the Interior, had been aware that the signatories did not have exclusive rights to the Hills. The cession of title only extinguished the right of those having signed Treaty 4. As for the Blackfoot Confederacy and other Aboriginals, their right to the Cypress Hills would be extinguished in a similar manner.<sup>31</sup> This statement implied not only that the usage of the Hills was shared by different groups but also that until their rights had been ceded through treaty, these groups should have unmolested access to the Cypress Hills.

Two years after the signing of Treaty 4, Alexander Morris was again assigned the task of making a treaty with the Aboriginal inhabitants of the Northwest Territories. In two meetings at Fort Carleton and Fort Pitt in August and September 1876, the Treaty Commission made a treaty with the Cree, Assiniboine, Saulteaux and Chipewyan peoples of the Saskatchewan River and the Battle River.<sup>32</sup> After several days of negotiations at both forts, the terms of the treaty were agreed upon, largely based upon the terms of Treaty 3 with some specific additions relating to farm implements, a famine clause and medicine chest clause.<sup>33</sup> During the treaty meetings, several influential Cree chiefs had been out on the prairie hunting buffalo, and consequently, their concerns and opinions were not heard during the treaty negotiations. They arrived at Fort Pitt only after treaty negotiations had been completed, and led by Big Bear, they voiced their objection to not having been notified of the treaty meetings. Big Bear and other chiefs such as Little Pine, believed that the terms of the treaty were insufficient and refused to sign the treaty at that time.<sup>34</sup> The refusal of Big Bear and Little Pine to sign Treaty 6 at Fort Pitt would have a marked impact upon the Cypress Hills. Although Big Bear said he would consider signing the treaty the following year, he and other Cree chiefs remained outside of the treaty for another six years. While trying to gather support for a renegotiation of treaty terms, Big Bear and his followers travelled the prairie in search of the buffalo, using the Cypress Hills as a base for their hunting expeditions into American territory.

The following year, 1877, the Government turned its attention to the last remaining unsundered area of the Prairie, the territory of the Stoney and Blackfoot Confederacy. Located north of the Canadian-American border and between the Rocky Mountains and the Cypress Hills, the Canadian Government wanted to secure title to this territory so as to facilitate the construction of the railway and link British Columbia to the Dominion. The Blackfoot Confederacy, composed of Blackfoot, Blood, Sarcee and Peigan tribes, wanted a stricter control on the buffalo hunt, on incursions by Cree and Assiniboine hunters from the central prairie into their territory, and on settlement.<sup>35</sup> The Treaty Commission, which included David Laird, former Minister of the Interior and Treaty 4 commissioner, met with the chiefs and headmen of the Confederacy and Stoney (part of the Assiniboine nation), chiefs from the foothills in mid-September 1877. After a few days of negotiations, as with the other treaties, the basic terms proposed by the Crown were accepted by the chiefs.<sup>36</sup> However, as was the case with Treaties 4 and 6, there were specific additions to the clauses that reflect the Blackfoot's circumstances. Because of the Aboriginal desire to mainly raise cattle instead of farm, provisions were made within the treaty to increase the number of cattle allocated and reduced the number of farm implements.<sup>37</sup>

In the official accounts and reports of the treaty commission to the Government, the Cypress Hills were never mentioned. Although the Department of the Interior had stated in 1875 that the issue of the Blackfoot Confederacy's right and title to the Cypress Hills would be addressed at the time of their treaty taking, this does not appear to have been the case. However, as in all treaties since 1873, a blanket cession clause in the treaty text stated that the Treaty 7 signatories also ceded "all their rights, titles and privileges whatsoever, to all other lands wherever situated in the North-West Territories, or any other portion of the Dominion of Canada."<sup>38</sup> Through this clause, the Blackfoot Confederacy's claim to the Cypress Hills was extinguished without overlapping the treaty boundaries. The official eastern boundary of Treaty 7 was to be on the western edge of the Hills.

The experience of treaty making between the Crown and Aboriginal peoples was not perceived in the same way by both parties. While the Government largely viewed the treaties as binding legal contracts ceding land in exchange for specific benefits, Aboriginal signatories held a very different perspective. First and foremost, the treaties were more than simple contracts. In the words of Treaty 4 Saulteaux elder Danny Musqua, treaties are: "a covenant with Her Majesty's government, and a covenant

is not just a relationship between people, it's a relationship between three parties, the Crown, First Nations and the Creator."<sup>39</sup> The ceremonies surrounding treaty making created duties and obligations for both Aboriginal signatories and the Government. Saskatchewan elders have stated that when promises and agreements are made with the Creator, they are "irrevocable and inviolable."<sup>40</sup> The use of the sacred pipe and of sweetgrass, two important sacred symbols in Aboriginal spirituality, underlined the sacredness and the solemnity of promises made to the Creator.

Aboriginal people had definitive goals in their treaty negotiations. As J.E. Foster stated: "the strategy of Indian leaders aimed at creating an alliance with the government...in which the government...would lend maximum assistance to facilitate the physical and cultural survival of Indian people."<sup>41</sup>

Aboriginal leaders saw the treaties as a way to assist their people in adapting to their new circumstances through the "cunning of the White man." In her important work "Magnificent Gifts: the Treaties of Canada with the Indians of the Northwest 1869-1876", Jean Friesen cited economic needs as one of the driving forces behind Aboriginal treaty making: "From an Indian perspective, the goal of the Numbered Treaties was economic security, just as it had been in treaties between Indians...They desired and anticipated that through the treaties, their children would prosper."<sup>42</sup>

Aboriginal people appeared to recognise their need to create a beneficial agreement between themselves and the representatives of the Crown.

For the government of the Dominion of Canada, the goal of the Numbered Treaties was to secure the cession of Aboriginal title to the Northwest Territories. As stipulated in the *Rupert's Land and North-Western Territory Enactment* of 1870, the Government agreed to settle any Aboriginal claims to the land in the Northwest Territories prior to settlement.<sup>43</sup> The Numbered treaties, in the eyes of the Government, were land transactions. For Aboriginal peoples, the treaties were not land sales. According to Aboriginal leaders and oral traditional

maintained by Treaty 4 and Treaty 6 elders, the treaties were agreements to share the land with the Government, and only to the depth of a plow.<sup>44</sup> John Leonard Taylor stated that: "the elders do not believe that the Indians surrendered the subsurface rights. They believe that their ancestors understood the treaty as providing for a limited surrender or sharing of territorial rights."<sup>45</sup> Treaty 7 elders uniformly maintain that there was no land surrender or sharing in Treaty 7, the treaty was to establish peace in the area, stop intertribal warfare and end disruptions caused by alcohol.<sup>46</sup>

With the signing of Treaty 7, the territory surrounding the Cypress Hills and the Hills themselves all fell within the jurisdiction of the Dominion of Canada. Through these treaties, the Government believed that intertribal conflict would cease, bands would settle on reserve

lands and abandon their nomadic lifestyle to become farmers and ranchers. This belief was never fully realised in practice, especially when the Cypress Hills are considered. While some groups did attempt to adapt to a more agricultural way of life, those who continued a nomadic lifestyle struggled to maintain their traditional ways of hunting the diminishing buffalo herds. The Cypress Hills served as a beacon for this traditional way of life, attracting Aboriginal peoples from all three treaty areas. The treaties also served as a tool for the Government to limit access to the Cypress Hills. Falling within the Treaty 4 boundaries, only signatories of that treaty held recognised right to the territory; all others were seen as trespassers. In the years after signing the treaties, the Government

struggled to change the traditional usage of the Hills through encouragement, persuasion and coercion.

In the years prior to the signing of Treaty 4, there was a certain amount of non-Aboriginal usage of the Cypress Hills. Although not useful for the fur trade because of the scarcity of fine fur bearing animals, the Hills increasingly became a centre of trade for buffalo robes and pemmican in the 1860s. American whiskey traders established posts north of the international boundary so as to trade cheap whiskey for furs and pemmican between the Rocky Mountains and the Cypress Hills. By



*G.A. French served as Commissioner of the North-West Mounted Police from 1873 until 1876. In 1874 he wrote of his desire to eliminate the whiskey trade in the Cypress Hills*

1872, whiskey traders were reported in the Hills and in 1873, there were up to six whiskey posts.<sup>47</sup> After the massacre of an Assiniboine camp near Battle Creek, located in the centre of the Cypress Hills, by American wolf hunters in 1873, the whiskey traders left the Hills for fear of Aboriginal reprisals but returned by 1874. Presumably, the re-establishment of these posts is what prompted the NWMP to establish a police post in the Cypress Hills.<sup>48</sup> In his annual report, Commissioner French stated: "I feel certain that a good deal [of whiskey trading] will be done in the Cypress Hills during the present winter [1874] but I hope that...we will be able to make such depositions as will completely eradicate the trade from the Cypress Hills to the Rocky Mountains."<sup>49</sup> It was vitally important for the NWMP to show that they could exert their control within Canadian territory north of the border.<sup>50</sup> On the site of a small Métis settlement on Battle Creek, Major Walsh and "B" Division established Fort Walsh in the summer of 1875. Posts such as this would serve not only to stem the illegal liquor trade but also to extend the NWMP influence and authority throughout the Northwest Territories.

One of the NWMP's most important tasks was to explain Canadian law to Aboriginal peoples. It had to persuade them to voluntarily replace their traditional laws and customs with Canadian laws. This was a necessary task in order to permit the implementation of the Government's policy on the Northwest: the

conversion of the Indians from nomadic hunters to sedentary farmers.<sup>51</sup> This was, however, no easy task, as A.B. McCullough explained in his study of Fort Walsh:

Over the centuries the Indians had evolved their own unwritten laws and customs and, so long as their way of life lasted, there was no logical reason why they should abandon them. However, until the Indians abandoned their traditional laws and accepted Canada's laws, and by extension Canada's authority, white settlement on the prairies could proceed only at the risk, almost the certainty, of armed conflict.<sup>52</sup>

The NWMP succeeded in this task only through careful example and strict impartiality. The police prosecuted Canadians and Americans who committed crimes against Aboriginals and vice-versa, and acted as mediators in intertribal conflicts. Throughout the Northwest Territories, the NWMP strived to develop Aboriginal trust through fairness and a keen understanding of the Aboriginal situation. This understanding was aptly demonstrated when 3000 Sioux sought refuge in Canada near the Cypress Hills between 1876 and 1881. The NWMP effectively prevented any conflicts between the Canadian Aboriginals and their traditional enemies, the Sioux. The Police also allowed for a certain amount of time for Aboriginal peoples to adjust to these new laws



Fort Walsh, circa 1878

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through reduced sentences or no sentences for horse theft, a traditional warrior activity. This leniency continued until 1880 when it was decided that Aboriginal people had had enough time to become familiar with the law and would now be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.<sup>53</sup> Through the post at Fort Walsh, the Government was able to introduce peace and order to a heavily volatile area as well as somewhat bridge the gap between Aboriginal and Canadian society.

As the NWMP extended its influence throughout the border areas, Fort Walsh became the area's administrative centre.<sup>54</sup> A small village grew around the post so as to serve the Police's needs and the various requirements of administration. Fort Walsh also played a role in the administration of Indian affairs. Treaty payments and rations were issued here and several NWMP officers served as interim Indian Affairs agents. Fort Walsh's central location, however, was not only a benefit, but also a burden to the NWMP. While it permitted the NWMP to extend its influence throughout the region and reduce illegal activities, it also served as a place for Aboriginal peoples to gather, either to organise hunting parties, or to seek assistance. As the buffalo herds diminished, Fort Walsh became the primary location for Aboriginal people to receive rations and other assistance. As traditional Aboriginal life broke down and starvation set in, Aboriginal people became dependent upon the generosity of the Policy.

The first substantial contact between the Aboriginal peoples in the Cypress Hills and the Canadian Government was remarkably beneficial to the Aboriginal population. The NWMP brought stability and relative calm to an area devastated by the effects of the whiskey trade. The presence and intervention of the Police also defused, or at least reduced, intertribal tension in this highly contested region. However, their arrival in the Cypress Hills did bring about a change to their traditional usage by Aboriginal peoples. No longer were the Hills used for warfare as raids stopped. Traditional Aboriginal laws and customs had to be abandoned and replaced with Canadian law, enforced by the NWMP, a law applying to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The construction of the post also created a place for Aboriginal people to congregate in times of need and starvation. While the fort's presence in the Cypress Hills did help facilitate contact between Aboriginal and Canadian society, it also led Aboriginal people to become dependent upon Government aid as their traditional way of life came to an end. This fact would lead to numerous problems for both the Police and the Department of Indian Affairs.

Within the provisions of Treaty 4, the location of reserves was to be made in consultation with the various bands. Treaty 4 states:

...Her Majesty the Queen hereby agrees...to assign reserves for said Indians, such reserves to be selected by officers of Her Majesty's Government of the Dominion of Canada...after conference with each band of Indians, and to be of sufficient area to allow one square mile for each family of five, or in that proportion for larger or smaller families.<sup>55</sup>

On the whole, the sites chosen by bands for their reserves were set aside by the Government. If it believed that the sites chosen were unsuited to agriculture, or in some cases, too valuable, the Government refused to grant these requests. Bands were also limited to sites within their treaty area. Reserves were the keystone to the Government's Indian Policy. Through settlement on reserves, it was believed Aboriginal people would be better able to make the transition from nomadic buffalo hunters to sedentary self-sustaining agriculturalists. Approximately twelve bands of Assiniboine and Cree had chosen sites within the Hills for their reserves; the Assiniboine at the Head of the Mountain on the western edge of the Hills, and the Crees at Maple Creek to the north-west of Fort Walsh.<sup>56</sup> In the case of the Cypress Hills, the Government had two main concerns: the suitability of the Hills for agriculture; and, their proximity to the American border. The Government's ultimate decision to refuse the creation of reserves in this area was based on the experiences and evaluations of the Department of Indian Affairs.

In 1879, Edgar Dewdney, a loyal Conservative Member of Parliament from British Columbia, was appointed Indian Commissioner, and, later, Lieutenant-Governor, of the Northwest Territories. Within his many duties as commissioner, Dewdney was to establish a system of farming agencies throughout the Territories to assist Aboriginal people's conversion from hunters to farmers.<sup>57</sup> Two farms were created within the Cypress Hills in 1879 to assist the different Cree and Assiniboine bands that sought reserves in the Hills: for the Assiniboine at Head of the Mountain, west of Fort Walsh, and another for the Cree at Maple Creek, a small waterway flowing north-east of Fort Walsh.<sup>58</sup>

Within the year, however, the unsuitability of the area was becoming evident. At Head of the Mountain, the land produced low yields and the harsh and unpredictable weather, especially summer frost, ruined crops. During the summer of 1880, A.P. Patrick was sent to survey the Assiniboine site at Head of the Mountain.



*Edgar Dewdney, a strong supporter of the Conservative party, was appointed Indian Commissioner in 1879 by John A. MacDonald. In 1881 he was named Lieutenant Governor of the Northwest Territories.*

In his report submitted to the Department of Indian Affairs, Patrick gave a detailed account of his survey and of the land. Although he did report that the land surveyed had excellent timber and some good pasturage, the quality of the soil was substandard, described as “barren and utterly useless for agricultural purposes” in one part and “poor”, “barren and alkaline” in others. He also commented, that because of the high elevations at the Head of the Mountain, “sever summer frosts exercise a detrimental influence upon farming operations.”<sup>59</sup> Although this reserve area was surveyed and the report received, these lands were never withdrawn from the Dominion Land Act and there never appears to have been a survey of the sites chosen by the Cree.

At Maple Creek, the situation was better. More sheltered than Head of the Mountain, the area was not as prone to summer frost and the soil conditions were far superior, producing good medium quality wheat and potatoes.<sup>60</sup> By 1880, Dewdney was recommending that the unsuccessful farm and the proposed reserve site at Head of the Mountain be abandoned and the Assiniboine moved to Maple Creek and the Crees there be relocated to the Qu’Appelle District.<sup>61</sup> While the NWMP annual reports had recommended closing Fort Walsh because of the harsh climatic conditions, this was the first reference

by a senior Department of Indian Affairs official proposing the relocation of Aboriginal peoples out of the Cypress Hills because of agricultural conditions. In 1881, J.P. Wadsworth, the Department’s farm and reserve inspector, was sent to the Cypress Hills to evaluate the requested reserves and the state of the farm at Maple Creek. After touring the Hills with Commissioner Irvine, the Cree-Assiniboine chief Piapot and various Assiniboine chiefs, he presented his report to Edgar Dewdney. His evaluation stressed the agricultural limitations of the region: “I am of the opinion that the land will be exhausted in a few years. It is poor land to start with and the little good in it will run out, unless manured, and this cannot be done.”<sup>62</sup> For these reasons, Wadsworth “could not consent to [the Assiniboine and Cree] taking of a reservation in this part of the country.”

With these recommendations and the reports from the farm instructors and the Indian Agent at Fort Walsh, the Government decided not to grant any reserves in the Cypress Hills. The officials felt these reserves would never permit the resident bands to become self-sustaining and would, therefore, always be dependent upon the Government. As of the summer of 1881, the Department began to pressure Aboriginals to leave the Hills and relocate on reserves closer to Qu’Appelle and in other treaty areas.<sup>63</sup> Although the Department of Indian Affairs wanted all Aboriginal bands to relocate, it believed that the Assiniboine had more of a claim to the Cypress Hills than did the Crees. Under no circumstances were Cree bands to be given reserves in the Hills but, according to Edgar Dewdney, because the Cypress Hills were the traditional hunting grounds of the Assiniboine, they could not be forced to leave and could, ultimately, be allowed reserves if they did not choose to relocate.<sup>64</sup>

There exists another possible reason for the refusal of reserves in the Cypress Hills. John Tobias stated the Government wanted to prevent the creation of an “Indian territory” in the Cypress Hills. Tobias describes this territory as similar to the American reservation system, but where “the Cree would be able to preserve their autonomy, or at least limit the ability of others to control them.”<sup>65</sup> The Government wished to avoid this situation because such a large concentration of Aboriginal peoples in one place would be difficult to control and impossible to assimilate into Canadian society.<sup>66</sup> Other historians, notably Sarah Carter in *Lost Harvests* and Walter Hildebrandt and Brian Hubner in *The Cypress Hills*, have also adopted the Tobias thesis. However, in his Indian Claims Commission report regarding the Carry The Kettle First Nation claim in 1998, Jim Gallo refutes this thesis, stating that “the Government did not close Fort Walsh and insist that the

Crees and Assiniboines to move north because of fears of creating a large 'Indian territory' in the Cypress Hills...Reserves in the north were in fact surveyed 'en bloc' and the Cree and Assiniboine tribes settled in these contiguous reserves in considerable numbers."<sup>67</sup> Historical geographer D. Aidan McQuillan, in *Creation of Indian Reserves on the Canadian Prairies*, a study of the reserve creation prior to 1885, stated that "often reserves were grouped together in blocks" citing the Crooked Lakes, Fire Hills, Touchwood Hills, Battleford and Peace Hills agencies as examples. McQuillan suggested that these groupings were motivated by financial administrative reasons because they "facilitate the administration of supplies and agricultural instruction," and reduce "the number of boundary lines shared by Indians and white settlers."<sup>68</sup> Bob Beal and Rob McLeod, in *Prairie Fire*, also make similar observations in regard to the concentrations of Aboriginal

population. Beal and McLeod underline that when Piapot and his band relocated to Indian Head, more than two thousand Aboriginal peoples were residing in the Qu'Appelle district.<sup>69</sup> The refusal of reserves was largely based upon the agricultural capacity of the Hills and not a question of Aboriginal population concentrations. Although not as large as the "Indian Territory" coveted by Big Bear and his followers, these groups concentrated large numbers of Aboriginal people. It was evident that any bands within the Hills would always be dependent upon the assistance of the Government because they could not become self-sustaining, no matter how much effort was but into them.

