

Saskatchewan History

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*"Blazing a Saga that Saved a Nation": The
Making of The Canadians*

History, Myth and the University of
Saskatchewan, 1907-1974

Destroyed by Fire

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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Features

Saskatchewan Archives Board News

Louis David Riel: A Letter to the Editor, November 9, 1885

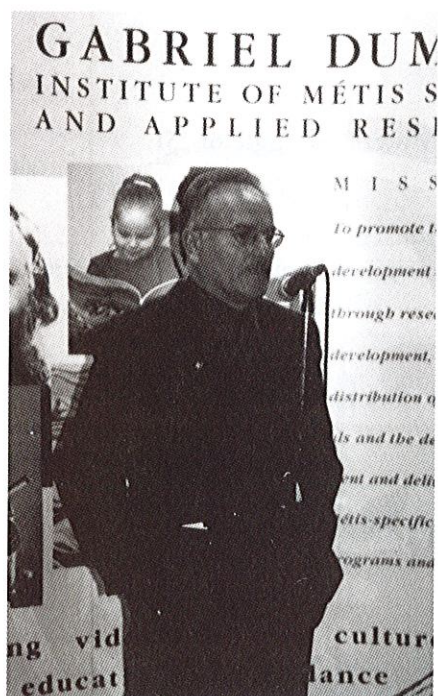
A letter written by Louis Riel and sent to the *Ottawa Citizen* just days before his execution in 1885 was the centrepiece of an archival exhibit at the Saskatchewan Archives in Regina, June 20 – July 11, 2003. In staging this display, The Saskatchewan Archives Board, in partnership with CanWest Global Communications and the Library and Archives of Canada chose to salute Louis Riel and honour his influence in shaping our province and nation. The exhibit was held in conjunction with National Aboriginal Day and the City of Regina's Centennial celebrations. Showcasing this addition to Canada's documentary heritage, the exhibit was unveiled to the public on June 20, 2003.

The recently discovered letter was acquired by the *Citizen* from a descendant of a former editor of the newspaper. The short document expresses Riel's gratitude for an editorial that urged clemency for those who followed him into battle against Canadian troops in the North-West Rebellion.

"Tell Mr. Johnson I thank him for his leniency," Riel wrote in his distinctively clear and looping script. He identified himself as "the Prophet of the new world" and signed his name "Louis 'David' Riel." The letter was dated November 9, 1885, one week before Riel was hanged. He added the following notation below his message to Johnson: "Regina Jail, eve of the day which was to be my last. L.D.R." Riel's closing words refer to the fact that his execution had originally been scheduled for November 10 and later postponed to the 16th.

It is believed that Riel sent the note to the *Citizen* in response to a brief editorial the newspaper published in August during his trial for treason. Though not forgiving of Riel himself, the newspaper argued that rank-and-file rebels should be treated with compassion by the law. "If any clemency be extended towards those persons who took part in the North-West Rebellion it should be in the cases of the unfortunate dupes who were induced by the chief of the rebels and his associates to take up arms against the government....These men are to be pitied. Many of their families are suffering to-day in consequence of their acts. We believe the country at large would approve of their being pardoned, or of their receiving light punishment. No doubt they will profit by their present experience."

Nearly one hundred guests attended the launch of the exhibit at the Saskatchewan Archives. Speakers included the Hon. Ralph Goodale, Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, Federal Interlocutor for the Métis and Non-Status Indians, Minister Responsible for Indian Residential Schools Canada; Dr. Ian Wilson, National Archivist and former Provincial Archivist of Saskatchewan; the Hon. Joanne Crofford, Saskatchewan



REVISED ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS SCHEDULE APPROVED

The Saskatchewan Administrative Records System (SARS, schedules 326 and 329) was first passed in 1993 and was amended in 1996, with the addition of an Information and Technology Section. In order to assist government departments and their changing needs, the Saskatchewan Archives Board conducted a thorough and detailed review of SARS, in consultation with records managers, staff and other experienced SARS users.

The Administrative Records Management System (ARMS) was passed by the Legislative Assembly June 16, 2003 and now supercedes SARS, as well as the administrative portions of all other existing retention schedules, for all government departments, agencies, boards, and commissions. A version of ARMS specifically for Crown Corporations is currently in development.

ARMS is an executive tool to assist government departments, boards, commissions and agencies in proper information management. ARMS combines a comprehensive classification system for administrative records with an up-to-date records retention schedule.

Both new users and clients familiar with SARS will find ARMS to be well-designed, streamlined and easy to use. Most retention periods have remained the same, and the new system has been designed to make the transition from SARS to ARMS very easy.

ARMS has been distributed free of charge to registered users on CD-rom in pdf and Microsoft Word format, and is available for download in pdf format at www.saskarchives.com. Additional copies of the CD-ROM are available for \$10 each.

Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation; Mr. Keith Goulet; MLA for Cumberland; Mr. Wilf Blondeau, Chief Executive Officer, Métis Nation of Saskatchewan; and Mr. Graham Green, *Ottawa Citizen* Editorial Pages/Opinion Editor. The Letter was unveiled by Mr. David Asper, Vice-President, CanWest Global Communications and Chairman of the *National Post* and Ms. Barbara Owens, Office Manager and Archivist, *Ottawa Citizen*. Mr. Trevor Powell, Provincial Archivist was unable to attend. In his absence, Chris Gebhard acted as the Master of Ceremonies and Don Herperger welcomed the guests on behalf of the Saskatchewan Archives.

The *Ottawa Citizen's* letter was exhibited along with a selection of original Riel documents from the collections of the Saskatchewan Archives and The Library and Archives Canada. These included Riel's 1885 diary, his last letter to his wife and children, photographs and a newspaper obituary for Gabriel Dumont, dated May 24, 1906. The exhibit was viewed by individuals from across Canada and was met with a favourable response.

Photographs

Left: Wilf Blondeau of the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan addresses the gathering

Centre: Unveiling of the letter by David Asper of CanWest Global Communications and Barbara Owens of the Ottawa Citizen

Below: Many dignitaries delivered presentations at the exhibit opening including (LtoR) Mr. Keith Goulet, Hon. Ralph Goodale, Hon. Joanne Crofford and Mr. Ian Wilson

Photographs by Ivan Saunders, Saskatchewan Archives Board



Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society News

The Relevance of Doing Local History

Finn Andersen, Executive Director
Saskatchewan History
and Folklore Society

The Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society, Inc. (SHFS) has been in existence since 1957. For the past forty-six years our mandate has been to gather, preserve and promote interest in the history and folklore of the area we now call Saskatchewan. For many of us, when we hear the term 'history' we think of our school days and the requirement to learn, often by rote, about the significant aspects of our past. What happened in 1066? Who was Jacques Cartier? What was the cause of the War of 1812? and so on ... and so on.

Our primary and secondary school teachers provided the answers to these questions. Their job was to give us an orientation to civilizations past. But unfortunately, in all too many cases, the emphasis was in preparing us for a test - with the goal of course being to pass the test (it often amazes me that out of this process we actually do get people that enjoy history). Although we may pass the tests, the bigger question that needs to be answered is have we actually grown as intelligent and conscientious citizens as a result of our experience in the history classes. All too often individuals leave school believing that they have a solid grasp on what they call history, and that they can now get on with their lives.

We are rarely told that all we have actually obtained is History 101, or that we need to develop more meaningful levels of understanding in order for us to apply the lessons that history gives us. We need to be told that as we are experiencing life, we are in fact experiencing history. Part of the problem in understanding this aspect of history is a word that was referred to earlier, that word being 'significant'. From and through our instruction and testing process the notion that only 'significant' aspects of our past are worth examining, leads us to discount the impact our own everyday lives actually play on the larger scale events.

All too often we think that people involved with history and heritage preservation are no more than a cult of antiquarians, who are bent on saving old buildings, establishing museums with old stuff in them and creating an occasional national shrine. Instead we need to reinforce the concept that history is about people!! It is through the study and understanding of history that we are able to develop a 'Sense of Place' about our society. It is from this 'Sense of Place' and the understanding of how we arrived here that we are able to become more informed and knowledgeable citizens. Although we often think that what is important is the more 'significant' national and worldly issues, we must not forget that our most closely held 'Sense of Place,' next to our families, is our local community. Especially in these times of high mobility and in a market place that produces a homogeneous cookie-cutter cultural mentality, it becomes more important to define ourselves though our communities in an attempt to nourish our civic culture. One of the fundamental building blocks of this civic culture is an understanding of one's local history, and that is what, for the past forty-six years, the Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society has been encouraging people to do.

Programs and Resources of the SHFS:

FOLKLORE MAGAZINE - Saskatchewan's yesteryear's personified, a quarterly publication retelling experiences with a personal point of view.

NEWSLETTER - four times a year receive news, opinions & details about personal, local and national historical issues.

MOTORCOACH TOURS - visit well-known and not so well-known heritage sites, experiencing provincial history. Tours also allow people with shared interests to connect, despite distances.

MEMBER FUNDING - to encourage and financially support most types of community historical projects.

HERITAGE ADVOCACY - to represent heritage preservation views and interests in/at various forums.

LOCAL HISTORY MARKER PROGRAM - provides financial assistance to community groups to purchase our cast aluminum plaques.

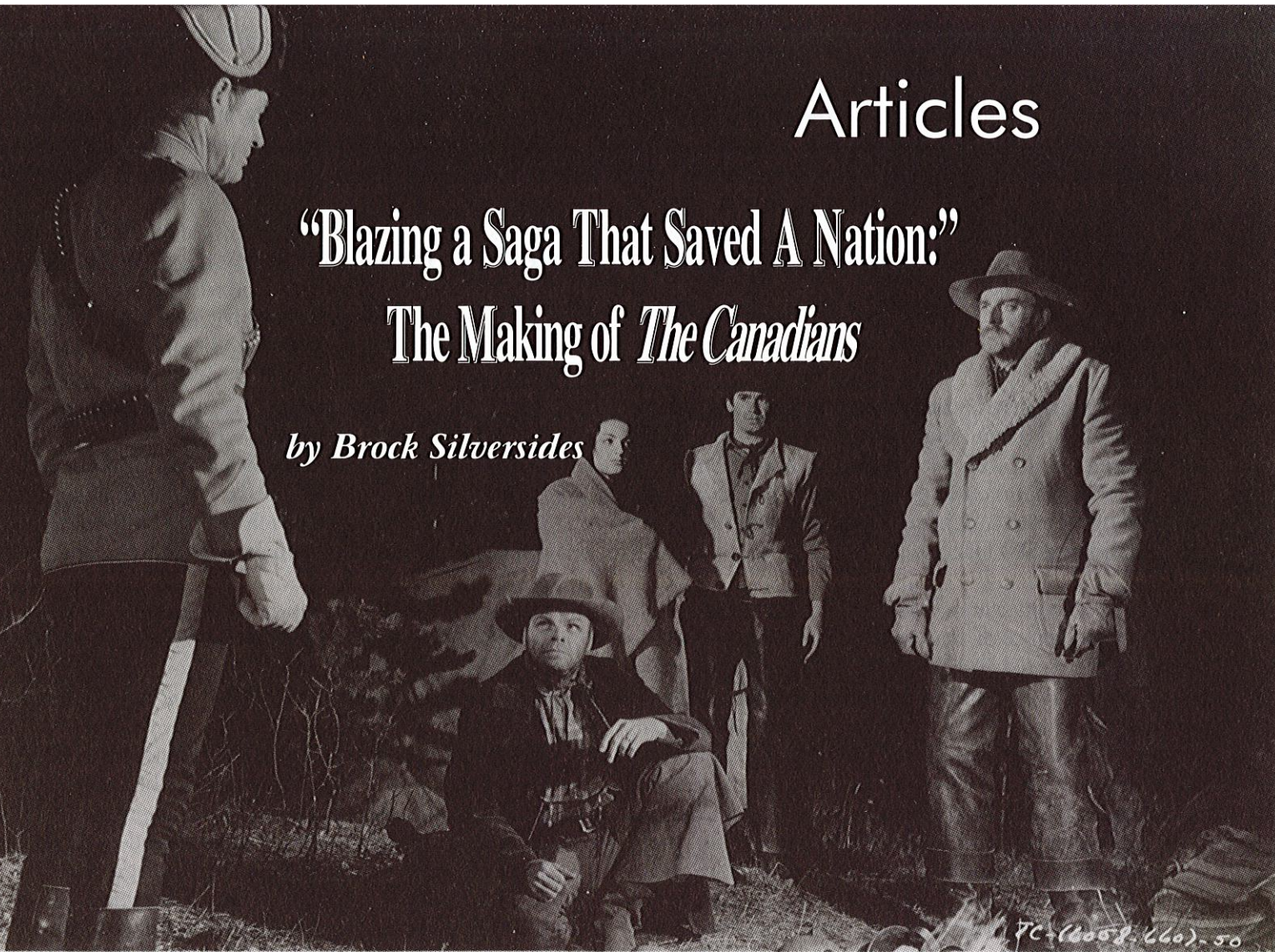
HORIZONS & HOMELANDS: A MULTICULTURAL TEACHING KIT - designed for grade 4 & 5 social studies. Overheads and audio tape are part of the kit and a companion videotape is available.

SASKATCHEWAN HISTORICAL RECOGNITION REGISTRY - free certificates are available for the recognition of farms, homes and businesses held by the same family for eighty years or more.

Articles

“Blazing a Saga That Saved A Nation:” The Making of *The Canadians*

by Brock Silversides



Copyright © 1961, 20th Century-Fox.
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duction. (Made in U.S.A.)

20th Century-Fox presents
THE CANADIANS
starring ROBERT RYAN with JOHN DEHNER • TORIN THATCHER
and introducing TERESA STRATUS • CINEMASCOPE • COLOR by DE LUXE
Produced by Herman E. Webber • Written and Directed by Burr Kennedy

*Property of National Screen Service Corp.
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the exhibition of this picture at your theatre.
Must be returned immediately thereafter.**

61/26

Brock Silversides Collection

Production Still for the 1961 film The Canadians. The scene depicts the arrest of horse thief Frank Boone by Inspector Gannon of the North-West Mounted Police.