The Government had another reason for encouraging the relocation of Aboriginals from the Cypress Hills. From the time the NWMP arrived in the Hills, they expressed concern about the usage of the Cypress Hills as a base for hunting expeditions into the United States. In his 1876 annual report to Parliament, Col. French reported that the number of men at both Fort Walsh and Fort McLeod had been increased by 100 because of conflicts between Aboriginals on both sides of the international border.<sup>70</sup> As the buffalo herds diminished throughout the late 1870s, Aboriginal bands from across



*Camp of Assiniboine near Fort Walsh photographed in 1878. Edgar Dewdney felt that the Assiniboine bands could be granted reserves in the Cypress Hills as the area was traditional hunting territory. But under no circumstances were Cree bands to be given reserves in the area.*

the prairie were headed to the Hills to prepare hunting parties to travel into Montana where the buffalo were still plentiful. Fort Walsh became the natural rallying point for these hunting parties who needed supplies and rest prior to heading out across the line. By 1879, Bloods, Blackfoot, Peigans, Assiniboines, and Crees from as far north as Battleford were reported gathering at Fort Walsh for supplies and rations.<sup>71</sup> Rather than limit this activity, the Government encouraged this cross-border hunt because it would reduce the tribes' needs on Government rations. However, as a letter to Edgar Dewdney from the Indian agent at Fort Walsh reported, the fear of crimes committed in the United States by Canadian Aboriginals was a very real concern.<sup>72</sup> The benefits of this trans-border hunt were not shared by American authorities south of the line. By 1880, the American authorities considered Canadian Aboriginals to be a nuisance, disruptive and unlawful.<sup>73</sup> Inhabitants of the Montana territory blamed nearly all crimes on Canadian Aboriginals and went as far as to call upon the military to assist in their deportation.<sup>74</sup> In the summer of 1881, the American Cavalry patrolled the border in order to prevent any hunters from crossing the line. Huge summer camps were organised as a show of force along the Milk River in Montana and to facilitate patrols.<sup>75</sup>



Although some Canadian Aboriginals were afraid to cross into American territory because of these patrols, the knowledge that herds were just across the border continued to attract large numbers into the United States.<sup>76</sup>

In addition to creating political tension between Ottawa and Washington, the deportation of Canadian Aboriginals was having a major impact upon the Cypress Hills. When being deported, American forces would strip Canadian Aboriginals of their horses, hunting rifles and ammunition before sending them across the border.<sup>77</sup> Without any means of transportation back to their reserves, these destitute people would go to the nearest place to get food and shelter, increasing their dependence upon Fort Walsh. Every summer, up to 3000 destitute Aboriginals arrived at the NWMP post from the United States in need of food and clothing.<sup>78</sup> The Police were there to hand out rations, often for months at a time, and to assist in returning Aboriginals to their reserves. This dependence upon the post for rations and goods was a much debated point between the Police and the Department of Indian Affairs.

One of the largest groups within these trans-border hunters were non-treaty Aboriginals, mainly from the Treaty 6 area. Led by Chiefs Big Bear, Little Pine and others, these bands refused to take treaty and continued to live in as much of a traditional way as possible. Big Bear and others also played a large role in Aboriginal peoples efforts to renegotiate or receive better Treaty terms. They advocated restrictions on the buffalo hunt and more generous benefits for Treaty signatories, and worked to unify the different tribes but with little success. They were also joined by Aboriginals who were discontented with life on reserves.<sup>79</sup> As they constantly crossed the border in search of buffalo, the Cypress Hills became an important place for these traditionalists. As it became increasingly difficult for Canadian Aboriginals to hunt in the American territories, non-treaty Aboriginals also became increasingly dependent upon the rations being distributed at Fort Walsh.<sup>80</sup> Unwilling to consider non-Treaty 4 reserves in the Hills, the Government maintained that only the signatories of Treaty 4 had rights to be in the Cypress Hills. This policy contradicted thousands of years of traditional usage of the Hills by Aboriginal people from the surrounding area.

The Cypress Hills were also used as a refuge by American Aboriginals. In 1876, nearly 3000 Sioux, led by Sitting Bull, and Dakota Indians crossed the border seeking refuge from the ongoing Indian Wars throughout the American territories.<sup>81</sup> Seeking the protection of the British and Canadian authorities, they stayed until 1881 when they surrendered to American

authorities. However, the stay by the Sioux did not end without causing an international crisis and depriving Canadian Aboriginals in the Cypress Hills. Both the Department and the NWMP reported that the Sioux presence north of the border had a large impact upon the few remaining buffalo in the Northwest Territories. In a letter to Edgar Dewdney, it was stated that the Sioux's buffalo hunt in Canada had greatly deprived Canadian Aboriginals of game and forced them to survive on government rations.<sup>82</sup> Colonel French's 1878 annual report stated: "[the Sioux] have entirely changed the Indian situation, and completely upset the calculations upon which the different treaties were based, vis. the Indians could subsist on buffalo until they became self-supporting."<sup>83</sup> Because of the Sioux presence, the buffalo stocks had been greatly diminished and the Canadian Aboriginals faced a greatly shortened timetable for adapting to their new mode of life.

For the Canadian Government, the Cypress Hills were becoming a liability for its Indian Policy and the successful settlement of the NWT. It believed that reserves in the Hills would never be productive enough to allow the settled bands to be self-sufficient. Because of this, the Department of Indian Affairs saw the bands in the Cypress Hills as being a constant financial drain without any viable returns. The Aboriginal presence in the Hills further complicated the duties of the NWMP and strained relations with the United States. The Government came to believe that the only way to resolve the "Cypress Hills Problem", as it came to be known, was to clear the area of Aboriginal peoples, not only those who were of a different treaty area, but also Treaty 4 signatories.

In the summer of 1881, there were approximately 3200 Aboriginal people camped in the general vicinity of Fort Walsh, of whom the majority were either non-Treaty Indians or signatories of Treaties 6 or 7.<sup>84</sup> Officials of the Department and the NWMP believed that Fort Walsh had become nothing more than a gathering place for destitute and dependent Aboriginals and the idea of closing the post began to circulate amongst them. As this was being discussed, however, the Department adopted a new rationing policy for all districts and agencies: rations were to be cut in half to all Aboriginals who refused to return to their reserves and none were to be issued to non-treaty Aboriginals.<sup>85</sup> The pressure tactics showed some signs of success. In March 1882, a few smaller Assiniboine bands consented to go but the Cree-Assiniboine band led by Piapot wanted to discuss with NWMP Commissioner Colonel Irvine the possibility of relocating.<sup>86</sup> Piapot consented to leave the Cypress Hills after some negotiation in April with the NWMP commissioner. As for the rest of the



*Piapot was leader of a Cree-Assiniboine band which succumbed to Government pressure to leave the Cypress Hills, moving in the spring of 1882*

Assiniboine, those led by Chiefs Man-Who-Took-The-Coat and Long Lodge soon consented to go to Qu'Appelle as well, while those led by Lean Man and Bear's Head relocated to the Battleford District.<sup>87</sup> By early July, both Cree and Assiniboine people had left the Cypress Hills for Qu'Appelle and Battleford.<sup>88</sup> With the departure of the two largest bands with a claim to the Cypress Hills, the Government was optimistic that it could resolve its Cypress Hills problem.

However, the issue of Treaty 4 bands in the Hills was not completely settled. After only a few weeks at his new reserve, Piapot and his followers returned to the Cypress Hills, displeased with their reserves at Qu'Appelle after a decimating epidemic. His Cree and Assiniboine followers had always claimed that the Cypress Hills were part of their traditional territory and that they had a right

to choose a reserve in the Hills.<sup>89</sup> In 1881, during J.P. Wadsworth's inspection of the area, Piapot indicated that he wanted his reserve near the Maple Creek farm.<sup>90</sup> He returned to Fort Walsh in October 1882, demanding that his band be given the reserve at Maple Creek. Carry the Kettle elder Dan Kennedy recounted that Piapot said that: "I will never go back to the land of the dead. This is my country and I am going to choose my reserve where there will be a chance for survival for my people."<sup>91</sup> The Department's attitude towards reserves in the Cypress Hills, however, had hardened. After the effort expended to secure Piapot's consent to leave the Cypress Hills and the considerable expense incurred in the relocation and creation of reserves, the Department flatly refused this request and insisted that Piapot return to Qu'Appelle.<sup>92</sup> Edgar Dewdney stated that granting a reserve for Piapot in the Hills would ruin any attempt to get the remaining Aboriginals in the Cypress Hills to relocate to the north. Piapot's agreement to return to his reserve at Qu'Appelle was only secured after it had been made clear that no reserve would be granted at Maple Creek and rations were withheld from his band.

For Indian Department and NWMP officials, Fort Walsh was central to the relocation problem. When Indian Department Inspector J.P. Wadsworth arrived at Fort Walsh in July 1881, he called for the immediate abandonment of Fort Walsh describing it as an incentive for Aboriginal people to stay in the Cypress Hills.<sup>93</sup> As long as the police post was in the Hills and providing rations, destitute Aboriginal bands would return. In his annual report, NWMP Commissioner Irvine stated that any relocation of Aboriginals would be difficult because "the natural inclination of the Indians themselves...was to remain about the Cypress Hills."<sup>94</sup> Irvine believed that he had done everything in his power to persuade the Aboriginal population to relocate but would not close Fort Walsh until the route of the Canadian Pacific Railway was determined. Commissioner Dewdney placed the blame for Piapot's return to the Cypress Hills in 1882 squarely on Fort Walsh: "Had [Fort] Walsh been abandoned our Indians would have been north today."<sup>95</sup>

Fort Walsh played a significant role in the history of the Hills for it drew Aboriginal people into them. From the moment of its construction, Fort Walsh became a gathering point for Aboriginal peoples from across the Prairie. The readily available rations, its sheltered terrain and its proximity to the American buffalo grounds made it a perfect place for traditional Aboriginal peoples resisting pressure to settle on reserves. However, rather than provide a return to their traditional lifestyle, these traditionalists became dependent upon the rations issued at Fort Walsh as the hunt failed. The connection between the post and Aboriginal peoples was noted by



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*This photograph of the camp of Cree chief Big Bear was taken near Maple Creek in 1883. Big Bear did not sign Treaty 6 until December of 1882 and his band was one of the last groups to leave the Cypress Hills area in 1883.*

the Commissioner of the NWMP in 1880. In his annual report, he stated that as long as reserves were granted in the Cypress Hills, the police could never entirely abandon the area.<sup>96</sup> The post could only be abandoned if reserves were moved out of the area. The NWMP also believed that the very site of the post was unsuitable. No agriculture was possible, the weather was bad and the terrain difficult on both men and horses. In his 1881 report, Colonel Irvine reported that Fort Walsh was no longer useful or practicable for the Police's purposes.<sup>97</sup> In his recommendation to close the post, Inspector Wadsworth emphasised the impact such a closure would have on the Aboriginal population: "if we abandon this place we will completely demoralize the whole outfit and they will be compelled to go North."<sup>98</sup>

This line of reasoning was quickly adopted by the Government and strongly discussed. In a letter to Sir John A. Macdonald, Edgar Dewdney, stated:

I cannot see the utility of keeping it [Fort Walsh] on, our northern Indians will always congregate about that point as soon as they get out of food...If there was no post then the bulk of them would go north and remain there and those that chose to remain south would have to make their own living without assistance from the Fort...<sup>99</sup>

The Department believed that without a central focal point, such as Fort Walsh, the Hills would be abandoned as a camp for hunting in the American territories because there would be no rations to sustain the hunting parties. Any reduction in the number of Aboriginals in the area would also reduce the number of inter-tribal horse thefts and conflicts. By the summer of 1882, the Department of Indian Affairs and the NWMP had agreed that closing the post would be the most advantageous course of action. There was, however, some disagreement as to when the post was to be closed. While the Department wanted to close Fort Walsh immediately so as to limit the concentration of Aboriginals prior to the winter, Colonel Irvine still wanted to keep the post in the Hills until the course of the Canadian Pacific Railway had been decided so that a new post would be established on the rail line.<sup>100</sup> Once the line was decided, it was announced that a new smaller post would be built at Maple Creek in 1883.

With the pending closure of Fort Walsh, the last factor of the Cypress Hills problem still needed to be resolved. Big Bear and his followers were one of the last non-treaty Aboriginal groups in the Prairies. The Government maintained that they had no right to the Cypress Hills because they were from the Battleford District in Treaty 6. The failure of the buffalo hunt and the Government's continued pressure through a policy of starvation had diminished Big Bear's influence and reduced the number of his followers. In December

1882, after trying to negotiate better terms and conditions to the Treaties, his people nearly starved, Big Bear signed adhesions to Treaty 6 at Fort Walsh. He and his band agreed to head north in the spring to the Fort Pitt District.<sup>101</sup> Although his followers had greatly diminished since his stand against the Treaties in 1876, Big Bear was seen by those who desired a return to the traditional prairie life as their unofficial leader; his signing brought the dreams of treaty renegotiation to an end. By December 1882, nearly all Aboriginal people in the Cypress Hills had agreed to either return to their reserves, or to head to new reserves to the north of the Hills. After eight years in the Cypress Hills, the NWMP closed Fort Walsh in June 1883. The village that had grown around it dismantled, and a new post was established at Maple Creek where the rail line would pass.<sup>102</sup> Although a relatively large number of Aboriginals congregated around this new post in 1883, it was a small number in comparison to the thousands that had congregated around Fort Walsh. They, too, were dispersed by the end of the summer.<sup>103</sup> The Cypress Hills were almost entirely abandoned by Aboriginal peoples. Where there had been 300 to 400 lodges in 1882, Edgar Dewdney reported that there were but 30 to 40 lodges in 1883. No longer were there thousands of starving people in the Hills dependent upon the generosity of the Government. In regard to the issue of trans-border hunting, Dewdney stated in a letter to Macdonald that:

thus may be considered solved one of the great problems which has had to be encountered for some years past and the Department has to congratulate itself on so easy a solution of the difficulty of preventing incursions from our side into the neighboring [sic] territory.<sup>104</sup>

Only one small band continued to live in the Cypress Hills. Led by Foremost Man, a Treaty 4 Cree, this band struggled to secure a reserve in the Hills.<sup>105</sup> Foremost Man claimed that a reserve had been promised to him but the Department firmly denied ever having promised any reserves in the Hills. This band was finally granted a reserve in 1913 at Maple Creek on the grounds that “they had lived there all their lives.”<sup>106</sup>

In the span of twenty-five years, the Cypress Hills, one of the areas in the Canadian Prairies most contested by Aboriginal peoples, became nearly totally devoid of their presence. Through refusal of chosen reserve sites and reduced rationing, the Department of Indian Affairs and the North-West Mounted Police managed to encourage, persuade, and, in some cases, force Aboriginal peoples who had occupied these hills for generations, to relocate to reserves hundreds of kilometres away. The Treaties

were the basis for this transformation of the Cypress Hills’ land usage. As Treaties were made and land title secured, these new boundaries not only divided the Northwest Territories but also Aboriginal people. Land usage was limited to within the boundaries of their treaty territories and claims in other treaty areas were rejected. Non-Treaty 4 signatories would not receive reserves in the Hills, and were forced to return to their treaty areas. Treaty 4 signatories were also not permitted to settle in the Hills. The Government’s reasons were based upon its Indian Policy, a policy that wanted to see a transformation of the nomadic Aboriginal hunter into a sedentary farmer. The harsh conditions and the unsuitability of the Cypress Hills led the Government’s assessment that Indian reserves in the Hills would never permit bands to be self-sufficient; bands would always need the assistance of the Government and would never fully integrate into society at large. Furthermore, the traditional lifestyle centred around the buffalo hunt was no longer able to sustain Aboriginal peoples. Buffalo hunts organised into American territory were failures and the reliance of NWMP rations and supplies issued from Fort Walsh further increased Aboriginal dependency. In order for its policies to be successful, the Government had to change the usage of the Cypress Hills.

The Government’s actions fit into its larger 19<sup>th</sup> century view of Aboriginal peoples. The Aboriginal way of life had come to an end and it was up to the Government, through the Department and the Mounted Police, to find the best solution to the problems this incurred. The removal of the Aboriginal presence from the Cypress Hills was necessary, in the opinion of the times, in order for the transformation of the Aboriginal to succeed. As long as the Hills remained a place for Aboriginals to recapture their traditional way of life, this transformation would never be possible.

## Endnotes

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\*I would like to thank Jim Gallo, DIAND, Manitoba Region, Claims Research and Negotiations Unit, Land Entitlement and Implementation Directorate for his invaluable assistance in the research and preparation of this paper.

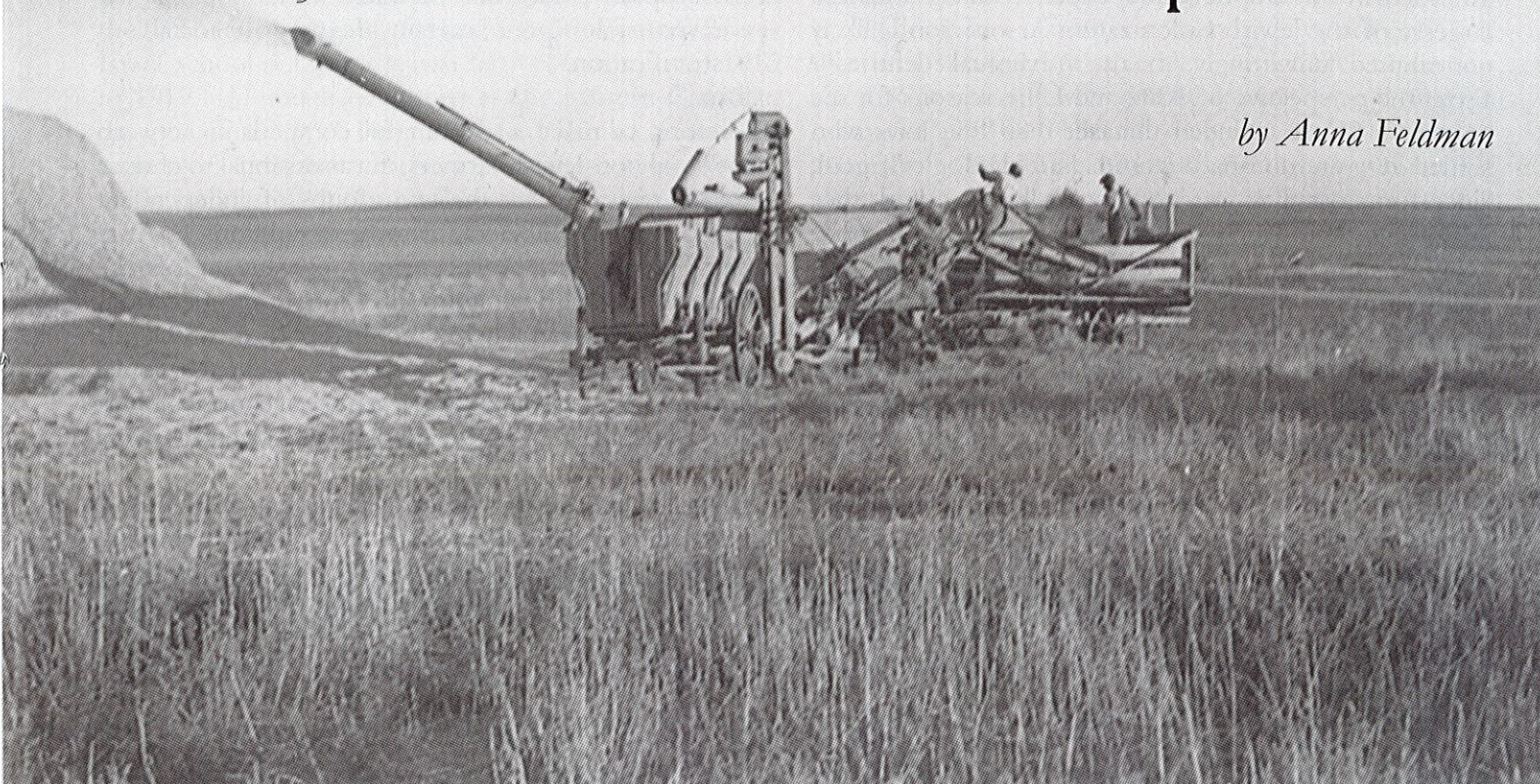
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# Were Jewish Farmers Failures? The Case of Township 2-15-W2nd

by Anna Feldman



*Threshing on the Feldman farm at Sonnenfeld during the 1930's.*

Russian persecution of the Jews in 1882 prompted Canada's High Commissioner to London, Sir Alexander Galt's suggestion to John A. Macdonald that Canada provide some of the Jewish refugees agricultural land in "the spare Mennonite Townships."<sup>2</sup> In his reply, Macdonald voiced his opinion of Jews as farmers by sarcastically declaring that "The Old Clo' move is a good one - A sprinkling of Jews in the North West would do good. They would at once go in for peddling & politics and be of much use in the New Country as Cheap Jacks and Chapmen."<sup>3</sup> Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior in Sir Wilfrid Laurier's new government in 1896, was of the opinion "that experience shows that the Jewish people do not become agriculturists."<sup>4</sup> Sifton was determined to populate the west with as many European agricultural immigrants as he could, so long as they were not Jewish.<sup>5</sup>

There is little reason to doubt that anti-Jewish feeling played a role in statements such as these. This is especially true of Director of the Immigration Branch, P.C. Blair who "expressed a strong personal distaste for Jews."<sup>6</sup> During the thirties, before the onslaught of the Holocaust, when the Jews of Europe were desperate to escape the Nazis' grasp and Canada welcomed only farmers as immigrants, Blair asserted that "Jewish [farm] colonization in Canada is largely a record of failure."<sup>7</sup>

The Director of the Immigration Branch had the same response for almost each request to admit Jewish farmers or agricultural workers into Canada: it was impossible to keep them on the farm.<sup>8</sup> Jewish farmers fared only slightly better in the early and mid-twentieth century press. While a few articles praised the colonization farming initiatives,<sup>9</sup> most often newspaper accounts were critical of the Jewish farmer.<sup>10</sup> This point of view persists to the present day. For example, some people including academics, while not tainted by an anti-Semitic bias, still base their theories on the premise that Jewish farm colonies did not succeed.

In the papers "Early Twentieth-Century Jewish Farm Settlement in Saskatchewan: A Utopian Perspective," by Anthony Rasporich,<sup>11</sup> and "Jewish and Mormon Agricultural Settlement in Western Canada: A Comparative Analysis," by Yossi Katz and John C. Lehr,<sup>12</sup> the authors list many reasons for the failure of

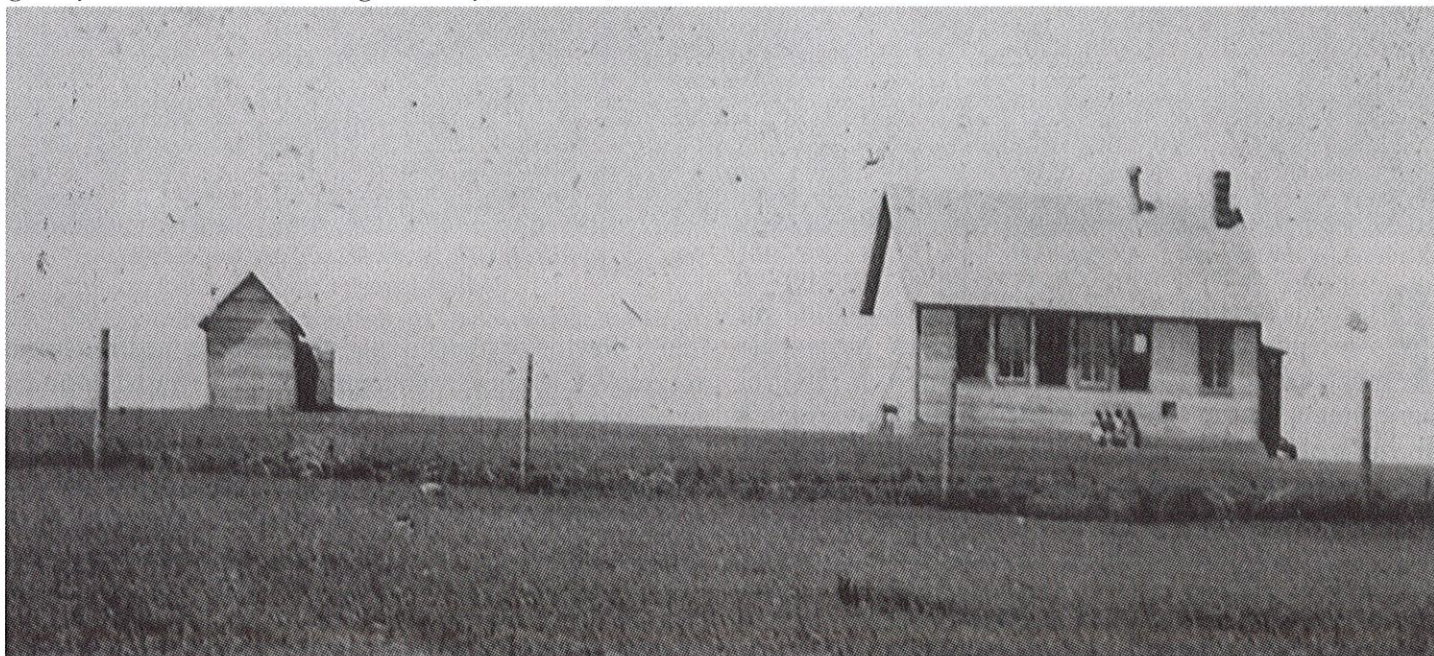
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*Anna Feldman has a Master's degree in Canadian Studies from Carleton University. Since 1978, she has been collecting oral interviews, researching and writing on various aspects of the history of the Jews in Saskatchewan.*

Saskatchewan's Jewish farm colonies. Rasporich came to the "reluctant" conclusion that the "lack of sufficient communal institutions, both economic and social" and an "excessive metropolitan dependence on the financial largesse of the Jewish Colonization Association" "likely contributed unwittingly to their eventual demise."<sup>13</sup> From the perspective of Katz and Lehr, reasons for the colonies's failure included the fact that "the Jews who settled in western Canada lacked...[an] ideological goal; since foremost they were economically motivated, they had no commitment to remaining on the land in poor economic times."<sup>14</sup> Also, according to Katz and Lehr, the Jews lacked the religious zeal to "overcome physical limitations and on occasion to cling to the land even under conditions of extreme adversity."<sup>15</sup> However, like Rasporich, Katz and Lehr also stress that the manpower, leadership assistance and large amounts of money poured into the settlements for projects provided by the Mormon Church and its philanthropists, contributed greatly to their success.<sup>16</sup> Significantly, however, neither

[T]he best land went to the Anglo-American and Northern European homestead populations; the poorer lands to the Eastern Europeans; and this resource differential is responsible for a certain degree of social stratification.<sup>17</sup>

Therefore, to make a meaningful comparison between Jewish and non-Jewish farmers, it was essential to choose a single region where the two groups of independent farmers co-existed facing similar conditions. Also, because Jews were a very small percentage of the province's total agricultural population, it was necessary to choose a location where there had been a sufficiently high number of Jewish homesteaders to make the results significant. In addition, it was essential to choose a block of land, such that a contrived boundary selection would not bias the results. After studying the Township Registers, it was determined that Township 2-15-W2<sup>nd</sup>, within the Sonnenfeld settlement in Saskatchewan,



*Summit School at Sonnenfeld, 1936*

paper deals with the non-Jewish farmers living in the same areas as the Jews and confronted with the same circumstances. Were they more or less successful than the Jews? It was this question which prompted a re-examination of Jewish farm colonization's success or failure in Saskatchewan.

Various considerations entered into the choice of a site for the investigation. Within agricultural areas, many factors, including climate, crop infestations, rainfall and soil vary. With particular reference to soil, John W. Bennett, in his paper, "Adaptive Strategy and Processes in the Canadian Plain," describes how

provided all that was necessary for an objective analysis and for a comparative study. Located close to the American border and approximately eighty kilometers west of Estevan, Sonnenfeld had numerous Jewish and non-Jewish farmers. As well, the community was my husband's original home. This familial connection assisted greatly in deciphering the landholdings and the family trees of the various colonists, and in comparing the experiences of agriculturalists on particular sections of land.

Using the remarkably detailed facts and figures dating from approximately 1910 to the end of the thirties and collected by Louis Rosenberg for the JCA, Jewish



Colonization Association,, it is possible to examine various aspects of Jewish farming operations within Township 2-15-W2<sup>nd</sup>. Louis Rosenberg, a statistician, who emigrated to Canada from England, was educated at the University of Leeds. He and was principal of Tiferes Israel School at Lipton Jewish farm colony in from 1915 to 1919. Although he served as the western Canadian director of the JCA from 1919 to 1940, he recorded a variety of statistical information on the colonies dating as far back as 1910. Louis Rosenberg was an educated, well-respected gentlemen, unique both among those JCA representatives who preceded him as well as those who followed.

Through analysis of archival materials, newspapers, primary and secondary sources, this paper argues that Saskatchewan's Jewish farm colonists in Township 2-15-W2<sup>nd</sup> were relatively successful and that the record of Jewish farm colonization is not "a record of failure." Although I believe that the experience in this particular geographic area is no different from that of any other, I recognize that the possibility of differences does exist. For this reason alone, there is a need to re-examine the "accepted" image that depicts Jewish farmers as failures in the years 1905 to 1939.

The so-called Jewish farm colonies, unlike those of the Doukhobors, Hutterites and Mennonites, consisted of independent Jewish farms interspersed with non-Jewish farms.<sup>18</sup> These settlements, Hirsch, Wapella, Lipton, Sonnenfeld and Edenbridge, whose locations are shown in Figure 1, had a sufficient number of Jews to create a loosely-knit communal group that participated in organized religious services and social gatherings. Sometimes they had a Jewish cemetery, a *shochet* (a ritual slaughterer) who may have also been the colony's Hebrew teacher, a rabbi, a synagogue or synagogues<sup>19</sup> and a *mikveh*,<sup>20</sup> a ritual bath, or *mikvehs*.

### The First Jewish Agricultural Colony in Saskatchewan

Jews, who for many years were not allowed the privilege of farming in some European countries, were among the first people to establish agricultural colonies in the Canadian west.<sup>21</sup> Jewish optimism for farming, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, grew out of their life without hope in Europe. The tolerance they enjoyed between 1850 and 1875 came to a bitter end in the 1880s when, concurrent with a severe economic depression, a renewed wave of anti-Semitism spread throughout Germany, Austro-Hungary, France and Russia. The return of prejudice and persecution shattered the absolute faith in enlightenment, the

Haskalah Movement,<sup>21</sup> and the belief in complete assimilation as solutions for the dominant society's prejudice and persecution of Jews. In their place, agriculture, from which they had been barred many times throughout their history, was seen by Jews not only as a means of survival, but as an ideal way of life. Operating on this premise, Jewish public leaders agreed that as many as possible should emigrate to Palestine or America. To refute the anti-Semitic argument of 'parasitism,' plans were made to demonstrate to the world that Jews were willing and able to engage in manual labour, including farming. Associations were formed, programs were proposed, and philanthropists donated funds. As part of this agenda the Am Olam,<sup>23</sup> a "back-to-the-land movement" chose to farm in the United States while another movement, *Hoveve Zion*, Lovers of Zion, eventually founded some agricultural settlements in Palestine.<sup>24</sup> The plans of the JCA, Jewish Colonization Association, funded by the Baron de Hirsch,<sup>25</sup> encompassed a much broader scope including a strong agronomic organization. It established and maintained educational institutions, such as agricultural colleges and model farms. Part of its mandate was to resettle Jews who suffered from political and other forms of discrimination and to establish them in farm colonies in places such as Turkey, Australia, the Argentine and Canada, but not Palestine. Palestine was eventually included in its field of operations seven years after the last Jewish farm colony was established in Saskatchewan.<sup>26</sup>

Much of this philanthropic activity was prompted by "[the] orgy of murder, looting and unutterable atrocities," which began in Yelisavegrad, Russia on April 27, 1881 and spread throughout the country.<sup>27</sup> These led to protest meetings in both London and New York.<sup>28</sup> Many organizations, including the London Mansion House Committee were formed to assist the survivors. The Canadian High Commissioner, Sir Alexander T. Galt was the London Mansion House Committee's presiding officer, and, as Canadian High Commissioner he was directly responsible for encouraging potential settlers to go to Canada's west.<sup>29</sup> Through discussion and correspondence, he managed to convince Sir John A. Macdonald that assisting several hundred impoverished Jews to emigrate from Russia to Canada would be advantageous to both the refugees and to Canada.

In May 1882, the refugees arrived in Montreal. Although the London Mansion House Committee subsidized the refugees' passage to North America and supplied them with some money, the responsibility for the newcomers' care fell on the very small Jewish communities which received them in Canada. Some of the newcomers stayed in Montreal. Others went to Toronto and the

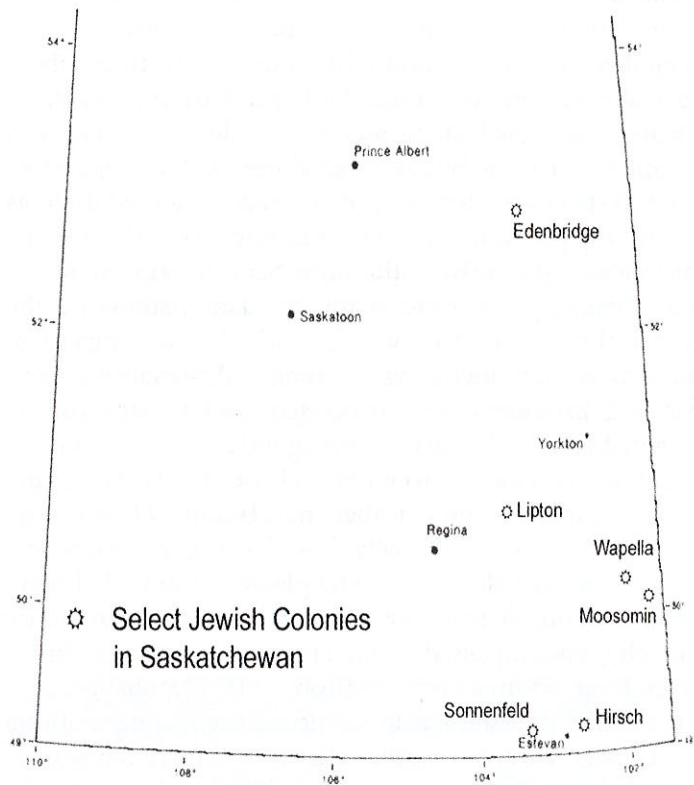


Figure 1. Map of selected Jewish colonies in Saskatchewan and other prominent towns

remaining 247 were sent to Winnipeg. Two years later, when the federal government finally allocated land for them, only twenty-seven families, two-fifths of the original group, became pioneers in the Moosomin colony of New Jerusalem.<sup>30</sup>

During the five years of its existence, from 1884 to 1889, financial difficulties and natural disasters dogged them. The final blow came with a disastrous fire which burned the settlers' crop of hay.<sup>31</sup> The remaining Jewish settlers believed that the fire was an act of arson but the police did not comply with the colonists' request for an official investigation.<sup>32</sup> Although not a private enterprise, New Jerusalem went the way of the majority of operations sponsored by colonization companies and collapsed in 1889.<sup>33</sup>

### Brief History of Saskatchewan's Jewish Farm Colonies

Each Jewish farm colony has its own history. Between 1886 and 1907 two groups of Jews, one of which was sponsored by the Anglo-Jewish financier, Herman Landau, founded the Wapella settlement, some forty kilometers south-west of Wapella. In 1892, the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society (YMHBS) of Montreal founded the colony of Hirsch, approximately

twenty-five kilometers east of Estevan. The JCA took over its supervision six years later. Comparatively, the Lipton Colony, founded in 1901 and located one hundred kilometers north-east of Regina, is the Canadian government's only attempt to delegate to government officials the founding and administration of a Jewish agricultural settlement. The JCA assisted the government in this operation. The plan was not satisfactory. Inadequate housing and supplies led to deaths from two diphtheria epidemics. Language barriers complicated the pitfalls of supervision. In spite of these difficulties, which were aggravated by both the neighbours' and supervisors' anti-Semitic comments and general behaviour, the colony managed to survive.

The remaining two settlements, Edenbridge and Sonnenfeld, grew naturally, the result of chain migration as emigrants followed the footsteps of their friends and relatives. In 1906 two separate groups, one from South Africa and the other from London, England, founded Edenbridge, a hundred kilometers northeast of Prince Albert. Three graduates Philip Berger, Majer Feldman and Israel Hoffer, of the Baron de Hirsch agricultural college in Slobodka Lesna Lesna, Galicia, were among those who established the Jewish farm settlement of Sonnenfeld.<sup>34</sup>

Both within and beyond their settlements, the Jewish colonists had an active cultural and community life. Edenbridge, for example, had a small, yet beautiful, synagogue with a cemetery. During the pioneer era the newcomers improvised a lending library. As time went on, they had built a community hall. The colonists hosted guest speakers and performers from within and beyond Saskatchewan, staged concerts, formed a dramatic society, taught Hebrew, Yiddish and religious classes, published a children's newspaper, held political meetings and organized young people's clubs.<sup>35</sup> Norman Vickar, the son original Edenbridge pioneers, became a cabinet minister in the Saskatchewan legislature.