Fiction film production in Saskatchewan had an unremarkable history as the province entered the 1960s. The silent era saw a handful of one reelers (approximately 12 mins. duration) such as *More Than His Duty* (1910) shot at the R.C.M.P. Depot in Regina by the Edison Company, and *A Newspaper Reporter's Romance* (1929) shot in Swift Current. There were several longer films produced as well: *Love's Young Dreams* (1919) shot in Saskatoon, and two versions of *A Free Ride* (1930) – one shot in Saskatoon and one in Regina.

Saskatchewan's pioneer film director/producer Dick Bird created several home grown movies including *Seal of Protection* (1930) and *This Generation: A Prairie Romance* (1934), while the National Film Board shot only three half hour dramas: *A Musician In The Family* (1953), *Fires of Envy* (1957) and *Saskatchewan Traveller* (1957). These received little attention or recognition, not to mention theatrical distribution.

Brock Silversides is a University of Saskatchewan alumnus, an audio-visual archivist/librarian and a former Saskatonian. He is currently Head of Media Commons, Robarts Library at the University of Toronto.

A full-length feature film with Hollywood production values seen by national and international theatre audiences seemed to be a fantastic dream. Yet that all changed suddenly in the Fall of 1960 when British and American actors and crews converged in the Cypress Hills to shoot what the Regina *Leader-Post* somewhat optimistically called “a pilot project in the possible establishment of a big time film industry in Canada.”

Pre-Production

This pilot project had several parents. The germ of the idea appears to have originated with Peter S. Myers, managing director of the Canadian branch of 20th Century-Fox. Vague outlines appear in a letter from his Toronto office, dated 12 July 1960, addressed to R.C.M.P. Commissioner C.W. Harvison:

Our company is most interested in producing a motion picture of feature length in Canada this fall. We would like, if possible, to do a story pertaining to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Naturally we would like the main theme of the picture to be about some unusual incident that perhaps could be taken from your files.

Our plans would be to make a production of quality, with a reasonably large budget and it would be distributed throughout the world and dubbed in as many as 27 languages ... I am hoping that we will be able to have your cooperation, because as a Canadian I would very much like to see a good story about the force produced in Canada.¹

Harvison appears to have been initially intrigued and assigned a liaison officer to the project. While it was only a first inquiry, it also appears that even without a definite “incident,” 20th Century-Fox headquarters in Los Angeles liked the idea and had already chosen an affiliate company to handle the production, and a writer to start the ball rolling. *Variety* magazine reported on July 14 that:

“The Royal Northwest Mounted” pic to be filmed in Canada, has been selected as the project Burt Kennedy will write and direct for Associated Producers Inc. and 20th -Fox release. Kennedy and API production exec Harry Spaulding plane today for Canada, where the pic will be shot in its entirety.

Kennedy and Spaulding will scout locations and available studio space in Toronto, as well as seek co-operation from the Mounted Police ...

Pic, which marks Kennedy’s bow as director, will roll before mid-October when the snows fall in Toronto. Script already has been started.²

Kennedy, Spaulding and Myers met with the Commissioner on July 18 in Ottawa. Kennedy explained that he wanted to truthfully portray the early history of the Force, especially during the period when Sitting Bull and his band lived in Canada. Harvison insisted that Kennedy should take some time to learn that history before specific plans for the film’s story line be initiated. The memo on file continues:

The Commissioner also indicated that, while he is quite willing to lend any reasonable assistance possible, this would be purely on the basis that the film would be one which would be a credit to the force but not be of the type which portrayed our organization in the traditional “Rose Marie” atmosphere.³

Finally:

Following the meeting these gentlemen were conducted to the projection room where they were shown our movie “Career In Scarlet” which was very much appreciated. Mr. Kennedy was supplied with the background material available here and they were directed to the Queen’s Printer in Hull for copies of Turner’s “The North West Mounted Police.” Mr. Kennedy intends to proceed to Regina to conduct further research in preparation for the film, as well as looking over the country to decide where the film would actually take place.

Kennedy did indeed continue on to Regina the following day to consult with Superintendent Porter. He then spent two days at Fort Walsh, and was given a tour of the Cypress Hills by ex-Commissioner Stuart Wood who had played a major role in coordinating the reconstruction of the Fort. This no doubt constituted Kennedy’s introduction to the district, to the dramatic reason why the N.W.M.P. came to locate their first headquarters there, and was the catalyst for changing the shooting location from Toronto to Saskatchewan. For better or worse, the film was Kennedy’s completely from this point on.

Burt Kennedy (born 1922) was the child of a married vaudeville team known as The Flying Kennedys. He had built his reputation as a writer, starting with radio scripts for such series as *Hash Knife Hatley*. In the mid-1950s he secured employment with Batjac (John Wayne’s production company) and his first screenplay was for the

relatively successful *Seven Men From Now* (1956). He was now hooked on the western genre and followed it up with projects such as *Gun The Man Down* (1956), *The Tall T* (1957), *Fort Dobbs* (1958), *Ride Lonesome* (1959), and *Comanche Station* (1960).

In early 1960, looking for a slightly different twist on the theme, Kennedy turned his thoughts north of the border. His treatment, whose working title was *Northwest Mounted*, had all the elements of a traditional western – good guys, bad guys, horse-stealing, chasing Indians, being chased by Indians, a woman wronged, vigilantism, gun battles and numerous killings. It was the inclusion of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police however that gave it a more exotic flavour.

A synopsis of the reworked storyline is somewhat complicated. A Sioux band, fresh from their fight with General Custer, heads north to Canada racing to stay ahead of an avenging troop of U.S. cavalry. Upon crossing the “medicine line,” they are met by three members of the N.W.M.P.: Inspector Gannon, Master Sgt. MacGregor and Constable Springer. They meet with Chief Four Horns, welcome him to the Dominion and advise him that the band is safe in Canada as long as they remain peaceful. They stress that the Sioux must never “fire a shot in anger.”

At this point, a greedy, aggressive Montana rancher – Frank Boone, accompanied by three gun-toting cohorts – also crosses the border looking for horses that he believes were stolen by Indians. They come across a small encampment with horses. Taking the law into their own hands, they proceed to massacre the band with the exception of a young white woman whom they take with them and an old Indian woman left behind, and steal their horses. When Gannon discovers the devastated camp and hears the story from the old woman, he goes after Boone. When he discovers that the stolen horses are not Boone’s, he decides that Boone will have to stand trial in Battleford for both theft and murder.

A tense capture ensues. Boone then brings out his captive from the Indian camp. She is the “White Squaw” – who had at a distant point in her past been kidnapped by Indians from a neighbouring ranch in Montana. Boone makes it clear that if he stands trial, he will say that he was only trying to rescue the White Squaw and that no jury will convict him for redeeming her. Adding drama to the encounter, Boone hints that one of his “boys” has carnal cravings for her, which in turn, alarms Gannon.

The Mounties and Boone’s party set out for Battleford, but run into Four Horns who has heard of the massacre. He demands the Montanans be handed over for a little local justice. Gannon insists they are his prisoners and must be tried under Canadian law. Four Horns reluctantly agrees but makes it known he will be following them all the way in case Gannon is not capable of ensuring that the Montanans go to jail.

One night at Buffalo Cliffs, Boone and his men escape N.W.M.P. custody with White Squaw as hostage and a chase starts. As Gannon and White Squaw have gradually made their personal interest in each other known, it becomes doubly important for Gannon to catch up. In one scene where Boone is about to shoot Gannon, White Squaw screams a warning, ends up being shot herself and dies in a dramatic fashion.

The Montanans take off again and are then pursued by



Both the Canadian and Saskatchewan Governments took a significant interest in the production. The Hon. Ellen Fairclough, Federal Minister of Immigration is pictured here with Director Burt Kennedy (far left) and actor Robert Ryan (centre).

Olive Roberts/SAB R-B 5474 (5)

Four Horns and his band of warriors. In a truly dramatic scene, they are actually herded over the cliffs like bison over a buffalo jump. When Gannon finally catches up, Four Horns explains that the Indians observed the initial warning given to them and “did not fire one round in anger.” Accepting the finality of the situation, the Sioux head off in one direction, while Gannon and his men head off in another.

The story was interesting and certainly had cinematic potential. Even better, it was supposedly (according to Kennedy) based on a true incident “as we learned of it from the R.C.M.P.” For those with even a fleeting knowledge of Western Canadian history, they will recognize this incident as the Cypress Hills Massacre. Briefly retold, this tragic event occurred in June 1873. A band of Cree Indians stole forty horses from a group of Montana ‘wolfers’ - ranchers who poisoned buffalo carcasses to kill off the wolf population that was threatening their cattle herds - from the Fort Benton area. They were led by Thomas Hardwick, a sociopath who had also been involved in the Sweetgrass Hills Massacre one year earlier. Hardwick thought he was tracking the Cree into the Cypress Hills when in fact they had headed for southern Alberta. Near Abe Farwell’s trading post, they ran into an innocent band of Assiniboine from the Carry-the-Kettle Nation. After a night of heavy drinking on both sides, tensions ran high and the Montanans turned on the Assiniboines, shooting men, women and children, beheading the chief Little

Soldier, and raping many of the surviving women. Although the exact number of casualties is not known, accounts vary from a low of twenty to a high of thirty-six. This brutal episode of lawlessness, along with the activities of the American whiskey traders at Fort Whoop-Up, were the catalysts for Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald to recruit for his new North-West Mounted Police as quickly as possible.⁴

There are thus some very serious incongruities between the real event and the movie script, along with a noticeable telescoping of time and events. Historically the Cypress Hills Massacre was one of the chief reasons for the formation of the N.W.M.P. The force was not yet in existence when the real massacre happened, so of course a Gannon character could not have investigated. As well, the Indians that were ambushed in 1873 were Canadian Assiniboine, the Sioux associated with Sitting Bull had no connection with the event whatsoever. The real Montanans were extradited and tried in Winnipeg, not Battleford. Finally, the Custer Battle did not take place until three years after the Cypress Hills Massacre, and Sitting Bull and the Sioux did not make their way into Canada until 1879, a full six years after the massacre.

This movie marked Kennedy’s debut as a director, and while there was no doubt that he was “green,” he did show an immense concern with picture quality. Kennedy insisted on using Deluxe Colour film known for its rich tonal saturation, and decided to shoot in the



SAB R-A 3967

The remains of the foundations for Abe Farwell’s trading post in the Cypress Hills are pictured in this undated photograph. The Cypress Hills Massacre, an event upon which The Canadians is loosely based, took place near this site in 1873.

Cinemascope format. Cinemascope was an ideal format in which to shoot the Saskatchewan landscape. Using a 35-mm. camera, the Cinemascope anamorphic lenses 'squeezed' or 'funneled' a large panoramic angle of view onto the film. When a positive print was projected through a similar lens, the image was 'decompressed' up and out of normal proportions. Indeed the resulting image was slightly over two and a half times wide as it was tall, and for maximum impact was usually shown on special curved screens which gave an illusion of three dimensions.

As developed and marketed by 20th Century-Fox, Cinemascope was pushed as an economical format which required fewer editorial cuts and permitted more action within the angle of view. It had its problems as well such as image sharpness at the edges, and the tendency of editors to include much-too-long scenes hoping the interaction between actors alone would move the story along. In the hands of an inexperienced director or editor, action could be sluggish. Unfortunately this film had an inexperienced director.

With these technical decisions made, Kennedy started to gather a team to help him realize his vision. A dependable producer, a person to ensure that the logistics supported a smooth shoot, was the first order of business. 20th Century-Fox chose a Canadian – Herman Webber, originally from New Brunswick, who had been a director himself in the 1930s and 1940s. Webber's other major tasks were to get the active support of the R.C.M.P., the Saskatchewan government, and the people of the Cypress Hills district, as well as act as corporate watchdog on expenditures.

Even though the N.W.M.P. figured largely in Kennedy's story, the modern R.C.M.P. were initially reluctant to put their seal of approval on his efforts. The reasons were many: first and foremost the historical inaccuracies of Kennedy's original scripts could not be countenanced. Secondly, although the force had been a favourite subject for filmmakers since the silent era, it had also been portrayed unrealistically far too often. They had been cast as lone Indian fighters, trigger-happy Canadian 'sheriffs', inept but extremely polite law enforcers in need of American backbone, or even empty-headed singing fools. The force was regularly asked to critique scripts and advise on their historical veracity, and occasionally provided advisors on sets, but it is glaringly obvious that their advice was usually ignored for the sake of a dramatic story. The R.C.M.P. then were not about to provide their moral and material backing for yet another movie that paid little attention to the facts.

Kennedy appeared to be quite genuine in his urge to

please them, but it was an appearance only. Once he had his "incident" and his locale, he no longer needed nor wanted input on the script. Yet he still needed their physical co-operation. Aside from a few non-committal telegrams, Kennedy essentially ceased any direct communication, leaving further dealings with the force to his producer. Commissioner Harvison explained this in a note to ex-commissioner Stuart Wood who was living at Fort Walsh that summer:

At that time (the initial meeting) I made it quite clear that we would not welcome another picture like "Saskatchewan" and that we are to see the script before approving the production. Other than a wire from Mr. Kennedy on July 21st, in which he thanked us for the co-operation given and assured that he would be in touch with me as the script progressed, no further word has been received.⁵

Kennedy may not have taken the force all that seriously. For example, wishing to avoid another example of the "singing Mountie" portrayed by Nelson Eddy in *Rose Marie* (1936), Harvison bizarrely requested that Kennedy not use any songs in the movie at all, just background music - a call that was not the force's to make. And according to an account published in the *R.C.M.P. Quarterly*, George B. McClellan, the Liaison Officer (and later commissioner of the force), also did not inspire confidence:

While the 20th Century-Fox director was going through the procedure of getting official sanction for the plot of the story, George B. was ironing out some of the more obvious discrepancies, and at the conclusion of one meeting in his office, George was taking early leave of the meeting for another appointment. As he was getting his hat and gloves, he concluded his veto of the scenario of a prisoner escaping from a constable by saying "No, no! That situation just won't do. Our members are always alert, always aware of possibilities, and know right where they are at all times" So saying, he donned his cap, swung open a door, and walked into his own clothes closet.⁶

A rough draft was finally forwarded to Harvison on August 30 who found the script to be "quite interesting." He wrote to Kennedy on September 6 to ask for a few minor and very specific changes including changing the rank of the "boy corporal" to constable, that the First Nations be used for more than just decoration in the opening and closing sequences, that the word "Mountie"



Olive Roberts/SAB R-B 5474 (4)

Robert Ryan and Teresa Stratas on the set of *The Canadians in the Cypress Hills*, October 1, 1960.

not be used as it was not recognized by the force, and that the word “Royal” not be used in tandem with “Northwest Mounted Police” since it was not historically correct for the period portrayed.⁷ He would not hear from Kennedy again until the movie hit the theatres.