Some indication of the colonists' involvement and active participation in the establishment of various cooperatives can be found in the many letters to the editor A.L. Plotkin, of Edenbridge, wrote promoting the formation of the Wheat Pool. They were published by the *Grain Growers Guide*, the *Melfort Moon*, and the *Western Producer*.<sup>36</sup> Research concerning western Jewish farmers in 1931 reveals that all of those included in this study marketed some portion of their farm products through a co-operative organization, whereas amongst the farmers of all origins in Saskatchewan only 33% were marketing some portion of their farm products co-operatively.<sup>37</sup> Colonists also participated in the community as directors of the telephone companies and

trustees on school boards. A few became Justices of the Peace while still others became reeves and councillors in their municipalities. Dedicated as they were to community and co-operatives, it is not surprising that many of the Jewish colonists became involved in the creation and life of the CCF. In fact, according to Tommy Douglas this support was critical. During a 1982 telephone interview he confirmed that his election of 1935 was not going well until the polls in Hirsch and Sonnenfeld turned the tide. The situation was repeated in his successful election of 1940.<sup>38</sup>

### Sonnenfeld Colony 1905-1912

No primary sources exist to indicate that there was a plan to organize a Jewish colony in this area. The early pioneers, as isolated individuals or small groups of relatives or acquaintances, applied for homesteads. Thus, from the beginning there was a mix of Jewish and non-Jewish English and Americans farmers. Most of these American homesteaders were of Scandinavian descent. For a \$10 entry fee, an applicant could obtain a quarter section of land provided he built a dwelling, lived on the land for six months of each year, brought certain amounts of land under cultivation and finally became a

British citizen before applying for the patent, that is, title to the land.<sup>39</sup>

Before migrating to the area, some of the non-Jewish settlers had been established farmers in the United States. Some brought not only their families but also machinery, livestock, and experience. One individual, J. H. Erixson, who homestead on SW3-2-15-W2<sup>nd</sup>, dismantled his home and brought it with him. The structure was reassembled and it was once again his home, this time in Sonnenfeld.<sup>40</sup> With these many assets, the Americans had a distinct advantage over the penniless, yet idealistic, young Jewish bachelors. Despite the fact that they, as students received support from the agricultural college for their education and even financial assistance for the trip to Canada, they alone were responsible for their future life.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, they started without a family support system and without experience in dryland farming, machinery, livestock, or money of their own. At least eleven of the Sonnenfeld settlers had received training at the JCA agricultural college of Slobodka Lesna, Galicia, but they were basically unskilled in prairie farming methods.<sup>42</sup> To earn money and to learn the necessary farming skills before settling on homesteads, many worked on farms in various places, such as the Jewish farm colonies of Hirsch and Wapella.<sup>43</sup> Two of the original settlers, Philip Berger and Majer Feldman are shown in Figure 2. Jews and non-Jews alike endured many hardships. They faced the rigorous climate and few facilities were in place. There were also no public services. “[T]here is no wood whatever in this township,” noted the surveyor.<sup>44</sup> Agricultural and Rural Development Act (A.R.D.A) maps described its soil, water and topographic characteristics as severely limiting to agriculture.<sup>45</sup> There were no roads. Neither were there electrical, nor telegraph, nor telephone lines. To obtain supplies or medical attention, it was necessary to make a fifty-mile trip across the prairie either by horse, by ox-drawn vehicle or on foot. While there were no trees to be cleared in the area, tons of rocks had to be dug and removed from the land. Breaking the prairie and planting crops were difficult tasks with what now seems to be primitive equipment. Drinking water proved to be a formidable problem for most homesteaders. Nevertheless, the pioneers struggled to fulfil their homestead requirements. Ruth Calof, in her memoir, vividly describes the extremely harsh environmental and economic conditions also endured by the Jewish settlement of Devil’s Lake in North Dakota.<sup>46</sup>



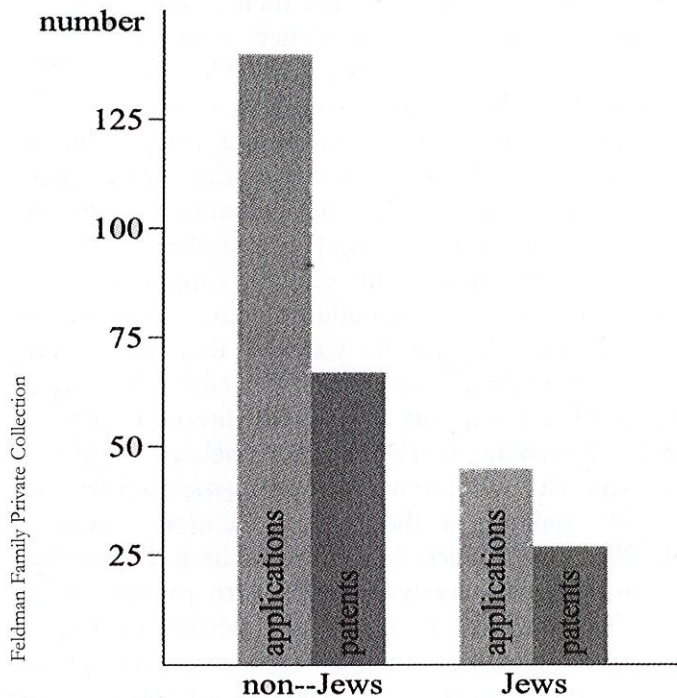
Feldman Family Private Collection

Figure 2: Philip Berger (left) and Majer Feldman (right) pictured at the Slobodka Lesna Agricultural College, Galicia circa 1900

### Analysis of Entries and Patents

Facing numerous difficulties, many new settlers chose to

Figure 3  
A comparison of patent applications and grants between Jewish and Non-Jewish farmers in 2-15-W2nd, 1905-1914



Feldman Family Private Collection

abandon their homestead rather than spend several years in a harrowing struggle to meet the homestead requirements as delineated in the Dominion Lands Act (1872). This study measures the success for Jewish and non-Jewish homesteaders by calculating the ratio between the number of patents and the number of applications for entry.

The township register provided the details on which settlers applied for homesteads and which settlers succeeded in obtaining patents for land in Township 2-15-W2nd. Using the surnames listed in the register, with a few exceptions, Jews and non-Jews were identified.<sup>47</sup> A simple count indicates a total of 185 applications for homesteads and 91 abandonments (49%). Of these, 140 applications were by non-Jews and 45 by Jews. The abandonments include 73 (52%) by non-Jews and 18 (40%) by Jews. Figure 3 displays these results graphically. In four non-Jewish cases and four Jewish cases second applications for entry were made in the same township and these all led to patents. At least another six Jews reapplied and obtained patents elsewhere in the province.<sup>48</sup>

During the period from 1911 to 1931, approximately six out of every ten homesteaders in Saskatchewan abandoned claim before securing title.<sup>49</sup> In spite of the best land having gone to the preferred groups,<sup>50</sup> only

2% of the British farmers remained in Canada, and only a few stayed in agricultural areas and in agricultural pursuits.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, of the thousands of Americans who migrated to farms in Canada, nearly two-thirds left shortly thereafter.<sup>52</sup>

### Sonnenfeld 1912 to 1939

The JCA's annual report for the year ending December 1912 confirmed that Sonnenfeld, like the remainder of agricultural southern Saskatchewan, had an excellent harvest: "Once more a splendid crop has been harvested in the colony, and the farmers are progressing very favourably. The total value of their crop this year is \$14,120 as compared with \$9,907 last year."<sup>53</sup> For the year ending December 31, 1913, the JCA review also observed that: "A great deal of progress has been made during the past 12 months on the individual farms and their condition has been materially improved. The crop was a large one being an increase of more than 50% over the last year and is valued at \$21,056."<sup>54</sup> These excellent crops following the wartime boom was accompanied by a rise in the price of wheat and other farm commodities in the months following the armistice of 1918. The peak of the boom came during the first half of 1920. A sharp recession thereafter carried price indices downward. Climatic conditions had been irregular for a number of years after the bountiful crop of 1915. Rust followed by a grasshopper infestation impaired the quality of Sonnenfeld's 1916 harvest. Moisture conditions were uneven in 1917, varying greatly from region to region. For a substantial portion of the semi-arid plains there were five crop failures in a row from 1917 to 1921. Census records for the period offer evidence of its effects with the depletion in rural population and an increase in farm abandonment.<sup>55</sup>

However, the endless cycle of settlement and then farm abandonment, characteristic of agricultural development within the Palliser Triangle,<sup>56</sup> was by no means a phenomenon of the period 1912 to 1925. It had been going on, without interruption, since the arrival of the first immigrants.<sup>57</sup> With 70% of its farmers remaining by 1920, Sonnenfeld's population was more stable than the remainder of the Triangle.<sup>58</sup> At that time there was a population of one hundred and eleven people on thirty-five farms where 5,013 acres of land were under cultivation. Their crops consisted of wheat, oats and flax and 675 acres of land were summerfallowed. The colonists' livestock included horses, milk cows, cattle as well as poultry. The value of the livestock was \$70,300, land and buildings, \$193,900 and farm implements \$38,500. Their total liabilities were \$105,310 and net assets, \$197,390.<sup>59</sup> A year later in the 1921 JCA's annual

report stated that the Hoffer brothers of Sonnenfeld had a model farm consisting of 1,600 acres of land, 39 horses, 57 cows, one stallion and agricultural machinery valued at approximately \$72,800.<sup>60</sup>

Life in Sonnenfeld, by the end of 1925, was harsh compared to experiences in present-day urban centres and primitive by modern standards. However, the colony was no longer the remote pioneering outpost it had been twenty years earlier. Although the colony started with essentially no women, the imbalance between the sexes gradually corrected itself. With the advent of wives and children, community life progressed and the institutions which contributed much to the colony's stability and success were established. The building, which housed the synagogue, Hebrew school and accommodation for the person who acted both as Hebrew teacher and *shochet* (ritual slaughterer), was completed in 1912. A doctor established himself in Bromhead, some thirty miles away. Summit school was opened in 1912 and Dravland in 1913. The Tribune Telephone Company was set up in 1916. Sonnenfeld residents, like other settlers in the region, participated as directors of the telephone company and trustees of the school boards. The pioneers organized the Jewish Farmer's Co-operative Credit Union of Sonnenfeld in 1917.

Figure 4 demonstrates that Sonnenfeld's early settlers quickly replaced their temporary one-room shacks. Families had homes, even during the homestead period, 1906 to 1912. From the homestead records listing the required improvements, Fox discovered that Jewish homes were relatively large, between 500 and 1000 square feet, compared to the very small percentage of the other homes built this size. Fox also learned that the only two brick homes in Sonnenfeld were constructed by Jewish immigrants. One farmer from British built his home from local stones.<sup>61</sup>

In spite of their many challenges, the settlers, mainly through their own efforts succeeded in building farms, increasing their assets, and maintained a cohesive community. The Jewish Colonization Association, although instrumental in neither the founding nor the detailed management of the settlement, assisted institutions as well as individual farmers financially. The JCA representative's periodic visits also added to the settlers' feeling of unity and, gave a sense of continuity to those who had graduated from the Slobodka Lesna agricultural college. After 1925 the JCA played a larger role in Sonnenfeld.

The most significant reasons for the JCA's interest in Sonnenfeld were the worsening European situation for

Size of Homes in Homestead Period

	under 200 sq. ft.	200...300 sq. ft.	300...400 sq. ft.	400...500 sq. ft.	500...1000 sq. ft.	over 1000 sq. ft.
Jewish homes	15%	30%	35%	--	20%	--
British homes	35%	41%	12%	12%	--	--
Scandinavian [American] homes	40%	20%	22%	9%	3%	6%

Figure 4: Size of Homes in Homestead Period adapted statistics compiled by Maureen Fox in her research on the Sonnenfeld and Edenbridge Colonies

the Jews and Canada's stringent immigration laws. In 1925, after an unsuccessful attempt to find a suitable block of land in western Canada on which to settle some Russo-Roumanian refugees, the JCA decided to enlarge the principal Jewish colonies in Saskatchewan.<sup>62</sup> In this there was some measure of success. Between 1926 and 1928, thirty-one Eastern European families, none of whom had before encountered Canadian farming methods, settled in Sonnenfeld. To provide accommodation and experience for the new farmers, the Oungre Farm Labourers' Hamlet was constructed on SW27-2-15-W2<sup>nd</sup> with the assistance of the JCA. Each of the six twenty-five acre lots had a house, barn and chicken house. The JCA hired an instructor to guide the beginners in their operations as well as teach them how to use modern machinery.<sup>63</sup>

The government, meanwhile, through its field supervisors, maintained a watchful eye over Sonnenfeld and Jewish colonization. Field Supervisor N. A. Craddock, in his report of 5 August 1928, found that "family members, hav[e] no desire to drift into the cities, and the scheme appear[s] to be making good headway."<sup>64</sup> Unfortunately the newcomers immediately faced poor weather, drought, unfamiliar topographical scenes, a spartan lifestyle, isolation, and no money. They borrowed from any institution, including the JCA, which would accommodate them. This led to increased tensions between the colonists and the JCA, resulting in many serious disputes, some of which went to court. Then came the "dirty thirties."

By 1931, the total gross assets, per acre, of Sonnenfeld's Jewish farmers were \$24.82 compared to \$23.71, the total gross assets, per acre, of farmers of all other origins. However, the Jewish farmers were in debt. Perhaps the Jews, as penniless pioneers, never did bridge the gap between themselves and their more financially secure Scandinavian neighbours. Or, in their haste to succeed, Sonnenfeld's Jewish settlers had over extended themselves. Whatever the reason, their liabilities, per acre, were \$17.30 compared to \$10.71 for Saskatchewan's farmers of all other origins and the net assets per acre of



*Benny Feldman, on the left and Nachman Feldman, on the right, pictured gopher hunting in 1939*

the Jews was \$7.52 compared to \$13.00 of all other farmers.<sup>65</sup> Thus the colonists had to resort to government relief.

An October 1931 JCA inspection report revealed that Sonnenfeld Colony fell within "Relief Area A" designated by the government as a district which is in the direst need having suffered from three successive crop failures. It also said that an examination of all government records showed that such a complete [crop] failure has never previously occurred in Western Canada.<sup>66</sup>

To protect the soil surfaces from erosion, the farmers were advised to leave "trash" cover and strips of stubble on the parched soil, but they soon became incubation beds for new insect threats. Types of sawflies, caterpillars, and cutworms never before seen in Canada were carried in by the wind. The ubiquitous gopher moved into abandoned fields by the thousands and destroyed whatever crops were growing. By far the worst pest, however, was the grasshopper. Damage done to the crops in the Palliser Triangle in 1931 amounted to more than \$30,000,000.<sup>67</sup> Records of the Rural Municipality of Souris Valley Number 7, where Township 2-15-W2nd is located, show that in 1931, 1934

and 1936 virtually 100% of all settlers were on relief; only in 1932 and 1933 was the number of families receiving relief as low as 50%.<sup>68</sup>

Incredibly, in spite of parched farm land, sand storms and calamitous plagues a newspaper dated December 3, 1938 reported the following:

One of the remarkable facts about Jewish farm life in Saskatchewan is that 62% of the present holders of land have retained it for 25 years without moving. In the same area only 16% of the total population have done the same thing. Only 40.4% of the Jewish farmers' sons have left the soil while the figure for the total population is 43.7%.<sup>69</sup>

### Conclusion

Early in the twentieth century Canadian government officials wanted to populate the west. For those people, including Jews, who had little or no money and wanted to farm, Canada's Dominion Land Act (1872) was an ideal solution. However, as one homesteader noted, "[Many] lost the game in which the entrant bets ten dollars with the Government against 160 acres of land [that] he could stay on for three years without starving."<sup>70</sup>

In Sonnenfeld 27% of the non-Jews and 60% of the Jews won the bet. Despite the ravages of the dirty thirties and a terrible depression, 62% of the Jewish farmers stayed on their land for twenty-five years, while only 16% of the total population did so. In the same way, only 40.4% of the Jewish farmers' sons left the farm, a percentage lower than the 43.3% of the total population who abandoned the land.<sup>71</sup>

There were many possible reasons why a significantly larger number of Jewish farmers than the farmers of all other origins chose to remain on the land in Sonnenfeld. For example, idealism, particularly amongst the agricultural school graduates played an important role. The ability to determine one's own future on the wide, open prairies within the support of a community was also a significant factor in the decision to stay. The Jews of Sonnenfeld had never farmed before. On the other hand, their Scandinavian neighbours, who moved to farms in the north, had not only farmed, but had also uprooted themselves from their farms in the United States, perhaps more than once. The Jews had never had this experience. Making drastic lifestyle changes must have been moderated by memories of "pogroms, military service, anti-Semitic rules and regulations, and the oppressive governments."<sup>72</sup> Considering the bleak

alternatives, most of those penniless Jewish families, who might have dreamed life in the city, must have chosen to weather the bad times in Sonnenfeld. Finally, because the Jews have had a long history of being a determined, stubborn “stiff necked” people,<sup>73</sup> did they have a choice? Keeping the previous facts in mind, and before branding Jewish farmers as failures, more comparative population studies of Jewish and non-Jewish farmers residing in the same area, need to be undertaken.

## Endnotes

- 1 I thank my husband, Keiva Feldman for his constant support and help with the homestead records. I also thank the editor, the readers, and the archivists, researchers, family members and friends who assisted me, and my many informants for allowing me to share their memories.
- 2 Letter from Alexander Galt to John A. Macdonald dated Montreal, 7 July 1882. As in Benjamin G. Sack, *History of the Jews in Canada*, (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1945), 263.
- 3 “Old Clo’ refers to “Old Clothes,” the cry used by clothing peddlars in London, England. Letter from John A. Macdonald to Sir Alexander Galt, dated February 27, 1882. As in Sack, *History of the Jews in Canada*, 263.
- 4 As in D.J. Hall, *Clifford Sifton, A Lonely Eminence 1901-1921* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985), 67-68.
- 5 Irving Abella, *A Coat of Many Colours, Two Centuries of Jewish Life in Canada* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1990), 90.
- 6 Irving Abella and Harold Troper, “‘The line must be drawn somewhere’: Canada and Jewish refugees, 1939,” *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. LX, No.2 (June 1979) 184. Abella and Troper discuss the issue of Blair’s anti-Semitic attitude in the first 80 pages of their book *None is Too Many* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1983).
- 7 National Archives of Canada (NAC) RG76, Vol. 82, File 8530, Microfilm Reel C 4729. F. C. Blair, Director, Immigration Branch, Department of Mines and Resources, Memorandum dated November 1936. In response to a request to allow some German Jewish families into Canada, Blair noted that the basis of the request is “the desire to get some more German Jewish families out from under Hitler’s yoke.” He continued by saying that they were not strictly speaking agriculturalists but cattle-traders and probably would bring less than \$400 with them. He concluded with “the record of Jewish farm colonization in Canada is largely a record of failure.”
- 8 Irving Abella and Harold Troper, “‘The line must be drawn somewhere,’” 182.
- 9 Examples of articles praising Jewish farmers and farm colonies include: *Saskatoon Phoenix*, 14 December 1913; and *Montreal Standard*, 3 December 1938.
- 10 Examples of some of the critical articles include: “Tories First Slander then Flatter Hebrew Residents of North Qu’Appelle,” *Regina Leader*, 10 August, 1908; “Board of Trade,” *Regina Leader*, 5 April 1883; “Jewish Immigration,” *Regina Leader*, 22 March 22 1892; Nemo Forall, “Letter to the Editor,” *Regina Leader*, 10 August 1908; and “The Jewish Colony is Undesirable” Anonymous letter to Editor, *Winnipeg Telegram*, 22 January 1907 as in *Regina Leader* 10 August 1908.
- 11 Anthony W. Rasporich, “Early Twentieth-Century Jewish Farm Settlements in Saskatchewan: A Utopian Perspective,” *Saskatchewan History*, Volume XLII, Number 1, (Winter, 1989).
- 12 Yossi Katz and John C. Lehr, “Jewish and Mormon Agricultural Settlement in Western Canada: A Comparative Analysis,” *The Canadian Geographer*, Volume 35, Number 2, (Summer 1991).
- 13 Rasporich, “Early Twentieth-Century Jewish Farm Settlements,” 37.
- 14 Katz and Lehr, “Jewish and Mormon Agricultural Settlement,” 127.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 140
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 John W. Bennett, “Adaptive Strategy and Processes in the Canadian Plain, in *Region of Mind*, ed. Richard Allen (Regina: University of Saskatchewan, Canadian Plains Study Centre, Canadian Plains Studies, 1979), 186.
- 18 Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies A History* (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 186; “Editorial,” *Canadian Jewish Times*, 17 May 1907.
- 19 A synagogue building is not necessary for services. They can be held provided there is a *minyan*, a quorum of ten men for orthodox Jews. For those who are not orthodox women are included to make up a *minyan*.
- 20 According to Jewish custom, it is necessary to set up a school, build a ritual bath, *mikveh*, consecrate a cemetery and organize a synagogue as soon as possible after a community is formed. In spite of efforts to have *mikvehs* built in other colonies, only Hirsch and Lipton succeeded in doing so. Edenbridge colonists used the Carrot River as their *mikveh*. Although the mikveh is used by both men and women as an aid to spirituality, it is a necessity for orthodox women.
- 21 Jewish farm colonization in the west, begun in 1882, pre-dates Ukrainian, Doukhobor, Russian, German and Hungarian settlement. Only the Mennonites and the people of Britain and Iceland came to farm before the Jews.
- 22 Educated Prussian Jews and those who held economic and financial positions clamoured for equal rights sought to abolish the degrading and discriminating laws directed against them. Believing that emancipation was at hand, they sought to change Jewish traditions. The leading spirit of the Haskalah Movement was Moses Mendelssohn.
- 23 *Am Olam* was a Jewish society formed in 1881 by two Russian Jews, Mania Bakl and Moses Herder, to establish rural colonies in the United States.
- 24 Also organized in Russia, *Hoveve Zion*, Lovers of Zion, collected money, conducted courses in the Hebrew language and Jewish history and organized glee clubs. Eventually several hundred *Hoveve Zionists* founded some agricultural settlements in Palestine.
- 25 Kennee Beth Switzer, “Baron de Hirsch, the Jewish Colonization Association and Canada (1891- 1914),” (Ph.D. diss., The London School of Economics and Political Science, 1982).
- 26 *The Canadian Jewish Times*, Montreal, Adar 7, 5673, 14 February 1913.
- 27 B. G. Sack, *History of the Jews in Canada From the Earliest*

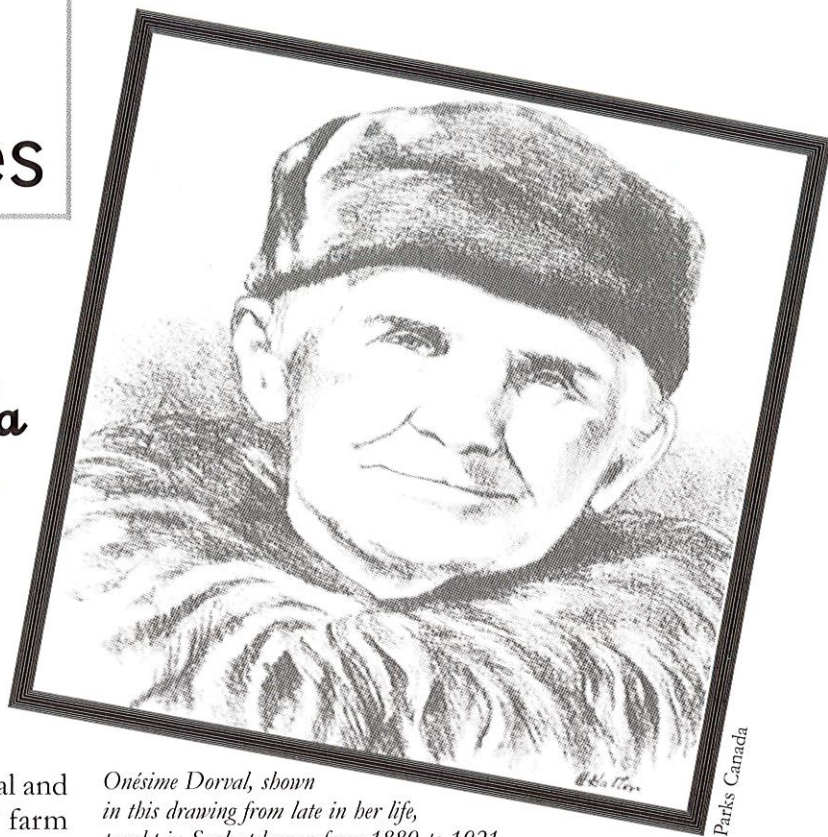
- Beginnings to the Present Day in Two Volumes, Volume One (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1945), 178.
- 28 Ibid., 179.
- 29 Simon Belkin, *Through Narrow Gates: A Review of Jewish Immigration, Colonisation and Work in Canada, 1840-1940* (Montreal: Eagle Publishing Co., 1966), 54.
- 30 Bob Irving and Maxine Povering, "Jewish Agricultural Colonization in Canada: The Moosomin Experiment," (Unpublished paper, Department of Geography, University of Waterloo, no date), 4.
- 31 Ibid., 32.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Andre W. Lalonde, "Settlement in the North-West Territories by Colonization Companies, 1881-1898," (Ph.D. diss., d'Universite, Laval University, 1969), 229.
- 34 Louis Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews*, (Montreal: Bureau of Social and Economic research, Canadian Jewish Congress, 1939), 218-223.
- 35 Michael Usiskin, *Uncle Mike's Edenbridge Memoirs of a Jewish Pioneer Farmer*, trans. Marcia Usiskin Basman (Winnipeg, Peguis Publishers, 1983), 127-133.
- 36 A.L. Plotkin, *Struggle for Justice* (New York: Exposition Press, 1964), 63-77.
- 37 Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews*, 243.
- 38 Tommy Douglas, telephone interview with author, November, 1982.
- 39 Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896-1921 A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1976) 56.
- 40 Telephone interview with Nachman Feldman, Calgary, Alberta by Anna Feldman, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, December 21, 2002.
- 41 Branche Feldman, interview with the author, Weyburn, SK., August 18, 1974.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Maureen Fox, "Jewish Agricultural Colonies in Saskatchewan with Special Reference to the Colonies of Sonnenfeld and Edenbridge" (Master's thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1979), 74.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 J. Sanford Rikoon, "Jewish Farm Settlements in America's Heartland," in J. Sanford Rikoon, ed., *Rachel Calof's Story: Jewish Homesteader on the Northern Plains* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1995), 105.
- 47 Saskatchewan Archives Board (SAB) S - A 1022. A report, compiled by Anna and Keiva Feldman gives the name, year and location on applications for homesteads and pre-emptions, provided the pre-emptions are located within 2-15-W2. Also indicated in this report is date of patent and identification of Jew and non-Jew. In some instances applicants abandoned homesteads in the township to move to other homesteads. The location of the new homestead is also given, when possible.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 Vernon G. Fowke, *National Policy and the Wheat Economy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), 185.
- 50 John W. Bennett, "Adaptive Strategy and Processes in the Canadian Plain," 186.
- 51 C. A. Dawson and E.R. Younge, *Pioneering in the Prairie Provinces*, Vol. III of *Canadian Frontiers of Settlement*, (Toronto: 1940), 30.
- 52 K. D. Bicha, *The American Farmer and the Canadian West, 1896-1914* (Lawrence Kansas: Coronado Press, 1968) 140
- 53 National Archives of the Canadian Jewish Congress (NACJC), Canadian Jewish Congress, *JCA Annual Report* (1912).
- 54 NACJC. Canadian Jewish Congress, *JCA Annual Report* (1913).
- 55 Fowke, *National Policy*, 78
- 56 As a result of a study carried out in the 1850s by Captain Palliser, he concluded that the area now referred to as the "Palliser Triangle" was unsuitable for settlement. The base of the triangle lies roughly between Cartwright, Manitoba and Caraway, Alberta. The peak of the triangle is located in the vicinity of Saskatoon.
- 57 James Gray, *Men Against the Desert* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Book Service, 1967), 41; and Jim Pooler, "Population Migration," in *Atlas of Saskatchewan*, 2nd edition, Ka-iu Fung, ed. (Saskatoon. University of Saskatchewan, 1999), 191.
- 58 Fox, *Jewish Agricultural Colonies*, 120.
- 59 Saskatchewan Archives Board (SAB) R-3282, Louis Rosenberg "Statistical Summary of Sonnenfeld Colony 1910-1934."
- 60 NACJC. Canadian Jewish Congress, *JCA Annual Report* (1921).
- 61 Fox, *Jewish Agricultural Colonies*, 94.
- 62 Belkin, *Through Narrow Gates*, 163.
- 63 Ibid., 165.
- 64 NAC, RG 76, Vol. 82, File 8520, Microfilm Reel C 4749) August 5, 1928 Field Supervisor's Investigation Report.
- 65 Rosenberg, "Table 151," *Canada's Jews*, 241.
- 66 November 6, 1931, Regina # 13,800, *Report on Hirsch and Sonnenfeld Colonies*, Inspection trip, Oct. 14023, JCA file, National Archives of Canadian Jewish Congress.
- 67 James Gray, *Men Against the Desert*
- 68 Fox, *Jewish Agricultural Colonies*, 158.
- 69 *Montreal Standard*, 3 December 1938.
- 70 W.C. Pollard, *Pioneering in the Canadian West* (London, n.d.) 49 cited in Bicha, *The American Farmer*, 141.
- 71 *Montreal Standard*, 3 December, 1938.
- 72 J. Sanford Rikoon, "Jewish Farm Settlements in America's Heartland," in *Rachel Calof's Story*, 105.
- 73 Exodus 33: 3 and 5.



# People & Places

## Onésime Dorval: “la bonne demoiselle”

by Diane P. Payment



*Onésime Dorval, shown in this drawing from late in her life, taught in Saskatchewan from 1880 to 1921.*

Parks Canada

Onésime Dorval, daughter of Ignace Dorval and Esther Brunette, was born on the family farm in Ste-Scholastique, Québec on August 3, 1845. She grew up in neighbouring St-Jérôme and attended convent schools in both communities, completing her teacher's training and obtaining a first class teaching certificate.<sup>1</sup> Educated in French, she would subsequently lay the ground work for bilingual French and English education in Saskatchewan.<sup>2</sup> Described as “Saskatchewan's first certified teacher”, her career lasted over fifty years, a notable achievement for the resolute petite woman who was thought to be frail and delicate.

The piecing together of Mlle Dorval's life is based on a journal that she kept of her travels and activities in the North West between approximately 1877 and 1885 and correspondence with Oblate missionaries, in particular, Bishop Vital-Justin Grandin.<sup>3</sup> It appears that her journal was interrupted after 1885, possibly due to the demands of her teaching career or at least the accounts for that period have not been found.<sup>4</sup> After her retirement in the late 1920s, she added some memories of her life and career to the journal. During the course of my work for Batoche National Historic Site since the mid 1970s, I interviewed many elders and former students who talked to me about their former teacher or helpmate. These

stories have enabled me to “fill in the gaps” in Mlle Dorval's life, and together with her journal, present some of the highlights of the life of this humble but remarkably talented woman.

In recognition of her contributions to the history of Saskatchewan and Canada, Mlle Dorval was designated as a person of national historic significance by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada in 1954. She was subsequently forgotten and even assumed to be a man as her name suggests. Fortunately, she was remembered when women's history became a strategic priority of the Parks Canada Commemorative program. Mlle Dorval was commemorated by a plaque at Duck, Lake, Saskatchewan on October 29, 2002.

### Early career and journey to Manitoba

An intelligent, altruistic and intensely religious woman, she wished to dedicate her life to the Church and entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Good Sheperd (Soeurs du Bon Pasteur) in New York where she learned English, but was not accepted into the order because of her frail health. Disappointed in this venture, she resolved to dedicate her life to God's service if her health was restored. When her wish was granted, she contacted the Oblates of Mary-Immaculate about service in the missions of the Northwest. Bishop Vital-Justin Grandin of St. Albert responded that he needed resourceful

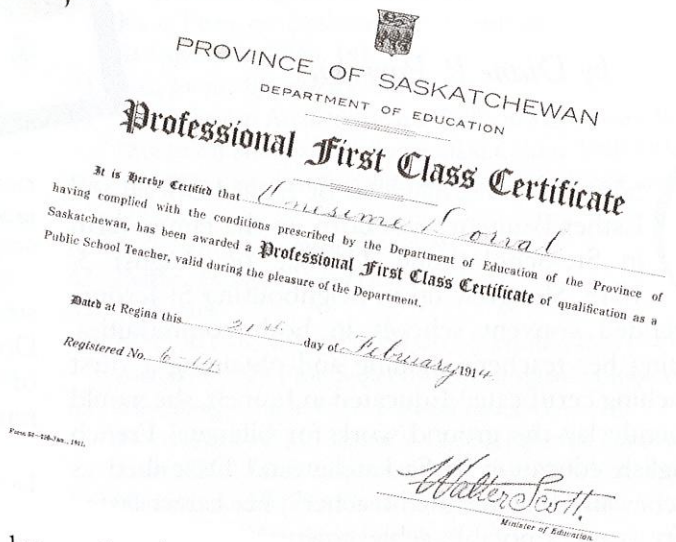
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*Diane Payment has been a historian with Parks Canada, Western Canada Service Centre in Winnipeg since 1976. She has published articles on Métis and Francophone communities in Western and Northern Canada and is currently working on the second edition of Batoche: The Free People - Otipemisiwak, originally published in 1990.*



Both documents are courtesy of the Missionary Oblates, Grandin Archives at the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Accession 84.400, File 766

Dorval's teaching career spanned over decades and three provinces. Featured are two of Dorval's teaching certificates. The one of the left was issued by the Province of Quebec May 5, 1875 and the one below by the Province of Saskatchewan on February 21, 1914.



women who were not afraid of hardship to work in the missions as domestics and teachers. There was a specific shortage of qualified teachers and Mlle Dorval's personal and professional qualifications made her a very desirable recruit. Furthermore, she had a sense of adventure, loved travel and willingly accepted life's challenges and adversities. In July, 1877 she left Montréal for St. Boniface, Manitoba. She travelled by boat and train and boarded the steamer *Northcote*<sup>5</sup> at Fisher's Landing (in present-day Minnesota) arriving in Winnipeg on August 5th. She spent the next two years in Manitoba, teaching in English at St. Mary's parish in Winnipeg and started a school for Métis and French Canadian children in Baie St. Paul on the Assiniboine river. She also spent some time at the Convent of the Grey Nuns in St. Boniface (now a National Historic Site). Although her services were in demand there, she had been recruited by Bishop Grandin for his diocese of St. Albert.

**On to Saskatchewan: St. Laurent de Grandin, Battleford, Batoche and Duck Lake**

In the summer of 1880 Mlle Dorval began the two and one-half month western journey by Red River cart. The brigade included nineteen carts under the direction of Louis Châtelain and other Métis freighters travelling to Lac Ste. Anne via the Carlton trail. It was an arduous trip which she thoroughly enjoyed. In her memoirs she

referred to the inspiring beauty of the landscape: "cette belle nature [qui] avait le pouvoir de charmer même les cœurs attristés" (this beautiful nature which had the power to charm the saddest of hearts) and often walked ahead of the caravan to explore and meditate. On August 8th, the travellers stopped at Duck Lake where Father André tried to retain her services for St. Laurent de Grandin but since she had been advised to go to St. Albert, she continued her journey. From there she went to Lac Ste. Anne where she made her first religious vows as a Tertiary of the Order St. Francis. But she was soon on her way back to the Saskatchewan district, to the Métis community of St. Laurent de Grandin. Her work there between 1881 and 1883 included teaching, household and sacristine duties. The mission chronicles for those years document her kindness, tact and teaching skills which endeared her to the local population. She also contributed to the establishment of a grotto to Our Lady of Lourdes. When the Sisters Faithful Companions of Jesus arrived in the community, she left to establish a school in Battleford where she taught until 1896. Her

first years there were marked by hardship and poverty but she persisted in her efforts. Mlle Dorval then taught at Batoche between 1896 and 1914, in the little one-room school just west of the rectory. She not only taught school subjects but crafts and music on a little harmonium, now at the Duck Lake Regional Interpretive Centre. She also worked as a housekeeper for Father Moulin and provided board for a few children who lived too far to walk to school. Former students such as Adélaïde Pilon Ranger and Rosario Gareau cherished her memory. She was strict but had a special way with students and never got angry at them. Others recalled the treats she would serve them after Sunday Mass and her tolerance of their often mischievous behaviour at a time when children were expected to be still and silent. At the plaque unveiling ceremony in Duck Lake in October, 2002, local elder, Mr. Omer Courchesne, remembered Mlle Dorval as a gifted teacher, humanitarian and selfless woman who set the example for many generations of teachers and students.<sup>6</sup>

### Work with Aboriginal peoples and 1885 Northwest Rebellion/Métis Resistance

The 1870s were years of hardship and change for Aboriginal peoples of the Northwest whose ancestral land rights were being threatened. The Dakota (Sioux) from the United States had sought refuge across the border after the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876 and the Canadian government was entering into Treaties with the Cree, Blackfoot and other First Nations of the Northwest. The rights of the Métis who had founded the province of Manitoba were also threatened and many left to establish new communities further west. The Northwest was also inhabited by a minority of “White” settlers or newcomers who feared “Indians”. Mlle Dorval witnessed some of these developments first hand. When she was at St. Laurent, a group of destitute Dakota visited the mission to ask for food and while the others ran to hide, she gave them some soup and bannock (galette) and they left peacefully.<sup>7</sup> She was a zealous Roman Catholic and participated in the Church’s mission to “civilize and christianize” Aboriginal peoples. She may not have understood their resistance to values she upheld but her memoirs also suggest much compassion and generosity towards people in need or whose basic rights were not respected, regardless of their origins.

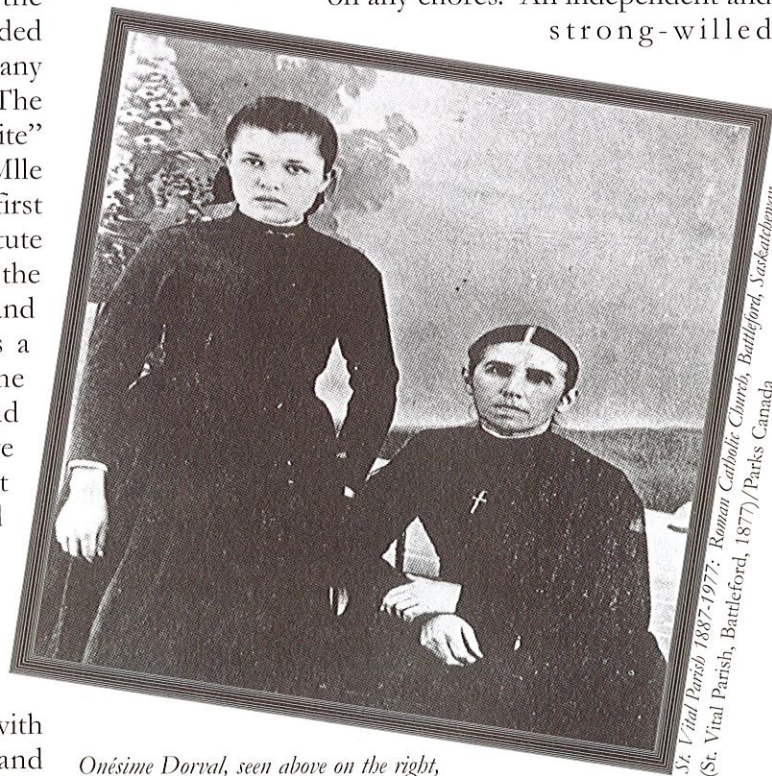
Aboriginal grievances came to a head in the Saskatchewan district in 1885. In the Battleford area, the Cree and Assiniboine came into conflict with government agencies and the result was war and bloodshed. Mlle Dorval and other town residents sought

refuge in the North West Mounted Police post during the so-called “siege” in the spring of 1885. She and thirty-two others spent the first days crowded into major Crozier’s quarters. Tents were erected outside the palisade, east of the fort, where the refugees lived for the next five weeks, returning to the fort to sleep at night. She shared the fears of the settlers but she reported that the victims of Cree attacks were ‘Whites’ who hated Indians or had treated them harshly.<sup>8</sup> The news of the deaths of Fathers Fafard and Marchand at Frog Lake deeply affected her and the local missionaries.