Even so, the force did assist at the beginning of the production, due to political pressure. Harvison mentioned this in passing in an October letter to Stuart Wood:

As you probably know, we have been under some considerable pressure from both the Federal and Provincial governments in connection with the making of this picture. The fact that the company was employing a number of Canadians and was spending some \$400,000 in Canada loomed pretty large in their arguments. I think we would have been wide open to rather severe criticism had we not extended all reasonable co-operation. The Twentieth Century-Fox people have been through the mill many times and know where to go in order to get pressures applied.⁸

The pressure worked, and 100 recruits from the Regina detachment and 60 horses were used as extras for several sequences shot on 26-28 September. The horses ridden by the principal characters were supplied by the force, as were three recruits to ride as doubles for the three police characters. The costs of feeding and housing the police and animals were borne by the film company.

Webber spent much of September in Maple Creek making connections with townspeople and siting locations in the nearby hills. His wisest decision was to take the editor of the *Maple Creek News*, Walter Migowsky, into his confidence, to help him publicize the shoot and to help him find goods and services in the immediate area that would assist the crews. Migowsky constantly kept the community up to date on the happenings. On September 15th he reported:

A number of local ranchers have been contracted to supply horses for the production. The entire cast and crew will make their headquarters at Cypress Park ... The air strip in Maple Creek is being lengthened to accommodate larger two-motored aircraft for the convenience of the producing company, 20th Century Fox. We were informed by the

producer, Mr. Webber, that each day as the film is shot, it will be packed and sent to London, England for development. Connections will be made with jet transport at Winnipeg, and it is expected the film will be in London 24 hours after it leaves the park – and will be back in Maple Creek three days after it left here. The film can then be screened, and if retakes are necessary the scene can be re-shot.⁹

He then spoke on Webber's behalf for additional suppliers and fair prices:

Several problems still confront the company. A number of cars and drivers will be required to transport the people involved – they're not too keen about driving on gravelled roads. Saddles and rifles are also required. Fair prices will be paid for all rentals or purchases made by the company. We suggest that local and district people treat the strangers in our midst with the courtesy and friendliness for which we are noted. We hope no one will attempt to 'make a fast buck' to the discredit of the honest folk of the district ...

By the second week of September, Webber appears to have convinced Premier Tommy Douglas that it was in the province's interest to assist the production. In particular, Webber asked for assistance in transporting the various First Nations extras (via the Saskatchewan Transportation Corporation) and help in upgrading the facilities in Cypress Park, an outlay that would have beneficial effects long after the film crews had gone home. Still showing a vestige of their 1950s anti-communist attitude, *Variety* magazine reported with almost disbelief in its 28 September issue:

Saskatchewan's Socialistic government, in power 16 years, is cooperating at cost with a British subsidiary of 20th –Fox which starts shooting a Royal Canadian Mounted Police picture hereabouts soon ... Provincially-owned bus company will, at cost, take 600 Indians from their homes to the shooting spot; all lodges there will be winterized and above-ground water lines insulated in case of an early winter. Cypress Hills provincial park staff will be provided at cost and meals served sans profit. Producer Herman Weber [sic.] arranged all this (subject to legislature's approval, later granted) personally with Premier T.C. 'Tommy' Douglas.¹⁰

government, Kennedy and Webber rounded up a total budget of approximately \$800,000 with \$150,000 reportedly going toward the lead actors' salaries. The film ultimately became a three-country production: Canadian, British - through Associated Producers Ltd., and American - through 20th Century-Fox.

For director of photography Kennedy lured Arthur Ibbetson from England. Ibbetson was known for his striking work on *Malaga* (1954), and *The Man Who Never Was* (1956). Other key crew included Constance Willis (continuity), Milt Carter (assistant director), Clancy Hearn (second assistant director), Douglas Twiddy (production manager – also from England), Jim Dunlevy and Jan Kemp (wardrobe) and Alex Garfath (makeup).

The acting team included an entertaining combination of personalities with an amazing variety of backgrounds. As male lead, Kennedy chose Robert Ryan to play Inspector Gannon. Ryan, born 1909 in Chicago, did not come to acting as a youth. Indeed, he worked as a sailor, a salesman, cowboy, bodyguard and a photographer's model. For a short while "when I was a youngster, I just sort of travelled around, doing any kind of work I could get." He made his first visit to Canada, working in the coal mines of Fernie B.C. "I was just a mucker" - meaning a common labourer.¹¹ He then moved out to Hollywood and got involved with live theatre.

He was handsome in a rugged sort of way, but was not "pretty" enough to land the star roles. He projected a taciturn, unflappable character, with an undercurrent of menace if provoked. Starting in movies with *Golden Gloves* (1939) he continued with a long and honourable career. The following year he was cast in a minor role in Cecil B. DeMille's *North West Mounted Police* (1940) and wore the red serge for the first time.

He would slowly progress up the hierarchy with *Bombardier* (1943), *Crossfire* (1947 – for which he received an Oscar nomination), *Return of the Bad Men* (1948), *I Married A Communist* (1949), *Born To Be Bad* (1950), and *Flying Leathernecks* (1951). Ryan came to *The Canadians* shoot fresh from a live theatre production of Antony and Cleopatra at the Shakespeare Festival at Stratford, Conn. Also starring the late Katherine Hepburn, it opened 31 July 1960 and ran for a month.

The female lead, whose character's name was only "The White Squaw" was Teresa Stratas. Stratas, born Anastasia Stratakis in 1938, was the daughter of Greek immigrants who had settled in Oshawa and started a restaurant. Stratas started singing at an early age for Greek community gatherings and on the radio. By the age of 15 she started to perform Cole Porter songs in area

Even without direct funding from the Saskatchewan

nightclubs. A contemporary profile in the *Toronto Telegram* described her:

An even five feet in height, weighing 113 pounds, Teresa has been singing for her supper since the age of four, when she perched on the counter in her parents' Oshawa restaurant, and sang "Pistol Packin' Momma" for pennies. She has always been a fighter, gambling with roles and opportunities deemed too hard for her to handle, and somehow always bringing them off.¹²

Before going further down the path of popular music, she won the 1959 Eaton Scholarship and enrolled in Toronto's Royal Conservatory of Music where she was introduced to opera, a challenging outlet for her immense energy. That same year she signed a three-year contract with the Metropolitan Opera Company in New York.

The supporting cast consisted of Torin Thatcher, Bert Metcalfe, and John Sutton as Ryan's Mountie comrades, John Dehner as the chief villain Frank Boone with Jack Creley, Richard Alden and Scott Peters as his Montana gunhands.

John Dehner was a well-known character actor. Born in 1915, he started his career as an animator for the Disney Studio. He also moonlighted as a disk jockey, wrote short stories and played piano professionally. He made his feature film debut in 1945 and began an amazingly busy career with roles in 91 features such as *Riders of the Pony Express* (1949), *Horsemen of the Sierras* (1949), *The Texas Rangers* (1951) and *Fastest Gun Alive* (1956). He also had 68 television appearances to his credit prior to joining *The Canadians* cast – he was an almost constant guest on ranking cowboy programs: *Rawhide*, *Gunsmoke*, *Stagecoach West*, *The Virginian*, *The Rifleman*, and *Zane Grey Theatre*.

Creley was a CBC veteran, having played numerous roles in television dramas including an early western *Man With A Rope* (1959). In true Hollywood style, the part of Chief Four Horns was not given to a First Nations actor, but instead to Michael Pate. Pate was born in 1920 in Australia, and was a veteran of the Australian Broadcasting Commission. Upon making his move to Los Angeles, Pate started guesting as an Indian on programs such as *Rawhide*, *Cheyenne*, *Wagon Train*, *The Rifleman*, *Maverick* and *Wanted Dead or Alive*. He became typecast as an Indian, and according to one incredibly insensitive biographical profile, he had played "so many film braves he sometimes has to think before saying 'Ug' and 'Nug' instead of 'Yes' and 'No'."¹³

The only major actor from Saskatchewan in the cast was Scott Peters. Born Peter Sikorski in 1930, he participated in dramatic productions in Bedford Road Collegiate Institute in Saskatoon, and worked part time as a doorman at the Roxy Theatre on 20th Street. He started in the entertainment industry as a disc jockey with Prince Albert's CKBI in 1948. He then returned to Saskatoon and joined CKOM from 1952 to 1955. He was the first night disk jockey at the station, and his show, entitled "Peter's Platter Palace" was extremely popular. Throughout this period he kept acting, and in 1954 joined Regina's Little Theatre with whom he won the Saskatchewan Best Actor Award in the Dominion Drama Festival. Further drama studies followed at the University of Saskatchewan under Emrys Jones.

In the summer of 1955 Peters relocated to Los Angeles, joined the Pasadena Playhouse, and won the Mary Margaret McLeary (best actor) award for his depiction as a psychotic killer – a most promising debut role indeed. His first feature film was in *Outlaw's Son* (1957) and from then on both the content and titles of his films kept getting more dramatic. His next two were *Invasion of the Saucer Men* (1957 – a.k.a. *Invasion of the Hell Creatures*) and *The Amazing Colossal Man* (1957). These were followed by *Motorcycle Gang* (1957), *Suicide Battalion* (1958), *Hot Rod Gang* (1958), *Attack of the Puppet People* (1958), and just prior to being cast for *The Canadians* he played Tom Wright in *The Cape Canaveral Monsters* (1960).

Peters' big breakthrough came in 1958 when he secured the role of gangster John Dillinger in the Warner Bros. movie *The FBI Story* alongside Jimmy Stewart. One of the key reasons for his being chosen was his uncanny facial resemblance to the late villain. Another was his behaviour in the casting interview with the film's producer/director Mervyn LeRoy which he recalled for a reporter:

It was during a chance meeting with Jack Roberts, Warner Bros. casting director, that a physical resemblance between Scott and John Dillinger was noted. The casting department, for four months in search of an actor to play Dillinger, quickly arranged an interview with Mervyn LeRoy who, in turn, tested Scott for the part. Scott had this to say about the test: 'When I was in make-up getting my hair uncurled, moustache applied, etc., Newt Jones, the make-up man, pointed out that he could make me look so much like Dillinger that his own mother would be fooled...

The important thing that Mr. LeRoy wanted was the look of a killer. Well, the field was

narrowed down to two of us and I shall never forget that final interview. There we stood: for one of us it could mean the big break in the business. And it was then that I took the make-up man's advice ... I stared Mr. LeRoy in the eyes and hissed 'If you don't give me this job, Mr. LeRoy, I'll get you. Somewhere ... someday ... I'll get you!' Well, it seemed an eternity that Mr. LeRoy – never taking his eyes from my face, said 'He's the one I want. That's the look I want.'" And I was in!¹⁴

It was in television however that Peters really made a name for himself. He became a regular guest on *State Trooper* (1958), *US Marshall* (1959), *77 Sunset Strip* (1958), and *The Untouchables* (1960). His best known role was an ongoing one as Deputy Hank in *Wyatt Earp*.

Peters was a late 1950s "pretty boy" and was very concerned about his looks. While still a student at Bedford Road Collegiate, he was popularly known as "Swoon-atra". A 1961 profile said he looked like an actor "thick blue overcoat, turned up a la Alan Ladd at the collar, black desert boots a la Tony Perkins at the ankle, dark wavy hair a la Tony Curtis, cascading over the forehead."¹⁵ However on the screen he earned his reputation for being a tough guy. For instance in *Motorcycle Gang*, he was seen as "a mean, sneering, leatherjacketed menace wielding a heavy chain on the populace" and as a result "the Saskatoon actor earned for his realism not only good reviews ... but also praise of it's director as 'the best thing in the picture.'"¹⁶

Regardless of his initial success, Scott remained a genuine Saskatchewan loyalist. Like so many other Canadians before and since, he quickly caught on to the absurd way in which the country, and especially his home province, had always been depicted by the American entertainment industry. Unlike many others though, he spoke out against it, trying to educate Hollywood.

An interesting *Star-Phoenix* article from 1957 was entitled "Peter Scott Lambastes Hollywood For Depicting Sask. as the Arctic." The paper had received a letter from another former Saskatonian in Los Angeles who had taken in Peters' nightclub act:

He tells of an evening when Scott, who is doing well in filmland, had many Hollywood notables including Jayne Mansfield, Pat O'Brien, Jack Benny and other stars listening to him. Scott had an act at the famous Hollywood Masquers Club. He started with the song *Saskatoon, Saskatchewan*. It goes: "What a delight when I think of the night I met you in Saskatoon." He

told them it was his home town, the beautiful city of bridges, and lambasted the movie industry, producers, screen writers, directors (many in the audience) for depicting it as a no-man's land of ice and snow and even as the mountainous wilds of B.C. He reminded of the time that Jack Carson (a Manitoban by the way) was in a celluloid comedy desperately trying to get away from civilization. Muffled up in a fur parka, fur pants and mukluks, driving a team of 12 huskies through a blinding blizzard, he finally came to a road sign pointing "north" to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan ... Scott told of the more or less recent film Saskatchewan which Alan Ladd shot in B.C. with "17,000 – foot mountains in the Cypress Hills" ... ¹⁷

After giving his audiences some needed education on western Canada, telling stories of Waskesui, Lac La Ronge, the University of Saskatchewan and suggesting he was sent to Hollywood as "technical advisor for Saskatchewan", Scott left them with this poetic message:

You've got us surrounded by ice and snow,
All year 'round it's sixty below
Behind each tree,
RCMP You've put mountains where prairie
ought to be – Believe us, Hollywood, you're real
gone, Signed Chamber of Commerce,
Saskatchewan!