### Glimpses of her personal life

Mlle Dorval loved children and perhaps because she was unmarried and did not have her own, she “adopted” two girls to whom she became a doting mother. Marie Giroux<sup>9</sup>, a young orphan who accompanied her from Québec, lived with her until 1883. Her second protégée, Georgine d’Amours, is better known.<sup>10</sup> A pretty, vivacious and highly intelligent Métis girl, she came to Battleford with Mlle Dorval and later accompanied her to Batoche. Georgine was postmistress in Duck Lake for many years and a source of comfort and affection for Mlle Dorval in her retirement.

Mlle Dorval lived a life of total self-sacrifice. She made a formal donation of her income to the Oblates.<sup>11</sup> She dressed very modestly and conservatively in black at all times. Her long white apron was always nearby to take on any chores. An independent and strong-willed



*Onésime Dorval, seen above on the right, is pictured with her protégée Georgina d’Amours, circa 1895.*

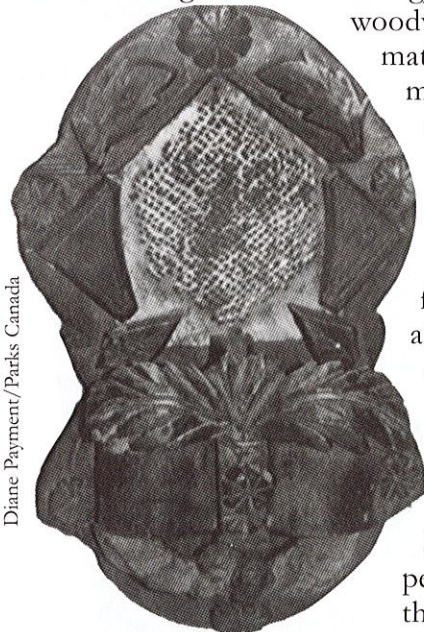


*St. Antoine School at Batoche, circa 1900.  
Dorval taught at this school between 1896 and 1914.*

woman, she found the vow of obedience the most difficult but she observed all with great dedication.

### Artist and philanthropist

Her duties as teacher and director of the mission household did not leave Mlle Dorval much time for leisure activities but she was very creative and excelled in the decorative arts: “Elle avait le don de faire de jolies choses avec des riens”<sup>12</sup> (She knew how to make beautiful things out of nothing). She was an expert woodworker and re-used materials, for example



Diane Payment/Parks Canada

*An expert woodworker, Mlle Dorval made this match holder from a cigar box.*

making a match holder out of a cigar box<sup>13</sup>. Some of her creations, such as room dividers were practical interior features but she was also a skilled carpenter<sup>14</sup>, helping to build the schoolhouse in Battleford and household furniture. She constructed “le petit chemin latté” or the narrow walkway which linked her quarters to the mission boardwalk at Batoche.

She made a number of items for the church: papier mâché flowers, statuettes and picture frames. She was also a gifted painter—perfecting a technique using her fingers.<sup>15</sup>

### Her legacy

After she left Batoche, Mlle Dorval taught at Aldina for a year and then returned to teach in St. Laurent de Grandin as there was a shortage of qualified French language teachers. In 1913, a special celebration was held at St. Michael’s School to mark her fiftieth teaching anniversary.<sup>16</sup> She retired with the Sisters of Presentation in Duck Lake in 1921 where she pursued her community and missionary activities and wrote her memoirs.

Mlle Dorval was “admired by all who knew her”<sup>17</sup> and her memory lives on in Métis and Francophone communities such as Bellevue, Batoche and Duck Lake. Bishop Grandin noted that she was not afraid to take on the most demanding work while Sister Germaine Gareau called her: “une âme forte et bien trempée” (a strong and sturdy character).<sup>18</sup> Small and delicate in stature, her health was not robust but her strength of character and determination ensured her a long and fruitful life. Mlle Dorval died at Duck Lake at the age of 87 on December 10, 1932 and is buried in St. Michael’s School cemetery. “Toujours souriante” (always smiling), her humility, generosity and competence are the qualities that people remember her by. She is truly one of Canada’s “extraordinary ordinary women”.<sup>19</sup>

### Endnotes

- 1 Mlle Dorval obtained a Québec Ecole Modèle and First Class Teacher’s Certificate. Records for the Territorial period in Saskatchewan are incomplete but she obtained a Northwest Territories First Teacher’s Certificate in 1888 or 1890 and Saskatchewan Professional First Certificate after 1905. Department of Education records strongly support the claim that she is Saskatchewan’s first certified teacher. She was most certainly the first certified bilingual (French-English) teacher. Saskatchewan Archives Board, Regina: Correspondance between Ed Morgan to M. Perillat, 11 July 1977; and R.D. Wilson to É. de Grâce, 7 October 1980. Copies of this correspondence are in possession of the author
- 2 The status of French and access to Catholic education were guaranteed in the the Northwest Territories Act of 1875 (and subsequent acts) which provided for a dual French Catholic and English Protestant public school system. A school district could also establish a publicly funded separate school. This system persisted during most of Mlle Dorval’s career but the Saskatchewan Schools Act of 1919 abolished Francophone Catholic minority education rights and publicly funded separate schools. Teaching in French was only permitted for

one hour a day. This injustice was not remedied until the late 1960s.

- 3 Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAA), Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Collection (OMI), Fonds Mlle Onésime Dorval, Journal [Mémoires], 36 pages; Correspondence of Bishop Vital-Justin Grandin of St. Albert, 1876-1902.
- 4 In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Mr. Éloi de Grâce, Oblate archivist at the Provincial Archives of Alberta, gathered files and correspondence relating to Mlle Dorval and made numerous inquiries as to the possible whereabouts of the rest of her journal. When he left his position, he forwarded to me copies of her journal, her correspondence and his correspondence relating to Mlle Dorval. I would like to thank him for sharing this information. It is our shared hope that one day, Mlle Dorval's lively and informative journal will be published.
- 5 This was the same vessel that was brought down by the Métis at Batoche during the armed conflict of 1885.
- 6 Address at ceremony October 29, 2002 and account in *Saskatchewan Valley News*, vol 1 (44) 6 November 2002.
- 7 PAA, OMI, Journal of Mlle Dorval, 26.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 29.
- 9 Marie or Mary lived with her at St. Laurent and then attended the Catholic Academy in Prince Albert until 1888. Mlle Dorval hoped that Marie would become a nun but she may have married a local merchant, Albert St. Louis. Nothing else is known about her although a photograph has survived in the Oblate Archives.
- 10 Born c. 1884 and died c. 1970, Georgine was the daughter of Théophile d'Amours, a French Canadian who worked at St. Charles Mission in Dunvegan (Alberta) and Marguerite Bourassa, a Métis woman. Georgine's mother died when she was a few years old and her father, who was sick and almost blind, asked Bishop Grandin to take care of her and her brother, Prudent. Both children were destined for the orphanage in St. Albert when Mlle Dorval took Georgine under her care. Prudent served briefly as an Oblate brother but left the order and married Marie-Louise Beaulieu at Fort Vermillion in 1898 and continued to reside there. National Archives (NAC), RG 15, D-II-8c, Scrip applications 1899-1900, reel C-14961, Certificate 864-A). Georgine married the twice widowed Frenchman, Auguste Lenglet, at Batoche in 1900. He was more than twice her age. They had two daughters, Liliane and Edna and lived in Duck Lake. Georgine later lived with one of her daughters in Saskatoon where she died. According to local lore, Mr. Lenglet had actually asked Mlle Dorval in marriage but she refused, having made religious vows, and suggested her eligible protégée instead. (Gleaned from interviews by author with Mme Alexandrine Fleury Nicolas and Mlle Marguerite Perillat, Duck Lake, July 8, 1981).
- 11 She made this formal donation in 1907 or possibly earlier. In return she was granted the same privileges and rights as regular member of the order. PAA, OMI, Fonds Batoche (St. Antoine de Padoue), Declaration, Nov. 6, 1907.
- 12 Account by Sister Gérardine Chamberland, originally from Bellevue (Saskatchewan), in 1981.
- 13 It was made with a pocket knife. This item is in the Duck Lake Regional Interpretive Centre.

## MADEMOISELLE ONÉSIME DORVAL (1845 – 1932)

Mademoiselle Dorval, Saskatchewan's first certified teacher, was an esteemed educator. Born and raised in Quebec, she came west in 1877 and dedicated her life's work to the Oblate missions as a member of the Order of St. Francis. She taught for over forty years at Baie St. Paul in Manitoba and in Saskatchewan at St-Laurent-Grandin, Battleford, Batoche and Duck Lake. A talented painter and innovative woodworker, she left a rich legacy of artwork. She is affectionately remembered in the Metis and Francophone communities on the prairies

Pédagogue remarquable, Mademoiselle Dorval fut la première institutrice diplômée de la Saskatchewan. Originaire du Québec, elle s'établit dans l'Ouest en 1877, devint membre de l'Ordre de Saint-François et consacra le fruit de son travail aux missions des Oblats. Elle enseigne pendant plus de quarante ans à Baie St. Paul au Manitoba ainsi qu'à St-Laurent-Grandin, à Battleford, à Batoche et à Duck Lake en Saskatchewan. Ses peintures et son travail sur bois sont pleins d'originalité et s'avèrent un riche patrimoine. C'est avec beaucoup d'affection que les communautés métisse et francophone évoquent son souvenir.

*On October 29, 2002, Mlle Dorval was commemorated by the Parks Canada Commemorative Program. The above text appears on a plaque which was erected at Duck Lake, the long-time home of Mlle Dorval.*

- 14 She probably learned those skills from her father who was a carpenter
- 15 There are examples of her work at the Duck Lake Regional Interpretive Centre and in the Batoche National Historic Site Artifact Collection. Her painting of the Lac Ste. Anne mission is in the rectory at Batoche National Historic Site of Canada.
- 16 This was reported in the local newspaper, *Le Patriote de l'Ouest*, August 21, 1913.
- 17 Obituary, *Saskatchewan Herald*, Battleford, December 17, 1932, p. 4.
- 18 Sister Gareau was the daughter of Rosario Gareau, a pupil of Mlle Dorval. Note on file, PAA, OMI, Fonds Mlle Dorval, n.d.
- 19 Title of a recent book on Manitoba women: *Extraordinary Ordinary Women: Manitoba Women and their Stories* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Clubs of the Canadian Federation of University Women, 2000). A similar title was used in a publication by the Saskatchewan Women's Secretariat: *Ordinary Lives, Extraordinary Women: Celebrating Rural and Farm Women in Saskatchewan: A Look Back at our History* (Regina, Government of Saskatchewan, 1998). Both titles acknowledge the fact that "ordinary" women are largely hidden or missing from history.

# Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society

## AWARDS PROGRAM

The vision of the Sask. History & Folklore Society, Inc.(SHFS), is to gather preserve and promote interest in the area now know as Saskatchewan. Although SHFS has been working hard to achieve these ends since its inception in 1957, we recognize that we have not been alone in this endeavour. There have been many individuals and organizations working with little or no recognition towards similar goals of their own.

To raise public awareness of Saskatchewan's history and the people who work to preserve and interpret it, SHFS has established an Awards Program. All interested individuals or organizations are invited to participate in the Awards Program by submitting nominations of outstanding individuals or organizations that have contributed to the preservation of our heritage.

Nominees may be volunteers, professionals, non-profit organizations or corporations. Examples of works that may be considered for nomination are, but not limited to the following: educational projects; books; historical research; plays; music; folkloric crafts; oral histories; electronic publications; films; etc. The work or project for which the individual or organization is being nominated must contribute to the vision of SHFS (stated above) and also must have been made available in Saskatchewan.

All applications must be received in the SHFS office by Friday, June 27, 2003. Application forms and further details may be obtained from the Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society office.

## HISTORY ON THE ROAD

Once again the Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society is offering its series of History on the Road motorcoach tours. This year we have planned three unique and what we believe will prove to be both educational and entertaining tours.

Our first tour of 2003 will take us to the wilds of northern Alberta as we visit the Oil Sands area of Fort McMurray. Along the way we will learn about other northern industries such as mining, forestry and fishing. Stops along the way to Fort McMurray will be in Prince Albert, Big River, Meadow Lake, Cold Lake and Lac La Biche. While in Fort McMurray we will have an extensive tour of Syncrude Canada the world's largest oil sands project. We will also learn about the history of the Fort McMurray area as we tour the Heritage Park Museum. In wending our way back home from northern Alberta we will be stopping in at the historic community of Athabasca, as well as visiting one of Canada's oldest National Parks - Elk Island N. P., as well as Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village. Stops will also be made at the Lloydminster Cultural Centre where we will learn about the Barr Colonists and Count Imhoff. The tour will conclude with an examination of one of the NWT capital's - the Battlefords area. The Fort McMurray Bound tour will take place from Saturday June 14 to Friday June 20.

During SHFS's second tour of 2003 we will learn about the process of establishing the world's longest undefended border, as well as the history of one of western Canada's most important pioneer settlements. We will travel to south central Saskatchewan and follow the border with the United States eastward as we learn about the processes used and challenges faced by the Boundary Commission as they established the border between our two countries. As we travel east we will stop in at the International Peace Gardens before continuing on to Winnipeg and the Red River Settlement area. While in Winnipeg we will experience an in-depth examination of the history and heritage of this historic area. The Red River Settlement & Boundary Commission tour will take place from Sunday July 20 to Saturday July 26.

The Qu'Appelle valley has always held a near mystical presence for all those that have experienced its beauty. SHFS's 3rd tour of the 2003 season will explore this natural swath through the centre of our province. The tour will start in the valley's western most portion, near Elbow and follow as closely as possible the whole valley eastward towards its joining with the Assiniboia River. Along the way we will learn about the forces that created this marvel, as well as the social and political forces that mustered themselves in response to the Qu'Appelle Valley. The Qu'Appelle Valley tour will take place from Friday August 15 to Sunday August 17.

For further information on the Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society and specifically with regards to our

Awards Program or our History on the Road tours contact our office at 1870 Lorne St., Regina, S4P 2L7; or by telephoning 780-9204 (Regina) 1-800-919-9437 (outside Regina); or by e-mailing shfs.fa@sasktel.net.

### Everett Baker Slides On Video

If you have been watching the Saskatchewan Communications Network (SCN) on TV lately you may have noticed a series of vignettes appearing every once in awhile. These vignettes have been developed from



*Example of the clear and well composed slides produced by Everett Baker during his photographic career.*

SHFS's Everett Baker Slide collection. 3rd Eye Media Productions worked very closely with SHFS in the production of these ten vignettes. Each vignette follows a specific theme such as Couples, The Co-op, Houses, Families or Work. In addition to showing each piece as a separate filler (each vignette is approximately three minutes long) SCN has shown all ten as a half-hour program. These colour images depicting everyday life in Saskatchewan during the 1940s & '50s, have been set to beautifully yet haunting music, and have received rave reviews! SHFS's office has received calls complimenting us on the program from as far afield as BC, where somebody caught the program off their satellite dish. If you are interested in receiving a copy of this tape, please contact the SHFS office at the address listed above.

The Saskatchewan History Advisory Board gratefully acknowledges the generous financial support of one thousand dollars from the Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society

## *History in the News: Fire Destroys the Queen's Hotel in Qu'Appelle*



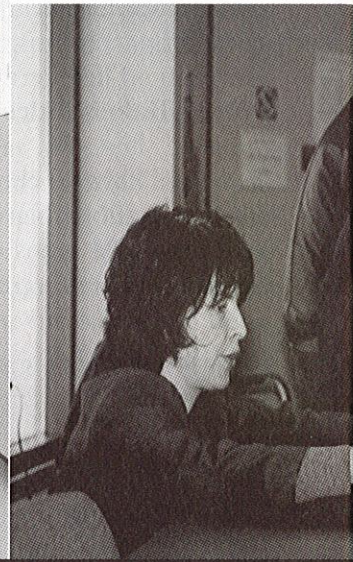
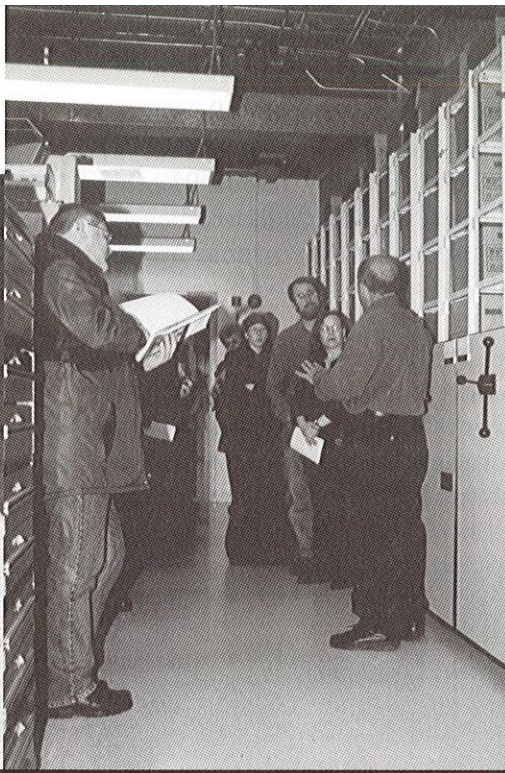
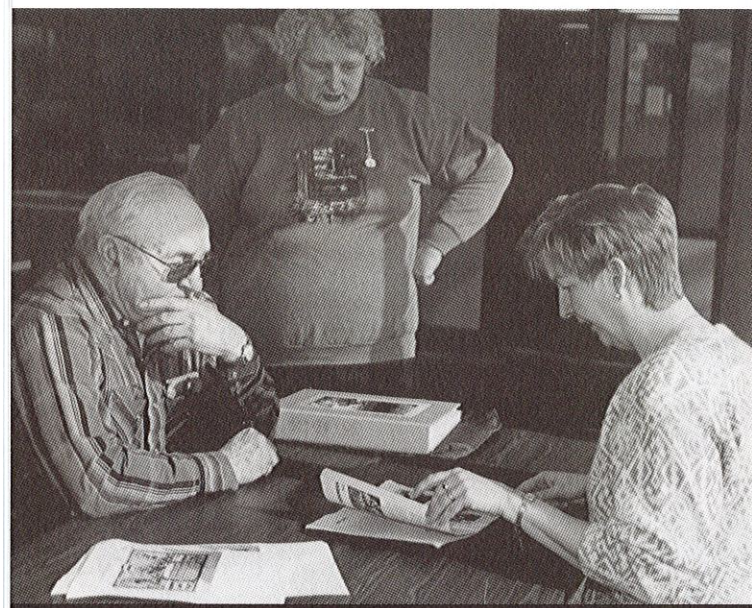
*The Queen's Hotel in Qu'Appelle, circa 1906*

An important piece of Saskatchewan's history was lost on the morning of April 17, 2003. The Queen's Hotel in Qu'Appelle, which opened on October 4, 1884, was one of the oldest buildings in the province before it was destroyed by an early morning fire.<sup>1</sup> During its lifetime, the hotel played host to a diversity of patrons and community activities. One of the most renowned visitors was General Middleton, who stayed at the hotel for a short time in March of 1885 before taking troops north to battle at Batoche.<sup>2</sup>

Not only was the Queens Hotel one of the oldest buildings in the province, it was one of the few remaining commercial structures built prior to 1900. As well, the hotel was a fine example of the Second Empire style of architecture that was popular in the 1880's. Featuring mansard roofs, symmetrical styling and dormer windows, the building style was uncommon in Saskatchewan and only a handful of examples are present today. So significant was the architecture and the history of the hotel, the building had recently been short listed for possible designation as a Provincial Heritage Property.<sup>3</sup> At the time of writing, the cause of the fire was still unknown.

### Endnotes

- 1 Qu'Appelle: Footprints to Progress (Qu'Appelle: Qu'Appelle Historical Society, 1980), 43.
- 2 Ibid, 13.
- 3 "Interview with Frank Korvemaker, Heritage and Restoration Advisor, Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation" *Saskatchewan News*, CBC Radio, Saskatchewan, 17 April 2003



## What is an Archives Anyways?: “Archives in Your Attic” at the Saskatchewan Archives<sup>1</sup>

While many readers of *Saskatchewan History* are familiar with what an archives is, for most people, the archives is an unknown entity. In a recent international survey on the relationship between society and archives, Rick Barry concluded that,

Most people in society have either not yet formed an opinion of archives, records centers and the people who operate them or have a poor opinion. Similarly, most people have formed little or no opinion on the *value* of archives.<sup>2</sup>

In an attempt to bridge the gap between the public and the archives, the Regina office of the Saskatchewan Archives Board staged “Archives in Your Attic” on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2003. The public was invited to bring in their personal archival “treasures,” such as family papers, scrap books, diaries, journals, letters, photographs, and have them appraised for their historical and archival

value. Visitors were also invited to take part in guided tours of the storage room and work areas of the Hillsdale Street office and to view a number of records that had been brought out for display. Also present were a local book dealer, who provided limited monetary appraisals of items brought in, and a conservator to provide conservation advice. Coffee and refreshments were available on the third floor along with two screenings of the 1955 film *Face of Saskatchewan*.

This was the first event of this nature organized by the Saskatchewan Archives, and the first open house in more than a decade. Staged as part of the Archives outreach program, two objectives were set for the event. The primary purpose of the event was to bring about a greater awareness of the importance of archives to the community and to society in general. The Saskatchewan Archives has been serving the government and the various interests or researchers since 1946. The majority of the public, however, does not understand all the functions, responsibilities and goals of the Archives. In addition to building knowledge about the institution, it was also hoped that donations of photographs, documents and other materials might be stimulated by the event.

The Saskatchewan Archives Board is not alone in taking this approach with its outreach programs. Last year, archives in both Edmonton and Victoria staged similar types of open house events. By numerical comparison, the Saskatchewan event was the largest, with a total of 176 people attending the daylong event. In fact there were 15 individuals waiting when the doors opened at 10 AM. Noteworthy was that of the 95 individuals who took part in the guided tours, approximately half had





never visited and Archives before. Based on these numbers, the event was a success, particularly when one considers that the temperature hovered around  $-25^{\circ}\text{C}$  for most of the day.

The event was deemed a success on other levels as well. "Archives in Your Attic" received good coverage in the local media, which meant that the message also reached many who were not in attendance. The fact that the event was staged during Heritage Week 2003 contributed to the success of the event as there was more publicity and awareness among the public related to the commemoration of history. Chris Gebhard, Chief Archivist or Reference and Special Media, noted "the public also saw the Archives in a positive manner and as an integral member of the community. Hopefully we gained some ground in dispelling some stereotypic views that archives are 'boring, old-fashioned and inaccessible.'"

In addition to the success in raising awareness of the Archives, the event prompted some visitors to donate records to the institution. Thirteen collections were acquired and several promising contacts made. Some of the items donated include:

- *A brief corporate history and 28 photographs related to Smeed's Moving and Storage Company Ltd. of Regina.*
- *Letters and documents relating to the history of the Latta family of Moose Jaw dating from 1890 to 2000.*
- *The 1946 journal of Mabel Gleadow, the first nurse of the Saskatchewan Air Ambulance service..*

- *The 1958-1960 board minutes of the Sedley Community Rink Board..*

The event was a successful public relations initiative and demonstrated that there does indeed exist a community interest and a degree of empathy for the work undertaken by the Archives. At the same time, outreach efforts such as "Archives in Your Attic" affirm the presence and value of the archives and, according to Gebhard, should "serve as a watershed in rethinking our outreach strategy."

## Endnotes

- 1 The article is drawn from the post-event report written by Chris Gebhard, Chief Archivist of Reference and Special Needs and coordinator of "Archives in Your Attic."
- 2 Richard Barry, (2003) "Report on the Society and Archives" [online]. Available: <http://www.mybestdocs.com> [viewed April, 2003]

## Photograph Captions

From left to right:

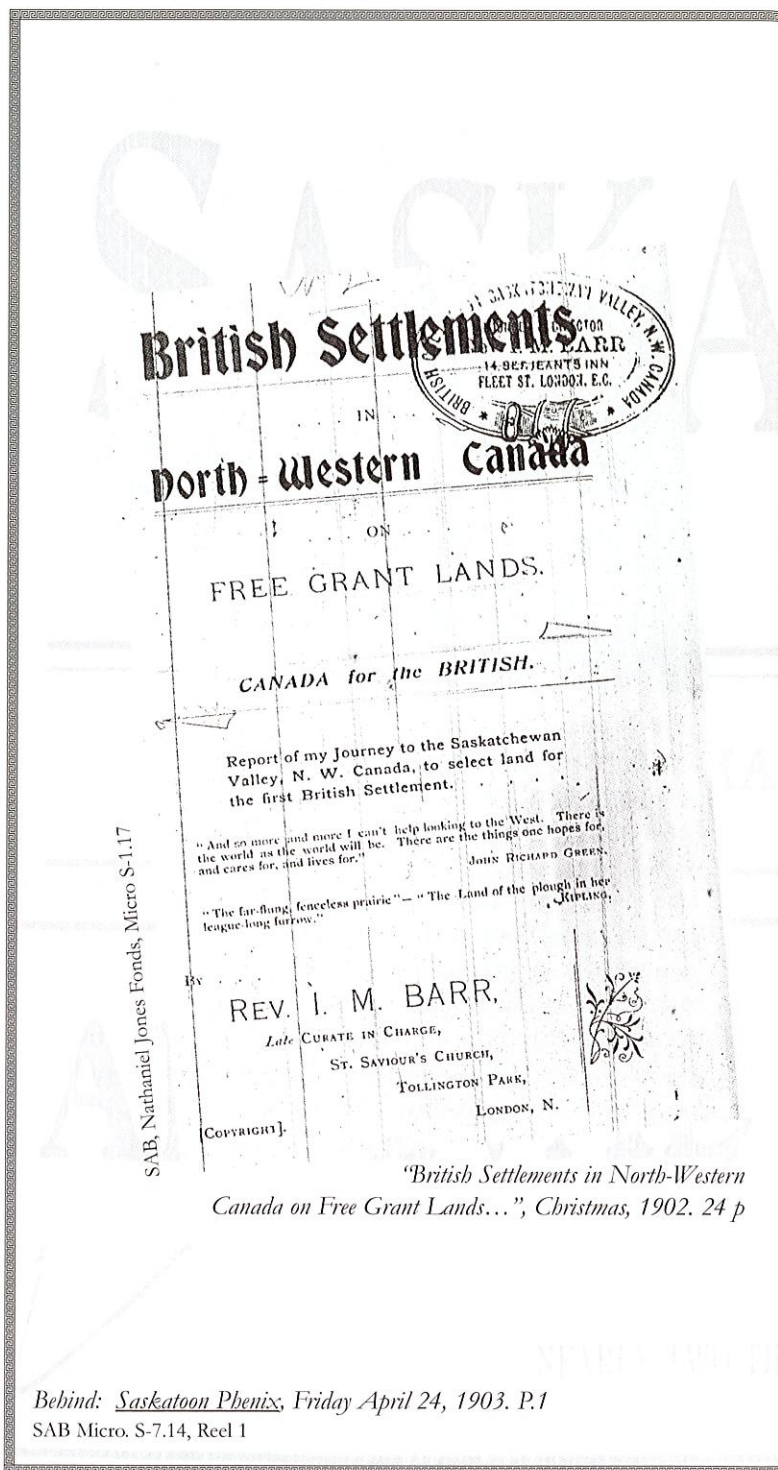
1. *Archivist Kathy Burianyk examines a document with visitors*
2. *Chris Gebhard leading a tour through one of the storage rooms*
3. *Conservator Brenda Smith gives tips on care of a document.*
4. *Archivist Tim Novak discusses a photograph brought by a patron*
5. *Visitors watch a screening of the movie Face of Saskatchewan.*

All photographs were taken by Stephen Fochuk, Archival Technician with the Saskatchewan Archives Board.

# Celebrating the Arrival of the Barr Colonists

One hundred years ago, in March 1903, an overcrowded ship full of eager, energetic and hopeful British families arrived in St. John Harbour, New Brunswick. These individuals had been lured to Canada by an enterprising clergyman named Rev. Isaac Barr. Barr, along with another clergyman, Rev. George Exton Lloyd, envisioned a colony of British settlers in north-west Canada called "Brittania". As Barr stated in a promotional pamphlet, "Let us take possession of Canada. Let our cry be "CANADA FOR THE BRITISH!". Although not all of the Barr Colonists (nor Rev. Barr) made it to their final destination, many settled on or around the 4<sup>th</sup> Meridian and established a community named after their new leader, Lloydminster. Only two years later, the community would be split in half due to the establishment of two provinces, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

In honour of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the Barr Colonists and founding of the community of Lloydminster, the Saskatchewan Archives office in Saskatoon has developed a display showing photographs and documents held by the Saskatoon office that describe the arrival of the Barr Colonists. The display will be in the Saskatoon office of the Saskatchewan Archives until Autumn 2003. The text, photographs and documents featured in this feature form part of the display.



Behind: *Saskatoon Phoenix*, Friday April 24, 1903. P.1  
SAB Micro. S-7.14, Reel 1

## Timeline of events related to the Barr Colony

Before 1902		1902	
1847	I.M. Barr is born near Hornby, Upper Canada	1901-2	Lloyd returns to England from St. John, New Brunswick to work as the Assistant Secretary to the Colonial and Continental Church Society
1861	George Exton Lloyd is born in London, England	Sept 1902	Lloyd publishes a circular letter "The Canadian Wheat Belt," in newspapers, including the <i>London Times</i> , promoting immigration to Western Canada.
1876	Rev. I.M. Barr ministers at St. Mary's and St. Catherines Parishes, Prince Albert for the Church of England	Fall 1902	Rev. I.M. Barr meets Rev. Lloyd to discuss a partnership in a colonization scheme in Western Canada.
1882	I.M. Barr homesteads near Grenfell, N.W.T.		
1885	George Exton Lloyd enlists in Queen's Own Regiment, Toronto and is sent to fight with Colonel Otter's forces at Cut Knife. He is awarded a medal for courage under fire. In July, he is ordained as a minister and married.		

## THE BARR COLONISTS

In March, 1903, over two thousand individuals and families crowded the decks of the S.S. Manitoba in Liverpool, England to wave goodbye to friends and loved ones. Their destination:

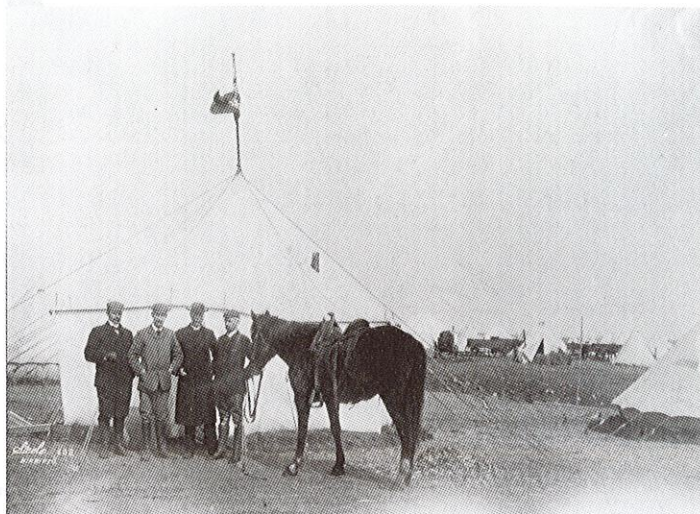
### SASKATCHEWAN

Many of the individuals were lured into making the trip to the new world by pamphlets and newspaper articles promoting a new British Colony in north-west Canada.

Rev. I.M. Barr, the main organizer of the colonization scheme, did not promise great riches, but exaggerated broadly on the agricultural conditions and arrangements for travel.

After ten turbulent days at sea, the S.S. Manitoba arrived at St. John, New Brunswick. Although they hoped that the overpricing of goods and troubles with I.M. Barr were behind them, the troubles had only begun.

One week travelling by draughty, crowded train cars deposited the settlers only in Saskatoon, not their final destination of the 4<sup>th</sup> Meridian. The miles of CPR line to Battleford and beyond that Barr promised had not materialized. The colonists were forced to sleep in hastily erected tents in the crisp spring air.



SAB, Fort Battleford Historic Park Collection, S-B 11614



SAB S-B 174

Top: Barr Colonist's Camp, Saskatoon 1903

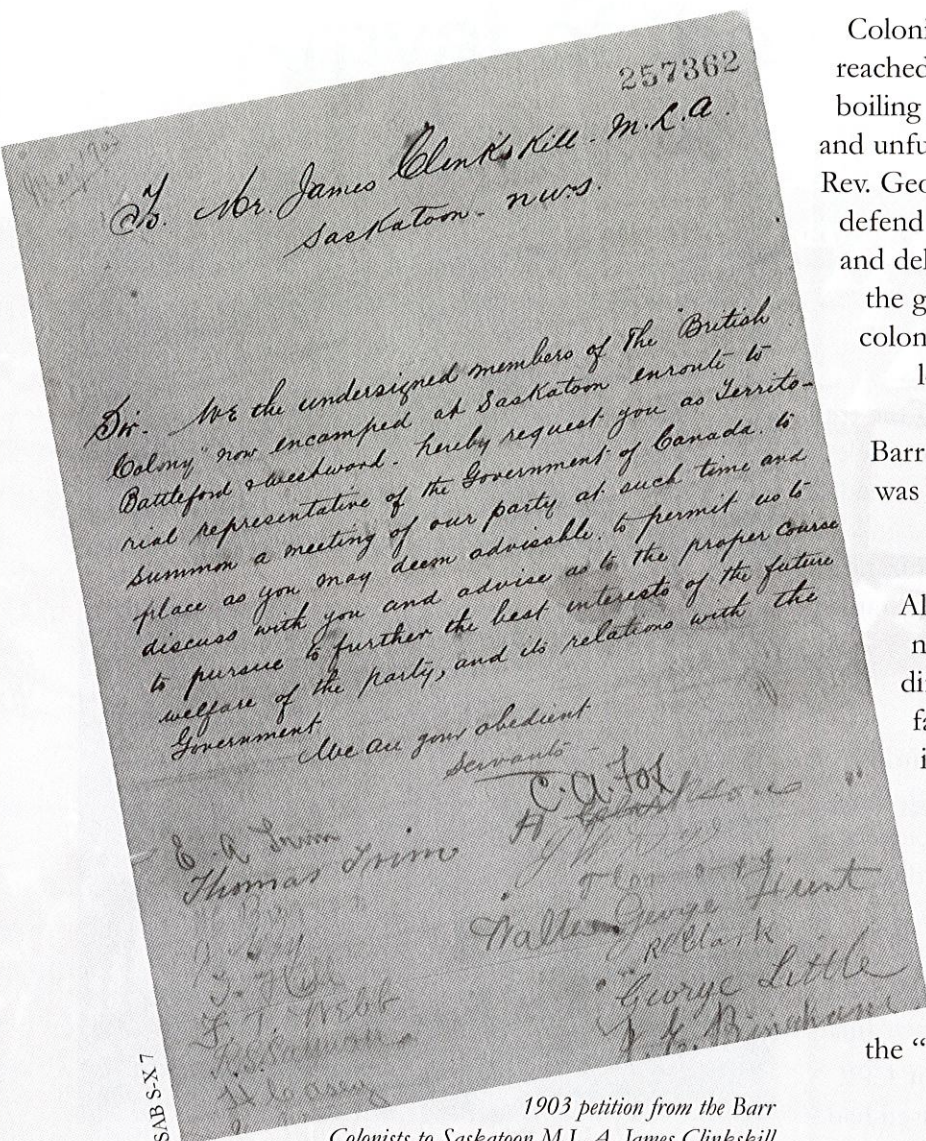
Bottom: Barr colonists and boxing match on S.S. Manitoba, 1903

### 1902

- Oct. 1902** Barr travels west of Battleford to select site for his proposed colony.
- Fall 1902** Barr publishes "Colonization in North – West Canada," and "British Settlements in North West Canada on Free Grant Lands – Report of My Journey to the Saskatchewan Valley, NW Canada to select land for the First British Settlement"

### March 1903

- March 25** Original scheduled sailing date of S.S. Manitoba
- March 31** Over 2 000 individuals crowd onto of S.S. Manitoba, bound for St. John, New Brunswick



1903 petition from the Barr Colonists to Saskatoon M.L.A. James Clinkskill

Colonists' patience were worn out by the time they reached Saskatoon. In Battleford, tempers reached a boiling point. Tired of being overcharged for goods and unfulfilled promises by Barr, they found a leader in Rev. George Exton Lloyd. Although at first he tried to defend Barr, he realized that the man had defrauded and deluded most of the colonists. Lloyd supported the grievances of the colonists against Barr. The colonists voted unanimously to depose Barr of his leadership and to place Lloyd at the helm.

Barr left Battleford and Saskatoon in disgrace. He was nearly egged by irate British gentlemen during his retreat at the Regina CPR station.

Although all of the troubles of the settlers were not over yet, Lloyd smoothed out many of the difficulties by abolishing the "colony" concept in favour of individual homesteads and settlement in several communities between Battleford and the 4<sup>th</sup> Meridian. The main community, located on the 4<sup>th</sup> Meridian, was named Lloydminster, after Reverend Lloyd.

Although Barr left this enterprise only several weeks after arriving in Canada, and the "Barr Colony" never came to be, the name

**BARR COLONISTS**

lives on.

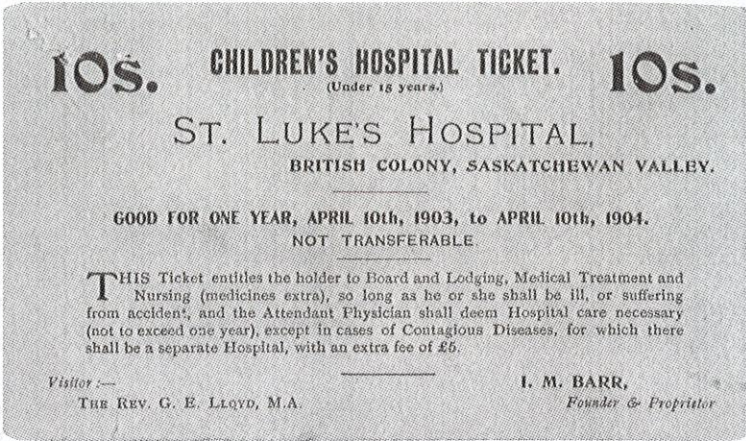
The display was developed and researched by Archivist Christie Wood

**April 1903**

- April 10** (Good Friday) S.S. Manitoba arrives in St. John, New Brunswick
- April 12** (Easter Sunday) 4 passenger and 1 freight train carrying Barr colonists and luggage leave St. John, bound for Saskatoon.
- April 17** First trains of Barr Colonists arrive in Saskatoon.