Although he deserves marks for trying, it is unlikely he had any impact on the Saskatchewan stereotypes. For though he was tapped to be in *The Canadians* cast, most of the same stereotypes cropped up again in that film.

The Filming

Photography started on 26 September 1960. The schedule was set for 24 days of shooting based on a six day week, and was centered on three main locations: around Fort Walsh proper, Cypress Park, and the Russell Lawrence Ranch. Atmosphere and scenery were key to the production. Kennedy was quoted in the *Leader Post* as saying "they can't say this film isn't authentic unless they want to criticize the hills and the trees. We are filming on the spot where the actual events took place."¹⁸

Further:

Mr. Kennedy and several other veterans of western films have described the Cypress Hills setting as one of the 'most breathtaking' they have ever seen. "These hills are better than mountains' one cameraman said 'You can see them in the background without having to shift

the cameras up at an impossible angle. I only wish there were a few maples out there though for the reds to add to those lovely greens and yellows.¹⁹

A huge glitch hit the set almost immediately – somehow sustenance for the First Nations extras was not forthcoming. Three hundred Cree, including over fifty children and infants, from the Piapot Reserve had been hired to portray the Oglala Sioux in the opening sequence of a teepee village. In time for the first day of shooting, they had been picked up and delivered by STC bus on the Sunday night near Fort Walsh. Unfortunately there was no supper on the site nor breakfast the following morning, and quite naturally there was an air of tension. Producer Herman Webber was exceptionally irritated. He told a *Leader Post* reporter:

I can't understand this, there has been a foul-up somewhere ... I want one thing to be made clear – the film company already paid the Indian Affairs Department for feeding the Indians. We sent a \$5,000 cheque to them through the Receiver General of Canada. This was a deposit only on our contract, but it paid for far more than the arrival of the Indians.²⁰

Food was finally provided by midday – 450 loaves of bread and more than 100 lbs. of meat. It did not come

from Indian Affairs, which appears to have had no presence during the entire shoot, but from Saskatchewan Natural Resources and distributed through Cypress Hills Provincial Park. The regular caterer took over for the rest of the shoot. Webber jokingly (or possibly it was not in fun) offered \$50 for the scalp of any Department of Indian Affairs agent found within the park. Other First Nations extras were hired from the Nekaneet Reserve in the Cypress Hills, the Sweetgrass Reserve at Cutknife, the Red Pheasant Reserve, the Carlyle Reserve, the Day Star and Gordon Reserves at Punnichy, and from the Thunderchild Reserve at Turtleford.

Setback followed setback, and Kennedy started to develop an antipathy for Webber, as can be seen from an anecdote in his autobiography *Hollywood Trail Boss: Behind The Scenes of the Wild, Wild Western*:

Picture people being cheap doesn't bother me at all unless they happen to be production managers or producers... I remember I was doing my first picture in Canada, and we had a production manager (now they call them "line producers"). We had a scene where we had five hundred Indians, and we had to build an Indian camp. This production manager came to me, and said "You know, these teepees cost a lot of money. They're made out of deer hide. I have this great idea. Rather than do them with hides, which are expensive, let's go to the stores and buy brown wrapping paper, and we'll just wrap it around the poles, and no one will ever know the difference. We can paint on some Indian figures – you know, feathers and horses. We'll save twenty-five thousand dollars."

I should have known then what was going to happen ... The assistants were dressed up like Indians so they could be right in the camp, and their job was to start the fires when we were ready to roll. There must have been at least twenty or thirty little campfires, scattered through the camp. We rolled the cameras and told the assistants to light the fires. There was a wind blowing...and it got out of control.

As it swept through the camp, the Indians ran. It wasn't really dangerous, they were just getting out of the way of the fire. It lit up all of these wrapping-paper teepees. When they caught fire, they burned from the bottom up, and when they did, this wrapping paper sort of rose to the sky in circles as it unwound from these teepees, and I had seventy-five teepees wafting in the air... I started laughing, and the whole camp



Olive Roberts/SAB R-B 5474(2)

The tasks involved with shooting the film such as setting up microphones as seen above, take significant time. In total, shooting of *The Canadians* took 34 days.

went up. The production manager, in trying to save twenty-five thousand, cost himself seventy-five to build a real camp, which we shot about two weeks later. We should have shot the production manager.²¹

To add to the tension, Webber was pushing to get as many exterior shots completed as possible. He explained to a reporter:

In case it snows, we want to get all the outside autumn scenes, both the dialogues and the ride throughs done first.

‘Once we get those done, we’re away’ he said. ‘We’ve saved some shots that we can rig up near the lodge anytime we run into really bad weather. Then, of course, there are some night shots that can be done almost anywhere, anytime, and if we get a few snow, or cold weather shots with actors huddled around a camp fire really shivering, so much the better.’²²



The camera crew and onlookers watch as a wardrobe attendant with 20th Century Fox adjusts the wig on Teresa Stratas.

Olive Roberts/SAB R-B 5474(1)

The weather remained consistently bright and warm however, even if in some of the later promotional literature, 20th Century-Fox claimed it was “filmed in the frozen wastelands of Saskatchewan, Canada in all kinds of weather.”

First Nations distrust of their Hollywood paymasters provided yet another delay that first week:

More production headaches face the “North-west Mounted” movie makers in Cypress Hills park Thursday as 280 Indians pulled a Sioux-prize move. The Indians, drawn from 11 reserves from Battleford and south, refused to go into the final crowd scene until they had been paid.

Producer Herman E. Webber, rushing a completion deadline, immediately dispatched a messenger into Maple Creek to draw enough money from the bank for a full week’s pay for each adult Indian. Although the Indians were on location for four days only, each will receive \$32. They were actually involved in only one and a half days

of filming the movie.²³

With the generic Indian shots and some exteriors in the can, Kennedy brought in the lead actors for the start of principal photography. The progress of the shoot can be reconstructed through a series of newspaper accounts. Almost every week a reporter for a nearby newspaper would drop by the set, talk to the actors and write up an episode to illustrate the filmmaking process and shed light on the personalities. For example the *Maple Creek News* visited the set during the week of 29 September, and reported on Stratas’ tribulations:

Those who had some romantic notion that being in the movies is all fun and play, have changed their minds. For one thing, opera singer Teresa Stratas has had to learn how to ride a horse. True, she has a stand-in, in the person of Bonnie Wood, who absorbs all the aches and pains of the wild riding sequences, But Miss Stratas has probably often felt more like eating her meals in a standing position, rather than seated.²⁴



Though unhappy with aspects of the script, the R.C.M.P. consented to allow three constables to appear in the movie. The police officers pose with a young fan between takes at right.

Olive B Roberts/SAB R-B 5474(3)

Another incident was related:

All kinds of things interfere with the shooting schedule. We were waiting for the cameras to start rolling for one particular scene where Miss Stratas was to sing a lullaby to a little Indian baby ... the infant persisted in whimpering and crying. While trying to pacify it, Miss Stratas discovered the child had 'had a natural accident' – and filming was held up while the parents were called to put a clean diaper on the infant.

A writer and a photographer from the *Medicine Hat News*, Jim Tate and Jim Shuttleworth, spent a day on location and assembled several articles on the activities and actors in their October 8 edition. They immediately made a beeline for Stratas "when the *News* reporter-photographer team arrived at the location Friday afternoon they were filming Miss Stratas' death scene with Robert Ryan carrying her 'lifeless' body to the brink of a hill while escorted by his two Mountie cohorts. This is the first scene she has filmed and has yet to play any live ones."²⁵

Labelled a "dark haired, sparkling-eyed Toronto beauty" Stratas "the friendly, unassuming young lady with the guaranteed future has fallen in love with the Cypress Hills and dreads the thought of returning to the cold grey canyons of New York." She then talked about how she had to adjust her mind set from linear to non-linear:

This is one of her small complaints about picture making compared to opera. In opera, she explains, it is one straight production from start to finish with no opportunity for re-runs. Movies are made in bits and pieces. Miss Stratas [sic.] says she isn't sure whether or not she would have the patience to wait around for the right sun for every scene.

Next they talked to Robert Ryan between takes:

Movie actor Robert Ryan is a thoroughly likeable guy. On location Friday in the Cypress Hills Provincial Park the tall rugged-looking actor found time for a chat despite being right in the middle of filming his 59th movie – tentatively called *Northwest Mounted*. Sitting astride a large black mare and dressed in the colorful red tunic and garb of the mounted Policeman, he was most courteous and cooperative subject. 'Just call me Bob.'²⁶

Ryan discussed long hours on the set:

'Every morning I get up at about 5:30 so I am ready to head for the location at 6:30' he explained. The group travels from the Cypress Park Lodge to the filming location – a distance of 22 miles every day. 'At approximately 7:30 we start the cameras rolling and work until

almost 6 pm with only a lunch hour in between. It gets pretty tough after a while.'

Ryan then mentioned the irony of donning the N.W.M.P. uniform again:

'I remember the first movie I played in 20 years ago' he recalled. 'It was also a Mountie picture and I was wearing the same clothes I have on today. I think I had only one line "Here they come"' he laughs.'

Finally the Medicine Hat reporter made some general observations on the pace of the shooting:

Watching the filming of movie scenes is an interesting and often amusing experience. The filming of one scene Friday took longer than an hour and will result in less than two minutes of film in the movie. But the work must be done carefully and every flaw is eliminated with painstaking effort on the part of the cast. Take for instance this scene. In the movie, the viewer will see Robert Ryan, Torin Thatcher and Bert Metcalfe on horseback approaching the brink of a hill. In Ryans arms will be Teresa Stratus [sic.]. A few words will be spoken. But to complete the scene Friday it meant constant rehearsals for both actors and cameramen. A few lines were muffed and several points checked over with director Bert [sic.] Kennedy before the final shooting was ready.

But before the shooting could be completed the entire cast had to wait until the sun was in the exact position to paint the beautiful sunset of the prairies. Waiting for the sun to set, some of the cast had the opportunity to relax. Workmen around the scene continued preparations to close down for the day. The director conferred with the assistant director, cameramen checked final settings. Spotlights were placed in exact locations and actors took time out for cigarettes...

Suddenly the sun was right, and the director called for 'positions' and asked the gallery to be quiet. The scene was shot to perfection.²⁷

Stratas finished all of her scenes by October 15 and left the hills. By the following Monday she had made it back to New York where she opened her opera season.

Leader-Post reporter Jim McGunigal revisited the set in the third week of October and described the filming of

several scenes:

The scene was the top of a hill within sight of Fort Walsh (unphotogenic because of its TV aerials) ... 'All right, quiet please behind the camera' boomed the foghorn voice of assistant director Clancy Hearn ...

A car a quarter of a mile away was frantically motioned to a stop. In the huge, silent hills, the sensitive mike, shielded from wind sounds by a canister-shaped nylon cover, can pick up the bark of a dog a mile away. An assistant stepped up before the camera with a placard bearing the scene number and sequence. 'Action, camera'.

Villain CBC's Jack Creley came galloping up to the now all-business Montana rancher Dehner waiting at the top of the hill. Their horses danced a neat little choreography of their own as anxious wranglers waited out-of-sight of the camera with soft words of encouragement. Creley and Dehner bridled at each other for several takes, then did a wild track – no action, just the words close up on the mike at the same rhythm and tempo. These would be the voices that would come out of the screen of *The Northwest Mounted* film later.²⁸

Modern obstacles continued to plague the shoot. In particular telephone poles could not always be removed by changing camera angles. The set designers ingeniously decided to disguise them with poplar branches. One participant wryly recalled "they looked like power poles with poplar branches."²⁹

The Maple Creek News continued to report on the goings-on at the various locations. On October 27 it wrote about the final week, which was concerned with further shots of scenery and sequences of stunts and extras:

Half the population of Maple Creek and district motored out to the Russell Lawrence ranch on Sunday afternoon to watch Twentieth Century-Fox 'shoot' a few hundred feet of film. Those fortunate enough to have good vantage points, saw a couple of stunt men fall from horses on the run, roll down cutbanks, etc. Also saw Indians chasing a band of wild broncs along the cutbanks for some action-filled scenes of the film. A lot of 'local' boys are riding as Indians – we took some snaps and hope to have them back in time for this week's paper. When you see them you'll probably agree with us that when these white men go 'injun' they really do it up right. We understand

the movie is to be finished up this week – final shooting to be done right in the park area.³⁰

The local boys who went “injun” included Jim Small, Wayne Armstrong, Wilkes Parsonage, George Naismith, Frank Yeast, Johnny Armstrong, Jim Leslie and Russell Lawrence. Unfortunately, in a fit of misplaced humour, they all took on “Indian” names for their newspaper interview – including Chief Sore in the Saddle and Chief Drop-Um Quick. Even more unfortunate the *Maple Creek News* thought the names funny and printed them.

Shooting wrapped for good on October 30, and already producer Herman Webber was making plans for a triple premiere: Regina, Toronto and, catering to local sentiment, Maple Creek. The local paper summed it up “one thing is certain, when the film does come to Maple Creek, even standing room will be at a premium.”³¹

Exhibition and Reception

All post-production, like the daily processing, was done in London, England. For reasons unknown, Kennedy decided to insert a perplexingly out of place 4 minute montage of contemporary stock shots of Canadian cities, industries, and rural scenery at the very beginning of the film. Not only did it have no discernable connection with the movie’s storyline, but it is glaringly obvious that the footage was not shot by Kennedy’s crew. One can only speculate why this was seen as added value.

Stratas was given three songs to record for *The Canadians* soundtrack: “This Is Canada” (which played over the opening sequence), “Sioux Lullaby” and “The Night” – all composed by Ken Darby. Darby was a Los Angeles-based musical director whose achievements ranged from being the singing voice of the Munchkin Mayor in *Wizard of Oz*, to being Elvis’ vocal arranger for *Love Me Tender*, to composing the songs for the B grade classic *Fiend of Dope Island*.

Post-production took three and a half months and resulted in an 85-minute film. The working title *Northwest Mounted* sounded too much like an earlier R.C.M.P. movie and so a new title was locked in as *The Canadians*. Both anamorphic and standard prints were produced in 35 mm. and 16 mm. formats.

As one would expect, a sizeable promotion was organized by 20th Century-Fox for all media. The Exhibitor’s Campaign Manual offered “Action TV Trailers”, “Dramatic Radio Plugs” and television title cards. It is fascinating to see how the Hollywood hype machine dealt with a Saskatchewan story. Dramatic is too

limp a word to describe the various examples of camera-ready half tone newspaper and magazine advertisements. Some of the stirring tag lines, which were incredibly misleading included:

Here Come The Canadians: They Rode Where No Man Dared Before ... Challenging the Killers that Custer Couldn’t Stop!

This was Their Finest Hour! These Were Their Boldest Deeds! This is Their Greatest Adventure! Here Come The Canadians!

Here Come The Canadians ... Exploding Across The Angry Snake River. Flinging Their Fiery Challenge at the Sioux Nation Custer Couldn’t Stop!

And finally:

Between The Angry Snake River and The Treacherous Buffalo Cliffs Stormed The Mounted Giants ... Blazing A Saga That Saved A Nation!

After viewing the film, one could be forgiven for thinking that the advertisements were for another movie altogether. Above all, the manual strongly stressed the connection with the Canadian wilderness and the outdoor appeal of the movie, and offered local promotional ideas, which are somewhat weak in retrospect:

1. Arrange with your local sporting goods counters in department stores and sporting goods stores to set up a display of hunting and camping items, in conjunction with posters and ads for “The Canadians”
2. Contact your local jewelry outlets and have them arrange during your playdates to promote Indian-style pins, rings, along with pictures and posters of “The Canadians”
3. Stage an Essay Contest with your local schools using Canada (its history) as the subject. Invite teachers and special groups to a screening
4. Arrange for a parade down main street of “Indians” and “Royal Northwest Mounted Police”
5. Stage a block party with Indian motif

6. Arrange for a Singing Contest with full coverage by newspapers, radio and television, building on the fact that Teresa Stratas is a young girl who rose from obscurity to become a famous Metropolitan Opera star. Send the winner on a prize trip to Canada.³²



To promote The Canadians, a number of colourful and dramatic posters and advertisements were produced. This assemblage, from the collection of the author, depict some of the bold, if not misleading, promotional items that were released.

Posters by the National Screen Service were produced in several sizes, along with a set of eight garishly coloured lobby cards. All were considerably more spectacular than the movie itself. Several depicted an aggressive charge of massed N.W.M.P. whereas the movie had no police charges at all.

20th Century-Fox again approached the R.C.M.P. for its assistance, this time in promoting the movie. The force decided a unequivocal “no” was necessary, and it appears that no political pressure was applied in this case. Deputy Commissioner George McClellan explained the decision in a memo of 1 February 1961:

While we did assist in the early sequences of this film, on location in the Cypress Hills, we do not propose to assist in promoting it... We have not received any advice from Twentieth Century-Fox Limited, to whom we extended considerable assistance, as to the merits of the film and the release dates. In the absence of any further contact with this organization, we are inclined to believe that they might not have made changes in their script which we insisted be done and which they assured us, in the beginning, they would do. In other words, to use an expression of the trade, this film could

be a “turkey”. With this in mind we do not wish to publicly endorse it ...³³

Kennedy finally wrote Commissioner Harvison on 22 February to politely announce the upcoming premiere, and to weakly explain why the requested changes were not made and why the film did not come out as the R.C.M.P. wanted it to:

I have been holding off writing in the hopes that I would see the finished cut of “The Canadians” before it opened in Canada. But it seems that inasmuch as the major part of the technical work on the film was done in London, it will go straight into the theatres before I get a chance to look at it.

The only reason I mention it is due to the fact that George McClellan, Sandy Holm and Eric Porter might very well be after my scalp if some of the cuts which they requested have not been made. They had me pretty much between the devil and the deep blue sea on some story changes, and it simply came down to being told flatly No by Fox on some of the things they

wanted. All of which is a way of passing the buck ...³⁴

Harvison in return was less than gracious:

I was disappointed ... to see that, despite the very considerable cooperation and assistance extended to you and the producers and despite assurances that changes would be made, certain scenes were allowed to remain in the picture. Since I had made my objections very clear to you, as had Deputy Commissioner McClellan and Inspector Holm, I can't take the charitable view that there was a misunderstanding.³⁵

As promised there were a number of premieres on Friday night February 24, 1961 – in fact there were 200 such occasions, making it the first mass premiere (or as it was known a “saturation opening”) in Canadian history. The Toronto premiere was both showy and an embarrassing continuation of the stereotype-laden promotional campaign. It was first screened in the Ontario capital at the Imperial Theatre on Yonge Street. To make it a “real” event, 20th Century-Fox rented a battery of searchlights to illuminate the dismal winter sky above downtown Toronto.

In the absence of Mounties, they also hired a group of thirty men from the Six Nations Reserve at Brantford to do an “authentic war dance” outside the theater. Earlier in the day, the “warriors” had dropped into City Hall to present Mayor Nathan Phillips with a war bonnet and an Indian name. An awkward misunderstanding played out in front of the press as Chief Red Cloud assumed the traditional return gift of an ox feast. An obviously unbriefed Phillips thought the idea “jocular” but made no effort to comply. One of his more humourless aldermen, Kenneth Waters, lectured the band “there will be no roast ox out of the city pot as long as people are going hungry.”³⁶ This attitude would put a strain on the evening's ceremonies as Mayor Phillips was one of the guests of honor at the premiere.

Also in attendance were Teresa Stratas, her family, Jack Creley, TSO conductor Walter Susskind, and Stratas' former singing teacher Madame Irene Jessner. The ceremony started with the giving away to the first 200 attendees the Stratas musical recordings from the movie, which had been released by the Canadian record label Quality Records. That was followed by the formal introduction of the stars to the crowd. According to the *Toronto Telegram*, after “the fanfare, they had to sit through three previews, two documentaries, the news and Mighty Mouse before *The Canadians* was finally screened.”

Although all three Toronto newspapers were enthusiastic prior to the screening, none could bring themselves to give a favourable review after the fact. Clyde Gilmour (an ex-Medicine Hatter) critiqued it for *The Telegram*:

In view of the film's made-in-Canada background and the special appeal of its locale to residents of this country, I wish I could honestly report that *The Canadians* has emerged as a distinguished or exciting specimen in its category of motion-picture entertainment.

On the contrary, I found it a thoroughly routine item, handsomely photographed in widescreen colour, but pitted with dozens of time-worn cliches in its characters and story development, and burdened with a depressingly slow tempo for a suspense western. Writer-director Burt Kennedy, from Hollywood, has given his actors little or no opportunity to show what they can do.

He comments on the acting and writing:

Ryan's role, solidly played by one of the most dependable professionals in the movies, is a grim-jawed stereotype. The same goes for his fierce-talking, soft-hearted old sergeant (Torin Thatcher) and the boyish greenhorn constable (Burt Metcalfe) who goes along on the Sioux mission. Three Canadian actors (Jack Creley, Scott Peters, Richard Alden) appear as the gunmen hired by Hollywood's Dehner. They do their work with decent competence, but the script is against them.

Some of the dialogue they are made to spout is embarrassingly corny. 'I had me a quiet woman once,' one of the boys remarks 'Outside, she was calm as Sunday. Inside she was like mountain scenery.' And when one of the trio asks another how old he is, the lad replies bashfully 'I dunno, young mostly.'³⁷

Gilmour then turns his attention to Stratas:

As the 'white squaw' Toronto's Teresa Stratas sings an introductory patriotic ballad and two later songs with all the silken control and lovely voice you might expect from this fast-climbing soprano of the Metropolitan Opera company. But not a word is said to explain such astounding vocal virtuosity from this half-wild wench of the wilderness; and the character she

portrays remains a cardboard figure at the finish.

Blake Kirby of the *Toronto Star* agreed in his review article entitled “No Action, No Acting, No Saga” and was even less diplomatic:

The Canadians is a slow moving grade B western, redeemed only by excellent color photography of the autumn browns and yellows of Saskatchewan and some nice bright red coats ... It’s hard to avoid thinking that the simultaneous opening is designed to get some money in the till before word of what the film is like gets around.

As for Teresa Stratas ... who makes her movie debut ... playing a white squaw, she proves once again she is an excellent and improving singer – but that movie acting is a craft she has not even begun to master. Further, the camera is cruel to her at times.

The film’s worst fault is its tedious slowness. There is not enough action for an action picture, and not enough character possibilities in the script for an acting picture. Even the stampede that does the villains in is dull – and their deaths are completely unconvincing.³⁸

He sums up:

This is a film designed to reap a profit out of Canadian’s national pride. For Canadian audiences only, it opens with a long shot of Canada, the growing giant, over which Miss Stratas sings “This Is Canada.” The scene is shallow bilge: it is the more deplorable because it is meant to be regarded by us as a compliment.

The Winnipeg premiere was held at the Metropolitan Theatre. *Winnipeg Free Press* reviewer Jack Parr in his article “Off-Key Hymn To Mounties” started off in a snotty manner:

This film would more or less appear to be the single creation of one man, Burt Kennedy, who functions both as director and screen-play writer. In the first five minutes of the picture I decided that Kennedy had made a colossal mistake in not hiring another writer ...³⁹

With undisguised sarcasm, he describes the dominant aesthetic motif:

The collapse was this: Kennedy specializes in panoramic long shots of human beings against the scenic grandeur of the Saskatchewan prairies. Now this was really very impressive at



The promotional department emphasized the constant danger faced by “The White Squaw” played by Teresa Stratas. In this production still, the hired gunslinger played by Scott Peters attempts to seduce “The White Squaw”.

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61/26

first, but then one certain bit of film composition kept reappearing. First of all there were Mounties sitting astride their horses, silhouetted on top of a rolling hill, then there were Indians on horseback silhouetted on top of another hill: a short while later a dusky Indian maiden on her horse on top of a hill; and then finally cowboys, also on horses, on top of a hill. And this kept on being repeated, only with the order of appearance slightly changed from time to time ... Kennedy might have been better off stepping aside in favour of another director and just contented himself with holding up the cue cards.

His next complaint was technical:

These long shots usually got out of focus within seconds: the figures would at first be clearly defined and then they would get all fuzzy. It wasn't bad enough that Kennedy's imagination had given way, but also the lenses in the cameras were crumbling on the spot.

His summation is underwhelming:

Is there anything good here? Well, yes, the picture was a reasonable piece of melodrama. Lots of action, adequately spaced out, capable enough acting, handsome horses...and Saskatchewan was never lovelier.

Not surprisingly Saskatchewan reviewers - and they did review rather than critique - were so damn pleased to see glimpses of their home province up on the screen, that the story, acting and production values were of little consequence to them. The Regina premiere was held at the Capitol Theatre with Lt. Gov. F.L. Bastedo, Mayor Henry Baker, various cabinet ministers and M.L.A.s and members of the R.C.M.P. in attendance. Max Laidlaw reviewed it the following day in the *Leader Post*:

The people of Regina and Saskatchewan will enjoy the 20th Century-Fox color and Cinemascope film "The Canadians" filmed in the scenic Cypress Hills region of southwest Saskatchewan, now showing at the Capitol Theatre. Highlight of the film is



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20th Century-Fox presents
THE CANADIANS

Starring ROBERT RYAN with JOHN DEMENTER • TORIN THATCHER
and introducing TERESA STRATOS • CINEMASCOPE • COLOR by DE LUXE
Produced by Herman S. Webber • Written and Directed by Bert Kennedy

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61/26

Another theme which 20th Century-Fox used to promote the movie was the romantic interest between Inspector Gannon (Robert Ryan) and "The White Squam" (Teresa Stratas). In this production still, we see one of the few tender moments shared between the two characters in the movie.

undoubtedly the scenery with its rolling hills, lakes, spreading prairie, bushland, and trees in the full glory of fall colors. To further commend it to local picture-goers the cast includes an actor closely associated with Regina – Scott Peters. Peter Scott, as he was known in his Regina days, had a radio program of his own and gained a good deal of support from the younger members of the community...⁴⁰

There is a hint that the film's reception was less than delirious:

Perhaps Regina as a whole are a little jaundiced about Hollywood's treatment of Canada in the past -- remembering this province's rude treatment when a film, using its name as title, was shot on a golf course at Banff...

He went on to summarize the plot, comment on the individual performances and paraphrase the pre-packaged actor biographies, but was unwilling to venture an opinion either favourable or unfavourable.

Slightly to the west, the movie also premiered in Maple Creek at the Grand Theatre. According to a local writer (a week later), it:

drew a packed house – and has continued to do so for every showing this week ... The showing of "The Canadians" made history in more ways than one: it is the first quality picture made in Canada by an American company as a wholly Canadian and British venture. Spokesmen for 20th Century-Fox, who filmed the picture, are prepared to film another picture in Canada this summer if "The Canadians" proves to be successful. Wherever the picture is being shown, it is being met with enthusiasm. Capacity houses are being reported at Medicine Hat, Shaunavon, Swift Current, Regina, etc.⁴¹

George Shepherd, curator of Saskatoon's Western Development Museum, was asked to write a review for the *Star-Phoenix*. It was a long meandering piece mixing memories of growing up in the Cypress Hills, and uncannily managed to avoid saying much of anything about the film itself:

Just in case the reader does not read to the end of this review it might be best to say right away that everyone in Saskatoon should see "The Canadians" now showing at the Capitol. And this, in part, from a sense of civic pride and to

support Saskatoon's own local son, Scott Peters (Peter Scott) who has embarked on what can often prove to be a rocky road to movie stardom.