**May 1903**

- May 1-2** First group of colonists move westward from Battleford to the new settlement near the 4<sup>th</sup> Meridian
- May 15** Barr deposed as leader by unanimous declaration by colonists; Lloyd appointed leader



SAB, Clive Tallant Fonds, S-A 517



SAB S-B 4

*Top: St. Luke's Hospital, Children's Hospital Ticket*

*Above: Barr Colony camp, near Battleford, 1903*

*Left: The Frederick Thorpe family, Barr Colonists, on their homestead, the NW 18-43-15 W3, in 1905*

*Behind: Barr Colonists, station, round-house and immigration hall, Saskatoon, March-April 1903  
SAB S-B10177*



SAB S-B 330

**June-December 1903**

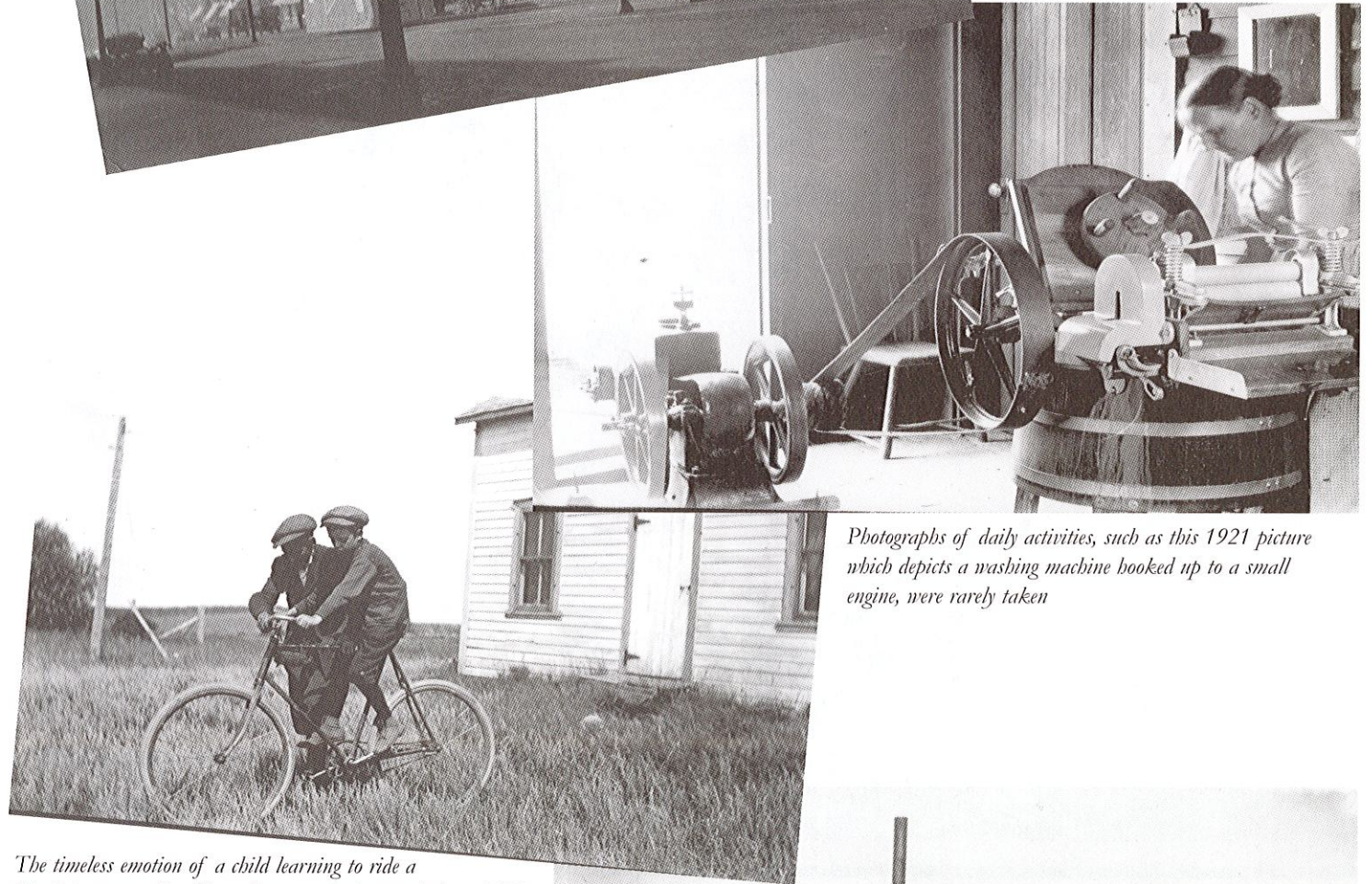
**After 1903**

- July 1903** Lloyd announces in a circular letter that by unanimous vote in three locations, the name of the twenty townships forming the British Colony would be "Brittania, N.W.T." and the name of the first town "Lloydminster".
- Oct 1903** Lloydminster boasts two general stores, a post office, a drugstore, a saddlery and harness shop, a carpenters shop, three restaurants, a livery stable and 75 houses.

- 1906** Population of Lloydminster, SK and AB - 519
- 1937** I.M. Barr dies in Australia, just days before his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday
- 1940** George Exton Lloyd dies in British Columbia



*At first glance this 1918 photograph appears to be a well composed shot of Main Street in Moose Jaw. A closer inspection reveals that the real focus is the victory bond demonstration in which a statue of the Kaiser is about to be attacked by a street car disguised as a cannon*



*Photographs of daily activities, such as this 1921 picture which depicts a washing machine hooked up to a small engine, were rarely taken*



*The timeless emotion of a child learning to ride a bicycle is captured in this well-composed photograph from 1920*



*Identified with the simple caption "Batching 1912," this photograph captures both the simplicity of life for the early settlers as well as the sense of hope possessed by those early arrivals*

# *New to the Archives:* The John Henry Norris Fond

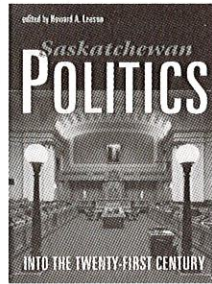
John Henry Norris began farming near Eyebrow in 1907. Around this time he also took up the craft of photography. His photographs display good composition and use of lighting. Perhaps most notable is the way in which the photographs tell the story of the day to day activities people in the Eyebrow area for the 1909 to 1938 period. Featured in this display is a sample of some of these captured moments of from the early part of the century.

The collection, composed of approximately 960 negatives, were recently donated to the Saskatchewan Archives by daughter of one of John's nieces. When processed, this collection will be available at the Regina Office of the SAB.



*Photographs of individuals talking on the phone are uncommon, particularly from the period prior to 1920. Also noteworthy in this photograph are the clothing and household items depicted*

## Book Reviews



*Saskatchewan Politics:  
Into the Twenty-First Century.*

**Howard Leeson, ed.**

Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2001.

425pp.

*Saskatchewan Politics – Into the Twenty-First Century* is a collection of eighteen scholarly essays concerning provincial politics and the workings of government. Some of the authors, who include university professors, government officials (past and present), and former elected officials, offer a very broad range of perspectives on only a few issues. The publication's editor, Howard Leeson, is no stranger to Saskatchewan politics. Leeson is the current head of the Political Science Department at the University of Regina. He was also Saskatchewan's Chief Constitutional Advisor in 1992, and the Deputy Minister for Intergovernmental Affairs from 1978-82, and again from 1993-1994. Leeson notes in his introduction that "change" is the underlying theme that emerged throughout this publication. This is very important since my overall impression of the book seemed to change the more I read. The diversity of the articles, and at times their lack of relevance to the title, is perhaps indicative of the larger issue of diverging points of view when it comes to Saskatchewan politics.

The publication is divided into five very broad areas: The legislature, the Monarchy, institutions, Saskatchewan's political parties, and issues the province has faced, or faces today. The essays within these five areas are descriptive, informative, and well written. However, this does not mean that all of them leave the reader with a greater understanding of how the political process in Saskatchewan is supposed to work. Part of the confusion lies in the fact that all of the articles are written by very knowledgeable people possessing very different writing styles. Leeson writes about the rich soil of Saskatchewan politics; Michael Jackson discusses the Monarchy; Allan Blakeney describes how a Premier picks

a Cabinet; and Dan de Vlieger outlines the work of the Provincial Constituency Boundaries Commission in 1993. I found these articles particularly easy to read and understand. These articles conflict with the detailed (at times painstakingly), lengthy, and seemingly legalistic articles on the role of the legislature by Merrilee Rasmussen, and the judiciary by John Whyte and Colleen Matthews. Regardless of the confusion surrounding the writing styles, the reader will not be left with a shortage of information.

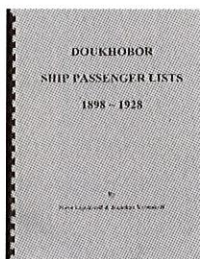
Perhaps the most interesting and controversial section of the book deals with the formation and history of Saskatchewan's political parties. Kevin Wishlow provides a detailed account of the formation of the province's newest political entity, the Saskatchewan Party. Jocelyn Praud and Sarah McQuarrie provide an adequate summary of the history of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), the present day New Democratic Party (NDP). One item to note in this article is a factual error that is quite important since the publication deals entirely with provincial politics. Praud and McQuarrie discuss the results of the 1995 election in the later stages of their chapter and at one point actually refer to the election as occurring in 1994. Although important to note, this mistake may seem small when compared to Lynda Haverstock's history of the Saskatchewan Liberal party. After reading Haverstock's article I was left with no further knowledge on the party and its formation. Instead I concluded from the article that the concerns Haverstock has with the provincial Liberal party are as strong today as they were in the 1990s. The former Liberal leader begins with a brief history of the Liberal party and uses the remainder of the fifty pages to give a chronological account of how she was forced out of the party's leadership. I believe the Lieutenant Governor's article did little, if anything, to help alleviate political infighting within the Liberal party. Haverstock's article has little relevance or resemblance to others in this publication. Its autobiographical and vindictive tone is out of place in this collection of scholarly essays.

The last section of the publication deals specifically with governance issues. The number of topics discussed offer insight into only a handful of the issues any government faces on a given day. All of the essays leave the reader with a sense of how daunting the task of governance must be.

*Saskatchewan Politics – Into the Twenty-First Century* provides detailed information on a variety of government structures and processes. However, at times the detailed collection lacked any form of coherence. The diversity of writing styles and the lack of connection between

some of the articles left me disappointed overall. Perhaps the confusion surrounding the variations in writing style will never be resolved due to the diversity of opinions in this province. For anyone wanting to learn more on Saskatchewan politics this book is a useful tool in understanding the parties and the political structure of government. However, a more appropriate starting point may be the numerous individual publications that provide more focused analyses on the origins and histories of Saskatchewan's political parties.

*James Winkel*  
*University of Regina*



### *Doukhobor Ship Passenger Lists, 1898-1928*

and

*“Doukhobor Genealogy” website*

<http://users.accesscomm.ca/doukhobor.genealogy/>

### **Steve Lapshinoff and Jonathan Kalmakoff.**

2001. 162 p.

*Doukhobor Ship Passenger Lists, 1898-1928*, provides an enlightening guide to Doukhobor immigration to Canada.

The introduction provides a brief history of Doukhobor immigration to Canada, separated into 4 waves. The authors caution that although the book contains a list of over 5200 passenger names, it is far from all inconclusive. They are aware that the lists of over 3200 Doukhobor passengers are either lost or incomplete. The authors describe the four waves of Doukhobor immigration as well as a clarification of several terms used repeatedly throughout the book.

The book is a nominal list – organized by ship and arrival date – of Doukhobor ship passengers. Every entry has a brief account of the voyage that includes the number of Doukhobor passengers, sailing dates, quarantines, intended destination and notable Doukhobor passengers. The National Archives of Canada microfilm reel numbers for each ship researched is also included as a footnote at the beginning of each list.

There is a nominal surname index at the back of the



book as well as a cross-reference of alternate surname spellings.

This is a valuable book for Doukhobor genealogical researchers. Within the next year, there will be a total of three books by Mr. Kalmakoff to assist Doukhobor genealogists. Mr. Kalmakoff has recently published another excellent source, the *1918 Independent Doukhobor Census* (2002), and will be publishing *Doukhobors in the 1901 Canada Census* within the next year. These three books, along with his website, "Doukhobor Genealogy," (reviewed below) are excellent tools for genealogical researchers.

Jon Kalmakoff's "Doukhobor Genealogy" website is still a work in progress, but is a good guide to various aspects of studying Doukhobor history and genealogy.

The 'Introduction' and 'History' sections are still under construction, but the 'Names' section can be valuable to Doukhobor researchers. It is a guide to Doukhobor and Russian naming practices. The section also provides the origin and meaning of Doukhobor and Molokan surnames. A chart showing the Russian Cyrillic alphabet transliterated into English letters sums up the section. One more addition to this section that could be helpful is a transliteration of cursive Cyrillic, because Cyrillic cursive language can be quite different than the printed form.

'Resource Sources' is also under construction, but does have some information that can be a quick reference for Doukhobor genealogists. He provides information regarding ship passenger lists, census records, national registration and local history books. Still to come in this section are descriptions for finding vital statistics information, obituaries, newspaper sources, oral histories, published genealogies and other sources of genealogical information.

'Stories and articles' is a section devoted to scholarly research about Doukhobor history and genealogy. It contains over 70 articles and book reviews written by Doukhobor scholars such as Koozma Tarasoff and Larry Ewashen, just to name two. Some of the articles are posted directly to the page, others are linked to the page. Some of the links are no longer connecting to the articles.

'Message Bord' section provides a link to the Ancestry.com website Doukhobor genealogy message bord.

The 'Doukhobor Settlements' section again is still under construction, but it does have general maps of

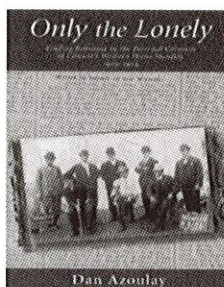
Doukhobor settlements in Russia/Ukraine and Canada. Still to come on this page is a guide to Doukhobor settlements and the origin and meaning of Doukhobor place names.

Finally, the 'Links' page offers weblinks to Doukhobor, Canadian, Russian and general genealogy sources. A brief description of each weblink is provided.

Although there is still much work to be done on this website, it is still a great source for Doukhobor genealogy. As new pages are added and edited, the site will become much stronger and even more useful to genealogical researchers.

The site is not only a great site for Doukhobor researchers, but it can be a great site for people interested in ethnic or social history. The 'Stories and Articles' section in particular is entertaining reading for even the amateur historian/genealogist. As an individual who is has daily contact with genealogists and genealogical research, I find this site to be an excellent example of how amateur or professional genealogists should run a website. It is extremely informative, and most importantly, gives references and citations for all of his research sources.

*Christie Wood*  
Archivist, Reference and Collections  
Saskatoon Office, Saskatchewan Archives Board



*Only the Lonely: Finding Romance in the Personal Columns of Canada's Western Home Monthly 1905-1924*

**Dan Azoulay**

Calgary: Fifth House Ltd., 2000. \$16.95 paperback

Life on the Canadian prairies in the years before the First World War was lonely and isolated. Sparse settlement patterns, months of poor travel conditions, and a shortage of women in many areas made the life of a single homesteader a very lonely one. Young women in cities, towns, and on farms found themselves similarly isolated by climate and circumstance, and additionally hobbled by societal expectations about the appropriate way young women should behave. How could young people on the Canadian prairies ever expect to find love given these obstacles?

The answer, according to York University professor Dan Azoulay's book, *Only the Lonely: Finding Romance in the Personal Columns of Canada's Western Home Monthly 1905-1924*, was the newspaper. Azoulay examined the Correspondence column of the Winnipeg-based magazine *The Western Home Monthly*. He argues that the magazine served primarily as a 'matrimonial column', facilitating the introduction, courtship and marriage of young pioneers from across western Canada. The column also provided a format for young people to exchange their ideas about loneliness, the ideal man or woman, courtship, physical intimacy and marriage. The column's editors facilitated the introduction of readers through the column. If a letter-writer sent a self-addressed stamped envelope the editors would forward letters to other letter-writers. This service was heavily used, according to Azoulay, with about fifteen hundred letters a month being exchanged in 1908. The service was eventually restricted to subscribers only in 1911.

The book is primarily a collection of letters from correspondents to the *Western Home Monthly*, with Azoulay providing a historical context for the letters in brief essays that introduce each chapter. For the most part, Azoulay attempts to let the original letter-writers speak for themselves. The author organized the letters by date, and edited the letters for punctuation and spelling in order to facilitate reading, while leaving grammar, syntax and vocabulary intact. To emphasize his thematic organization, he chose to reprint primarily excerpts from letters. This proves to be a weakness of the book as some letters are cut off, tantalizingly, at an interesting point in order to better fit with the thematic structure.

Often, the correspondents to the *Western Home Monthly* would write responses to letters sent in by other correspondents, forming a string of interrelated letters in successive issues of the magazine. Azoulay has attempted to allow the reader to follow 'strings' of letters through to their conclusion. However, he does not always succeed, and thus some letters refer to previous letters in the *Western Home Monthly* that Azoulay has not reprinted. This provides frustration and confusion at times for the reader. Scholars may be frustrated by the lack of information about the *Western Home Monthly* itself – its circulation, editorial staff, and general content. Academic readers may also find themselves wondering about the choices of photographs accompanying the text. The photographs are from a variety of western Canadian archives, not from the *Western Home Monthly*, and Azoulay has provided wildly speculative captions for many of the photographs.

It is in the letters themselves, however, where *Only the Lonely* shines. Azoulay provides an illuminating glimpse into the romantic lives of young men and women in the late Victorian and early Edwardian period. The loneliness and isolation of life on the farm is poignantly apparent in the letters from young men and women. One reader, Yawkob Shtraus, wrote that: "Ven I sees py der baper dot some gurls iss lonesomeness in Alberta und Sask. Den goes bump de bumps mine heart mit joy for den tinks me mit mineself, maybe dot girl like me too und maype vill wrote me somedings." (14) Yawkob's longings were echoed in letter after letter, from men and women alike, as with 'Just Me', a schoolteacher from Lampman, Saskatchewan, who wrote: "What about the poor girls who have just left a home, congenial friends, plenty of amusement, and have come to sparsely settled districts, with nothing in view but the gopher burrowed trail that leads to the barren little schoolhouse?"(17)

In the chapters about the ideal man and the ideal woman, the letters chosen by Azoulay portray a lively debate between the sexes. For example, 'A Young Widow' of Cranbrook, British Columbia, referred to prairie farmers as "seedy, chronic, pokey, old way-backs."(26) This prompted a response from 'A Bachelor' of Wakopa, Manitoba, who saw himself (and many of his fellow farmers) as "a good looking young man, respectable and well to do."(26)

The chapter on physical intimacy is particularly interesting, as readers weighed in with their opinions on dancing, parties, and card-playing. Such activities were viewed with delight by some correspondents like 'Honey Kid', who commented that "if it wasn't for a little dance once in a while through the winter I think that we would be all dead by spring,"(118) and with suspicion by other correspondents like 'Ontario Girl', who wrote that: "The Bible nowhere sanctions such a thing as the modern dance."(121)

Azoulay's book provides a fascinating glimpse into the social lives and romantic aspirations of the men and women who settled the 'Last Best West.' Although scholars may have issues with some of Azoulay's editorial choices, *Only the Lonely* is an entertaining and enlightening read for all those interested in the social history of the Canadian West.

Dana Turgeon  
Archival Technician  
Saskatchewan Archives Board



# Saskatchewan History

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## Articles

Empty Hills: Aboriginal Land Usage and  
the Cypress Hills Problem, 1874-1883  
*by Jean-Pierre Morin*

Were Jewish Farmers Failures?  
The Case of Township 2-15-W2nd  
*by Anna Feldman*

## People and Places

Onésime Dorval: "la bonne demoiselle"  
*by Diane P. Payment*

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Dave, Benny and Mottie Feldman feeding calves in 1939  
(Feldman Family Collection)