We could go further than this and say that everyone in Saskatchewan should see this film. The whole program is good wholesome entertainment for every member of the family... The story does not appear to hew too close to the line in being historically correct but it still holds true that truth is stranger than fiction, so we can let that pass.⁴²

Shepherd was obviously taken with Stratas:

How fortunate to have that strikingly beautiful Toronto-born star Teresa Stratas singing those lovely lyrics. Listening to that charming voice singing a lullaby to the little Indian child one could only reflect that she was singing as well to the early members of the force, some of them mere boys of 18 and 19 years of age, lying in the tree-shaded police cemetery within sound of her voice .. How well Miss Stratas did – wading through Battle Creek in the cold September days (Ugh, Ugh) and giving up the comforts of New York life to come out to our wild west to assist in making a truly Canadian film. A special How! How! to Teresa Stratas.

It was the scenery that made the greatest impression on Shepherd:

No doubt Herman Webber and all connected with the filming realize this was an exceptional fall, for coloring and mildness of weather was the best seen in the Cypress Hills for many years ... The lovely fall gold of the poplars contrasting with the green of the pines set off by the red coats of the police, to say nothing of the fleecy clouds in the blue sky, helped make a picture one will never forget. After forty years residence in the Montaigne de Cypre it made one more than a little homesick for the country and the people ...

Generally speaking, American reviewers were not overly impressed with the movie and were direct about it. *Limelight* magazine reviewed it in mid-March. Commenting chiefly on its tempo, it said:

The Canadian Northwest Mounted Police always get their man but, to judge by this slow-paced Herman E. Webber production ...it

sometimes must take years and years and years. One of the defects of the film is that it promises too much and delivers too little.

It opens with a fine bracing montage of scenes and cities in the northern Dominion, accompanied by a rousing musical number "This Is Canada" ... Then comes an arrestingly dramatic opening. We are given a quick flash of the battlefield of the Little Big Horn, strewn with the bodies of General Custer and the 7th Cavalry. Next we are shown a long shot of the entire Sioux nation ... streaming across the border into Canada. The Superintendent of the Mounties ... for some reason has but three men ... to meet the intruders.

As they ride out to do it, the audience has high hopes of a great and enthralling Indian story. But soon Ryan and his lads are in the position of the Dutch boy who placed his finger in the dike when there wasn't any flood. They do not meet Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse or any of the chiefs whose names cause pulses to quicken – instead they meet Four Horns ... From here on in, the story becomes fairly routine, western connected but remotely with the mighty theme that has been invoked.

The journey takes them through some glorious Canadian scenery ... It is unfortunate that director Kennedy thinks of very little of interest for his actors to do in front of the scenery... This is not a bad western – it just could have been better.⁴³

Paul Beckley of the *New York Herald-Tribune* thought it was a bad western:

Burt Kennedy's screenplay is uninventive, uneventful, and without even enough cliches to fill it out ... Ryan, an actor who does have a sinewy manner, seems at times to be concealing with difficulty his awareness of just how slouchy drab is the material he is working with.⁴⁴

Variety magazine, the bible of the movie industry, was equally harsh in its assessment. In its writer's opinion, it was:

a plodding, tepid drama about Canada's Mounted Police. It is short on high dramatic notes and on humour. Main virtue of pic is the sweeping Canadian scenery but even this is

fuzzily photographed, especially in long shots. Despite a dogged performance by Robert Ryan as one of those Mounties who always gets his man and the introduction of singer Teresa Stratas there is nothing to give a kick to the box office. This seems a safe booking for undemanding audiences but that's the limit. A dull script is played out conscientiously but without much spirit by Ryan and his fellow thespians. The only really dramatic scene is when the Sioux take charge and stampede the horses but even this is patently faked. The Sioux are wasted after a promising start.

Ryan, expressionless as his horse, gives a solid performance as the dedicated Mounty [sic.] who falls gently for the white squaw ... John Dehner, Jack Creley and Richard Alden are the heavies and, though they snarl a great deal, they don't add up to much a menace. Teresa Stratas, making her screen debut, sings a couple of songs charmingly but her acting is strictly minor league.⁴⁵

Eugene Archer of *The New York Times* not only did not like it, but commented that the film could spell the end of the genre itself:

Those bright jackets adorning the Northwest Mounties have seldom looked so drab as in "The Canadians": for a tedious hour and a half Robert Ryan, as an exhausted trooper pledged to keep peace with the Sioux, grapples alternately with Teresa Stratas, a soprano turned squaw, and John Dehner, a rancher seeking vengeance on Indian horse thieves, and an apparently endless series of cliches. Miserably written and directed by Burt Kennedy, this lattitude [sic.] horse opera is as monotonous as its frequent Cinemascope vistas of waving grass on the rolling Saskatchewan plains. The crimson uniforms – a popular Hollywood commodity since Cecil B. DeMille first displayed their photogenic potentialities two decades ago – are not the only Western staples that have lost their sheen. This lackluster, low-budget Twentieth Century-Fox production suggests that unless a radical new approach is discovered soon, the reliable old Western format may be reaching the end of a long hard trail.⁴⁶

Perhaps the last critique should be saved for one of the participants – Teresa Stratas. In the March 17, 1961 issue of *Time* Magazine, she openly admitted: "when I saw my

performance, I felt like weeping for the first ten minutes – and after that I felt like laughing.”

The consensus then was that *The Canadians* exhibited weak writing that relied too much on “western” clichés and too little on historical accuracy, contained some fairly good performances within the limits of the lines given them, a few not so impressive performances, much beautiful Saskatchewan scenery and colours especially in the panoramic format, numerous fuzzy shots, and some excruciatingly slow pacing.

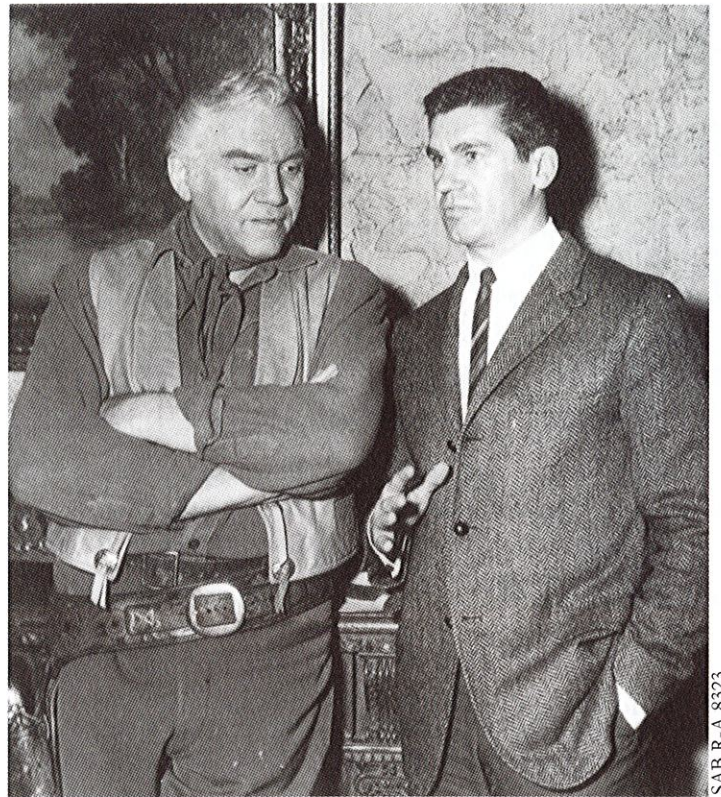
Assessment

With forty years hindsight, one cannot help but try to assess the importance of *The Canadians*. Was it a monetary success? No. Was it an artistic or critical success? Again no. Did it help make the careers of any of its cast or crew? Well actually starring in *The Canadians* was a career-killer for many of the actors involved. Scott Peters for example starred in only three more feature films *Panic In Year Zero!* (1962), *They Saved Hitler's Brain* (1963), and *The Girl Hunters* (1963). From there he did a fairly quick dive into obscurity, re-emerging only in the late 1970s as a radio talk show host on KGOE in Los Angeles. Teresa Stratas did not do another film until the 1970s, and then it was as an opera singer, hardly a stretch for her.

Only Ryan and Dehner emerged bankable, and went on to star in a number of thoroughly respectable productions. The next year Ryan would play John the Baptist in *King of Kings* (1961) and go on to *The Longest Day* (1962), *The Dirty Dozen* (1967), and *The Wild Bunch* (1969).

Dehner continued to be incredibly busy. He would break out of his western typecasting and appear in *Slaughterhouse Five* (1972), *Airplane II* (1982) and *The Right Stuff* (1983). He also continued his heavy television schedule guesting on *Twilight Zone*, *Hogan's Heroes*, *Mission Impossible*, *Rockford Files* and *Quincy*.

Finally the man responsible for the whole mess, Burt Kennedy, continued on with his dual career as writer and director. As writer he was responsible for *Mail Order Bride* (1964), *The Train Robbers* (1973) and Clint Eastwood's *White Hunter Black Heart* (1990). As director he would split his time between television and feature films. Two well-known television series he did were *Combat* (1962) and *Simon and Simon* (1981), while his movies included *Return of the Magnificent Seven* (1966), *Dirty Dingus Magee* (1970), *How The West Was Won* (1977), and ending his career with the Hulk Hogan comedy *Suburban Commando*



SAB R-A 8323

An appearance in The Canadians did little to promote the career of Saskatoon actor Scott Peters, seen above on the right with renowned Canadian born actor Lorne Greene in 1965. After a handful of feature-film appearances during the 1960's, Peters disappeared from the big screen.

(1991). In his 1997 autobiography *Hollywood Trail Boss*, he only mentioned *The Canadians* twice, both disparagingly, calling the movie “a terrible thing.”

Did *The Canadians* kick start a local film industry? No, at least not immediately. No resident Saskatchewanians filled crew positions so they could not pass on their experience to others. Did it have any positive impact at all? Most certainly, but only in Saskatchewan itself. It was the first time a Hollywood feature film was shot in the province (the 1940s *Northwest Mounted* was shot in a Hollywood backlot even though it premiered in Regina). Aside from several movies based on the Riel Uprising, it was the first movie based, however loosely, on an event in Saskatchewan's history. It was the first time that ordinary Saskatchewanians (extras) were used in a Hollywood film. And it was the first time a Hollywood film had highlighted the Saskatchewan landscape, which as can be seen from the reviews, was as important if not more so than the actors themselves.

It also provided a major financial boost to the local economy of Maple Creek. Many locals secured employment as drivers and teamsters, and the road from Cypress Park to Fort Walsh was upgraded. Local restaurants, hardware stores, and hotels did a booming business. The main cast and crew stayed at the cabins in

Cypress Hills Park, and as a result they were insulated, had heating installed, and showers built. Of the \$15,000 spent on this modernizing, \$5,000 was paid directly by the provincial government and \$10,000 by 20th Century-Fox. Local ranches such as the Yeast, Naismith and Parsonage spreads supplied horses for considerable fees, and Bill Parsonage was employed as head wrangler throughout the filming.

The movie also brought the Cypress Hills to the attention of the rest of Saskatchewan, Canada and even the world. More than this, it broke the pattern of thinking that a feature film could not be made in the province. This change of attitude would lay the groundwork for the making of such Saskatchewan films as *The Drylanders* two years later (the National Film Board's first feature film ever), and *Alien Thunder* and *Paperback Hero* in the following decade.

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History, Myth and the University of Saskatchewan, 1907-1974

by James Pitsula



*Above: Laying the Cornerstone for the Engineering Building,
University of Saskatchewan, 1911*

(University of Saskatchewan Archives A-2991)

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the University of Regina.*

This essay focuses on the interpretation of the history of the University of Saskatchewan from 1907 to 1974, especially as it relates to two major themes: the notion that there should be only one university in the province and that it should operate with a large measure of autonomy from the provincial government. A corollary sub-theme attributes any departure from the one-university model to “political influence.” The University Act of 1907 gave the University of Saskatchewan monopoly degree-granting powers (except for theology), and it became a fixed goal of President Walter Murray (1908-1937) and many of his successors to maintain the monopoly. Murray also believed that government interference could do great damage to the integrity of the university, and this conviction became part of the institution’s self-definition. This essay argues that these two goals, which may be abbreviated as monopoly and autonomy, acquired a mythical status. The myth enjoyed wide circulation and considerable influence both within and outside university circles.

It is necessary to clarify what is meant by the term “myth,” a word that can be used in different ways and contexts. Myth in this essay is defined along the lines suggested by semiotics theorist Roland Barthes.¹ He holds that myth is “a type of speech” or a “mode of signification.”² A “language-object” does double duty in conveying at the same time a literal meaning and a broader concept. In the present case, the term, “University of Saskatchewan,” refers in an immediate sense to an institution, a set of buildings, a physical location, an array of academic programs and associated scholarly and research activities. But it is also a sign or a token of the twin propositions that “Saskatchewan has only one university” and “the university operates with minimal interference from the provincial government.” The phrase “University of Saskatchewan” constitutes, in Barthes’ terminology, a linguistic form (the signifier) that holds the concepts of monopoly and autonomy (the signified). Barthes calls the correlation of the two terms “signification,” which is the myth itself. The very principle of myth is that “it transforms history into nature.”³ The University of Saskatchewan myth made it part of the natural order of things for the province to have but one university. To contemplate other ways of organizing higher education in Saskatchewan verged on heresy. Walter Murray in fact declared in 1931 that the proposal for a second university was a “dangerous heresy.”⁴ Myth transforms what is contingent, historical, and fabricated into what “goes without saying.” As Barthes puts it, “In passing from history to nature, myth... abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives

them the simplicity of essences, it does away with all dialectics, with any going back beyond what is immediately visible, it organizes a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity....”⁵ At the same time, there is no permanent fixity in mythical concepts: “...they can come into being, alter, disintegrate, disappear completely. And it is precisely because they are historical that history can very easily suppress them.”⁶ History makes and breaks myths.

Jonathan Vance in *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* employs Barthes’ conceptualization of myth to throw light on how Canadians in the 1920s and 1930s made sense of the war by constructing “a mythic version of the events of 1914-18 from a complex mixture of fact, wishful thinking, half-truth, and outright invention....”⁷ He demonstrates how myth can play a role in the formation of “social memory,” defined in general terms as, “the shared narratives of a community’s past, which are essential to its identity and cohesion.”⁸ The community may be a nation-state, as in Vance’s study, or a more narrowly defined group, such as the working class, women, a town or an institution. The University of Saskatchewan is both an institution and a community, whose members—faculty, students, alumni, administrators, and others—share to varying degrees and in diverse ways a common identity. The University of Saskatchewan myth became an important part of that identity.⁹



Parade to celebrate the awarding of the University to Saskatoon, 1909. Pictured in the automobile are Board of Governor members A.P. McNab, W.J. Bell and James Clinskill and the Mayor of Saskatoon William Hopkins.

The decision in 1909 to locate the university in Saskatoon was of great importance in the construction of the myth. The intervention of the provincial government in what was supposed to have been a neutral decision-making process compromised the ideal of autonomy, and the reaction to the decision in Regina threatened the principle of monopoly. The two issues were in fact linked because the perception that the process was tainted by politics made the response in Regina

even more negative than it otherwise would have been. It is of interest, therefore, to examine how historians have told the story of the 1909 decision. Although there are several accounts, none of them looks closely at the person who cast the deciding vote in favor of locating the university in Saskatoon.

By the terms of the 1907 University Act, the Board of Governors was entrusted with the responsibility of choosing a site for the university. The Board consisted of nine men—five appointed by the Senate, three by the provincial government, and one, the president of the university, by the other members of the Board. The Senate, which chose the majority of Board members, was made up of five ex-officio members and twelve members elected by Convocation. The latter comprised the body of graduates of Canadian and British universities who had resided in Saskatchewan for at least three months and had applied to be members of Convocation at the call of the university registrar. The ex-officio members were the chancellor, the president, the chairman of the Educational Council of the province, the principal of the Normal School, and the Minister of Education.¹⁰

The Senate held elections on 7 January 1908 and appointed to the Board the following men: A. Forrest Angus, Regina (Conservative); Arthur Hitchcock, Moose Jaw (Liberal); John Dixon, Maple Creek (Liberal); Andrew MacDonald, Prince Albert (Liberal); and James Clinkskill, Saskatoon (Conservative). The Liberal government led by Premier Walter Scott named James MacKay, Prince Albert (Conservative), Archibald P. McNab, Saskatoon (Liberal), and Levi Thomson, Wolseley (Liberal). The ninth board member was Walter Murray, a professor of philosophy at Dalhousie University, who on 20 August 1908 became president of the university. Excluding Murray, there were four members from the northern part of the province (MacDonald, Clinkskill, MacKay, McNab) and four from the south (Angus, Hitchcock, Dixon, Thomson). Of the three government appointees, two were from the north (MacKay, McNab) and one from the south (Thomson).¹¹

The Board voted to select the site of the university on the evening of Wednesday, 7 April 1909. On a motion of Levi Thomson and Andrew MacDonald, they voted by ballot, dropping after each round the city that received the fewest number of votes. It came down in the end to a contest between Regina and Saskatoon, with Saskatoon emerging the winner. The margin of victory was not made public; nor was any information given out as to how individual board members voted or why they voted as they did. The Board decided to say as little as possible in order not to fuel speculation or controversy—a futile

hope, as it turned out.

There is no doubt that the outcome led to rejoicing and celebration in Saskatoon. More problematic is the way historians have interpreted the reaction in Regina. Arthur S. Morton, a historian at the University of Saskatchewan from 1914 to 1940 and author of *Saskatchewan: The Making of a University*,¹² based his interpretation on an editorial that appeared in the *Regina Morning Leader* the day after the vote. Journalism has been described as the first draft of history, and so it was in this case:

The Board of Governors of the Provincial University have in their wisdom decided that the great future institution of learning shall be located at Saskatoon, and despite any disappointment which may be felt by citizens in Regina, Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Fort Qu'Appelle and Battleford that their home city was not preferred above their successful rival, the decision of the Governors will be readily accepted and loyally concurred in. The University is not a local, but a Provincial institution, and it was a proper and worthy ambition for any place to wish to become the home of the institution. Now that the question has been settled it should be regarded by all as settled, and settled wisely and well. There should be no heart-burnings, no fault-findings. The residents of each of the several aspiring cities may still be as profoundly convinced as ever that the University would have attained to a greater measure of success and more rapidly, if located in their midst, but there is no longer anything to be gained by urging such views. There is one common duty now devolving upon each and all as loyal citizens of Saskatchewan, and that is to accept the decision reached... Although the Parliament Buildings of Saskatchewan are at Regina, our pride in them should be equaled by Saskatoon, and Saskatoon's pride in the stately structure, which will soon arise on the banks of the noble Saskatchewan River should be equaled by Regina. Both institutions belong to both and to all, and are created and maintained for the benefit of all.¹³

Morton quoted the editorial and concluded, on what basis it is not clear, that it “turned out to be a very accurate reflection of the opinion not only in Regina but also in the province at large.” He added, “the Board's decision was accepted by the public with remarkable acquiescence, and attention turned almost at once to

considerations of getting the University started.”¹⁴ Morton failed to mention that the Conservative newspapers in Regina did not share the opinion of the *Liberal Morning Leader*. *The West* said the decision to give the university to Saskatoon was pure politics: “The governors were selected by the government with the end in view that has been attained. Does anyone deny that the university location was not decided [sic] some time ago?” As a result, the newspaper claimed, the prospects of the university had been seriously damaged. This, however, was no concern of the Liberals. All they cared about, the paper alleged, was winning the Saskatoon seat in the next election.¹⁵ The Conservative *Daily Standard* delivered the same verdict, condemning the Liberals as “vipers,” who “gamble[d] with loaded dice and gave pointers to gamblers.” The new institution, the paper said, would never be anything more than the “University of Saskatoon,” and a true University of Saskatchewan would yet arise.¹⁶

The *Leader* denied the charges of political interference, basing its case on the fact that the government had appointed only three of the nine board members. Although it was to be expected that the Saskatoon appointee voted for his home city, the other two were said to be blameless for Regina’s defeat. James MacKay, a well-known Conservative, would not have participated in any Liberal scheme, and Levi Thomson, according to the *Leader*, was rumored to have voted for Regina. The latter supposition, as we shall see, proved unfounded. The *Leader* then proceeded to criticize *West* for its gratuitous slur upon the integrity of the Board of Governors, “who are among the leading citizens of Saskatchewan on both sides of politics, but whom the Tory organ would have the people believe are mere puppets in the hands of the Government and without the slightest regard for the welfare of a great institution whose interests they were appointed to safeguard and promote.”¹⁷ The *West* responded in a second editorial, posing two questions. Could the *Leader*—that “pap-fed organ of a corporation favoring government”—explain why Premier Scott had not appointed a Board member from Regina and why Archibald P. McNab, the Liberal Public Works Minister from Saskatoon, had given every sign of knowing in advance that his city would get the prize? “Several prominent men in Saskatoon,” the paper continued, “seemed to have a clear understanding with Mr. McNab that the university would be located there. By what authority could he promise it?”¹⁸

Both Conservatives and Liberals tried to make political capital out of the controversy, the former trying to pin blame on the government, the latter seeking to exonerate it. But beyond the skirmishes of party politics, the debate had implications for the University of

Saskatchewan myth. If it turned out that politicking placed the university in Saskatoon, the myth was contaminated at its source. Doubt was cast on the proposition that the university operated outside the realm of politics. Further, the second part of the myth—that Saskatchewan has one university—was harder to sustain if Reginans believed that tricky business had placed the university in Saskatoon. It was vital for the integrity of the myth that this matter be cleared up and the rough edges of history made smooth.

Morton accomplished this by playing down the role of politics in the decision. He informed his readers that Walter Murray voted for Regina, even though he knew Premier Scott preferred Saskatoon. “The incident,” Morton said, “was an eloquent indication of the President’s independence of mind and of the freedom given to the Governors to decide University problems for themselves.”¹⁹ Morton completely ignored the *West* and the *Daily Standard*, both of which accused the government of interfering, and cited only the *Leader’s* editorial. Nor did he examine his main source critically. He failed to mention that the *Leader* was a Liberal paper, and William F. Kerr, the managing editor and probable author of the editorial, was one of Premier Scott’s closest associates. Scott had owned the paper until 1906 when he sold it to the Leader Publishing Company in which Kerr was the major shareholder.²⁰ Kerr also assisted Scott with his financial affairs.²¹

The negative reaction to the university location decision was not confined to the ranks of the Tory party. J.W. McLeod, private secretary to Walter Scott, reported that by the Saturday following the vote “quite a number of prominent Grits [were] vowing summary vengeance upon all and sundry connected with the Government. A hurry-up meeting of about 20 or so of the workers was held and I believe the gathering was one of the warmest which has taken place in Regina for many moons.” Norman MacKenzie, a Liberal lawyer and later the benefactor of the MacKenzie Art Gallery, was so angry that for a day or so after the announcement it was scarcely safe to approach him. “He paced his office all one day very much after the manner of a caged tiger while the air was positively blue in his vicinity.”²² McLeod said that Regina members of the university Senate accused Minister of Education J.A. Calder of giving them the “double-cross,” leading them to believe that Regina had nothing to fear, when all the while Saskatoon had the advantage. McLeod also passed along to Scott the information that certain individuals from Saskatoon were doing “a lot of unnecessary talking”:

For instance: a brother of Sheriff Calder represents the Canada Permanent in Saskatoon

and about the time the Governors met he was in Regina conferring with Mason, of the Canada Permanent here. He assured Mason that he has seen a promise, over your signature, that the University would not be located outside of Saskatoon. Mr. Brown had this information direct from Mason and also very near had a scrap with him while discussing the matter. The action of several Saskatoon people in coming down here, offering to give big odds on the result and their loud boastings before the Governors reached their decision, has been the cause of a lot of unfavorable comment—not from Tories alone but from a good many Liberals as well. The decision was a sore touch at the best without any unnecessary ‘rubbing it in.’²³

The “all’s-well-that-ends-well” editorial, which Morton used to characterize the general reaction to the university decision, also featured prominently in Jean E. Murray’s 1959 article, “The Contest for the University of Saskatchewan.” She cited the editorial at the conclusion of the essay, leaving the impression that while competition for the university was intense, once the decision had been made, everybody was soon reconciled to it. Jean Murray was the daughter of Walter Murray, and she owed her appointment to the university faculty in 1931 to her father’s willingness to pay her salary out of his own pocket.²⁴ Despite the family connection, the tone of her account is on the whole more neutral and matter-of-fact than that of Morton. She sketched in the political context and narrated the events with a minimum of emotional coloring. The reader is given to understand that while Scott was tempted to intervene, he did not do so. She hinted, without actually saying so, that he held back because of a letter her father wrote to him on 8 October 1908 warning of the dangers of tampering with the independence of the university. This thesis is not rigorously argued or defended, merely suggested. We know what we are supposed to believe, but we are not quite sure how we got there.

To her credit, she gave full value to the political ambience. Scott had made it government policy in 1906 to select Regina as the capital. The reasons were obvious. The city had already served as the capital of the North West Territories for close to a quarter of a century, and it was larger than Saskatoon (6,169 compared to 3,011 for Saskatoon; the population figures for 1911 were 30,213 and 12,004 respectively.)²⁵ Regina’s advantages did not discourage other cities from advancing their own claims so that the process of choosing the capital became highly contentious. Once the matter had been resolved, Scott went out of his way to express appreciation for the attitude that had been taken by the



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University of Saskatchewan History Professor Jean Murray offered a “matter-of-fact” assessment of the decision to locate the University in Saskatoon in an article published in 1959.

citizens of Saskatoon. He said they had not tried to embarrass him or apply undue pressure on the government to secure the capital, and this was something for which he was grateful.²⁶ Saskatoon had another reason for optimism. The Liberal platform in the 1905 election supported the principle of “decentralization of public institutions,”²⁷ which could be interpreted to mean that since Regina had been made the capital, Saskatoon would get the university.

Initially, Scott took the position, as stipulated in the University Act, that he would leave the decision on the university site to the Board of Governors. However, he appeared to adopt a different policy on 26 August 1908, when he stated publicly that, “if the Government was to be held fully responsible for selecting the university site, then the Government would make the selection.” He promised to proceed, if the other cabinet ministers agreed, with an amendment to the University Act “to take the duty off the Board of Governors. We coped with the capital location and [we are] not afraid to cope with the university location.”²⁸ This announcement greatly worried Walter Murray, who expressed his concerns in a letter to the Premier on 8 October 1908. Noting that party politics was the “great bane” of universities, he advised Scott that interference in the



Board of Governor member John (James) Dixon of Maple Creek, in his Mason's uniform. Dixon was a member of a committee which toured United States universities in 1908 and recommended building the university in Regina.

location of the university would set a precedent for interference in other matters—the appointment and dismissal of professors, the letting of contracts, or “the dozen and one things men wish to use to their own advantage.” The university would become “a prey to the schemes of designing men.”

Murray went on to say that if the government were to interfere, it could do so in one of two ways. The direct method was to amend the Act, which at least had the virtue of openness, frankness and courage. The indirect method was to employ “secret influence,” which would be “just as injurious and will beget suspicion.”²⁹ At the time Murray wrote the letter, the government had already made its three appointments to the Board—Archibald P. McNab, James MacKay, and Levi Thomson. McNab had been conspicuously outspoken on the university question. When he ran as the Liberal candidate for Saskatoon in the provincial election of 14 August 1908, he promised to resign his seat if the city did not get the university. Murray’s letter referred specifically to McNab, implying that his presence on the Board tainted the process of choosing a site for the university. Scott early in December 1908 raised McNab to the post of Minister of Public Works, which, in accordance with the parliamentary rules of the day, required him to resign his

seat and run in a by-election. The voters of Saskatoon returned him to the legislature by acclamation. One week before the by-election he resigned from the university Board of Governors, and Scott replaced him with W.J. Bell, another Saskatoon Liberal. Even the *Morning Leader* admitted that Bell was “undoubtedly expected” to vote for Saskatoon.³⁰ This meant that the situation that Murray had complained about had not changed in the slightest. Scott still had the means to apply “secret influence” to make sure that the university was given to Saskatoon.

Although the specifics of the Board’s vote were neither recorded nor made public, Walter Murray in 1938 said the tally was 6-3. University of Saskatchewan historian Michael Hayden argues that “Murray’s memory must have played a trick on him” because the vote was 5-4.³¹ There were 4 board members from the north, 4 from the south, and Murray, the ninth member, voted for Regina.³² Therefore, at least one of the members from the south must have voted for Saskatoon. If all the southern votes had been for Regina, then the outcome would have been 5-4 for Regina. Levi Thomson of Wolseley confessed in a letter to Walter Murray on 12 April 1909 that he voted for Saskatoon. He “betrayed the south,” as it were, but was he alone? Thomson stated in the same letter that Arthur Hitchcock of Moose Jaw voted for Regina. A. Forrest Angus from Regina was a Conservative, who almost certainly voted for his home city, which leaves John Dixon, a Liberal from Maple Creek. The evidence points to the fact that Dixon voted for Regina. Otherwise, as Hayden indicates, Thomson’s letter doesn’t make sense, specifically the part that reads, “I am the guilty party in the eyes of my Regina friends. I don’t feel at all guilty, but I can understand that they can feel that they have a serious grievance against the man who gave a South vote in favor of Saskatoon.” If Dixon had voted for Saskatoon, Thomson would not have been the “guilty party,” but merely *one* of the guilty parties. He would not have been “the man who gave a South vote in favor of Saskatoon,” but *one* of the men who did so. Moreover, Dixon had been a member of the committee that had toured U.S. universities in 1908, which led to a report favoring Regina. He remained popular in Regina and was invited in 1910 to serve on the board of Regina College. Hayden’s detective work leads to the conclusion that the vote must have been 5-4.³³

Levi Thomson, the only government appointee from the south, cast the critical vote. Morton described him as a representative of the “Farmers,” Jean Murray referred to him as “a Liberal from Wolseley,” and Hayden simply as “a Liberal.”³⁴ But was he was not just a person who voted Liberal; he was a party insider, a candidate in four elections, and a dispenser and recipient of government

patronage.³⁵ A lawyer by profession, he stood as the Liberal candidate for Qu'Appelle in the 1904 federal election, losing to his Conservative rival by 28 votes. He represented the Liberals in the 1905 provincial election, losing again, this time by 20 votes.³⁶ Shortly after the election, he wrote Scott congratulating him on the provincial victory and regretting having “failed to do our share toward building up your majority.”³⁷ Thomson did not run in the 1908 provincial election, but he actively supported the local Liberal candidate, and, three days after the election, gave the Premier a detailed account of what had happened: “Magee and I have been on the warpath pretty steadily since we got back. And our leading men here all fell into line and worked for Rosborough [the Liberal candidate] like men.” He went on to give the poll-by-poll results, which added up to a 48-vote margin of victory for the Conservative candidate.³⁸

Thomson dispensed political patronage in the Wolseley area³⁹ and was himself a beneficiary of government largesse. He served as Crown Prosecutor in Wolseley and received an Order-in-Council appointment in October 1910 as “Agent of the Attorney General in and for the Judicial District of Moosomin,” a position he held until December 1912.⁴⁰ He returned to active politics in 1911 winning election as a Liberal to the House of Commons, where he served for ten years.

Although Thomson informed Walter Murray that he voted the way he did “because I believed it to be in the best interests of the University and the Province,”⁴¹ his statement is compatible with Scott’s appointing him to the Board to swing the vote in Saskatoon’s favor. We know from Murray’s letter to Scott on 8 October 1908 that Scott had the means to interfere through “secret influence.” For the interference to have any hope of succeeding, it had to be applied to one of the southern votes. Thomson, the only government appointee from the south, was a well-connected Liberal deeply involved in the affairs of the party. The evidence points to the conclusion that he cast his ballot as a good soldier of the Liberal party who did what was expected of him.

One month after the decision was made to locate the university in Saskatoon, Thomson showed up at Scott’s office with a delegation from Wolseley. He asked that Attorney General Turgeon be available to discuss “court house matters in all their bearings” and that Calder, the minister responsible for telephones, be there to talk “along telephone lines.”⁴² This suggests that Thomson was intimately involved in various government-funded projects in the constituency. In the same letter, Thomson alluded to fact that “Regina lawyers are trying to make trouble for us by endeavoring to form a law

school in Regina.” He seemed very much at ease discussing university matters with Scott.⁴³ The Premier in a letter to loyal party supporter 11 June 1909 denied that the government had tried to influence the Board,⁴⁴ but it would have been extremely foolish for him to say anything else.

Walter Murray was sure that politics was involved in the location decision, and in the immediate aftermath of the vote, he considered resigning in protest.⁴⁵ As he had made clear in his 8 October 1908 letter to Scott, government interference in deciding the location of the university would set a dangerous precedent that compromised the integrity of the institution and its future development. What he had feared had come to pass. He apparently did not believe Thomson’s claim that his vote had not been motivated by political considerations. After consulting with university chancellor E.L. Wetmore and his friend, Robert Falconer, president of the University of Toronto, Murray decided to stay. Resignation would have signaled that the vote had been manipulated, and the university would have been thrown into political turmoil.

Thereafter, Murray consistently maintained in public that politics had never entered into any aspect of the life of the university.⁴⁶ Privately, however, he told Walter P.



A.F. Angus, ca. 1914. Angus, a Conservative, was elected to the Board of Governors by the University Senate.

SAB AB 830, James Brown Scrapbook, p. 40

Thompson, who joined the university in 1913 and served as president from 1949 to 1959, that “he was certain that the choice of Saskatoon over Regina for the site of the university was arranged through the appointment of certain members of the board and the pressure brought to bear on them.”⁴⁷ Murray in 1941 wrote an essay on the founding of the University of Saskatchewan for the Royal Society of Canada. He discussed the location decision in sufficient detail to give the final vote count (erroneously), but gave no hint of the government’s interference in the process. On the contrary, he led his audience to believe the opposite was true: “In accordance with the tradition started by Mr. Haultain, and cordially supported by the Hon. Walter Scott, the political leaders agreed to leave the decision to the Board of Governors unhampered by outside influence.”⁴⁸ The complexity and murkiness of history had been simplified and distilled into the “blissful clarity” of myth.

Throughout his presidency, Murray followed a policy of blocking efforts to establish a degree-granting institution in Regina. Despite Arthur Morton’s claim that the decision to locate the university in Saskatoon was “accepted by the public with remarkable acquiescence,”⁴⁹ this was far from being the case. Opposition emerged immediately after the decision was made and continued intermittently and with varying degrees of intensity into the 1950s. The full story of this opposition has not been told and appears only sketchily in the existing historical literature.⁵⁰ A few days after the decision was made to locate the university in Saskatoon, Regina alderman F.N. Darke proposed in a letter to the *Morning Leader* that an additional storey be added to the two-storey collegiate building then under construction in the city. The third storey, he suggested, could be used for a medical college and a law school. “These are institutions,” he said, “which belong to the city for which we will have to provide and which cannot be taken from us, if our citizens are true to their own best interests.”⁵¹ Then in June 1909, the Saskatchewan Methodist Conference discussed the possibility of establishing a residential college in Regina. Although the immediate goal was the provision of secondary education for the youth of the city and surrounding area, long-term plans called for the introduction of first-year university courses. The General Conference of the Methodist Church approved the project, and the provincial government granted a charter of incorporation on 23 April 1911.⁵² It was to have been called “Saskatchewan College,” but when Walter Murray objected, the name was changed to “Regina College.” He also intervened behind the scenes to ensure that the college did not receive any government funding, subsequently reporting to Robert Falconer, “Why then should we fear though the Methodists rage and Regina imagines vain things?”⁵³

In 1925 Regina College succeeded in obtaining junior college status in affiliation with the University of Saskatchewan, which meant that it could offer the first year of the three-year Bachelor of Arts course. Students had to transfer to Saskatoon or to some other university to complete their degree. As the pioneer era drew to a close and high schools became more common in southern Saskatchewan, fewer young people found it necessary to move to a larger centre to receive a secondary education. This led to a decrease in the number of students enrolled at Regina College and staying in the residence. As student numbers declined, the college began to experience financial difficulties. President Ernest A. Stapleford dealt with the crisis by trying to expand to a full degree program, but he encountered stiff opposition from the university. Walter Murray, who sat on the Board of Trustees of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, arranged in 1932 for the Foundation to study the question of whether the province should have one university or two. The principal investigators were W.S. Learned of the Carnegie Foundation and E.W. Wallace, Principal of Victoria University, Toronto. Their report recommended against Stapleford’s plan and delivered a heavy blow to Regina College. Murray praised it as a “masterpiece,” and said, “I believe it has disposed of the problem for at least twenty years.”⁵⁴

The financial crisis of the 1930s depression forced Regina College to the brink of bankruptcy, and in 1934 it was taken over by the university. The latter acquired ownership of the buildings and property, valued at more than \$800,000, in exchange for assuming a debt close to \$100,000 and promising to maintain the institution as a junior college. Murray secured a \$50,000 grant from the Carnegie Foundation to help cover the debt. Ironically, the Foundation had earlier refused Stapleford the identical amount, which he had intended to use to keep the college operating as an independent institution. Murray expressed satisfaction at this turn of events: “Great as was the operating loss of 1934-35, it is more than offset by the advantages resulting from the attainment of the University’s great objective—to be the one recipient of state aid for University purposes and the sole degree conferring power in the province.”⁵⁵

Regina College over the course of the next twenty-five years made numerous requests for permission to expand beyond the first year Arts program, all of which the university turned down. Dean William Ramsay in 1938 endorsed a petition from a group of public school teachers in Regina, who asked to be allowed to take more than five classes (five classes constituting one year’s work) towards their B.A. degree.⁵⁶ Ramsay’s successor, Steward Basterfield advanced similar petitions in 1946

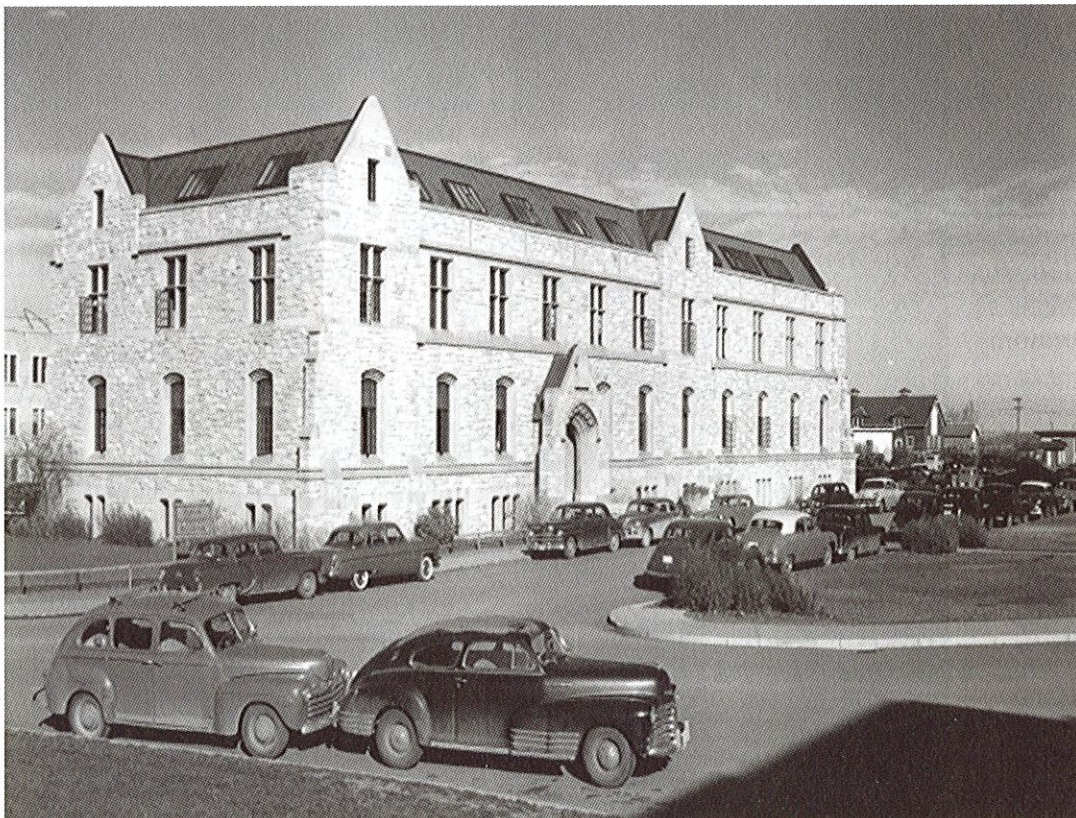
and 1950.⁵⁷ Although both men had been faculty members in Saskatoon for many years prior to taking up the deanship in Regina, each became an advocate for Regina College. Ramsay, upon resigning, strongly criticized the “negative attitude” of the University Council: “The staff here and I have given, I think, loyal service. The University Council should be loyal to us.”⁵⁸

The arrival of the veterans after the Second World War temporarily boosted enrolment, but when they left, the number of students fell drastically. The situation was so serious that the Government of Saskatchewan in 1949 asked the university to consider closing down the college as a cost-saving measure. The university declined to do so in part because, according to the terms of the 1934 takeover agreement, a commitment had been given to maintain the college. If it were closed, the buildings and property would revert to the original owners.⁵⁹ In addition, the college served a useful public relations function. It was tangible evidence of university activity in Regina and gave residents of the city one more reason to support university fundraising campaigns.⁶⁰

When W.A. Riddell was appointed dean in 1950, he renewed the appeal for expansion beyond the first year. The university rejected the proposal for the usual reason—it would signal the development of a second university, which it claimed the province could not afford.⁶¹ Since the college by 1954 offered 30 credit classes, it was becoming increasingly difficult to explain to students why they were allowed to take only 5.⁶² Frank

Wagg, the registrar for many years and also a United Church minister, remarked uncharitably that there would be no change in policy until there had been “a few funerals in Saskatoon.”⁶³ Riddell came to believe that while most people in the university viewed the college with indifference, others “hoped that it would just disappear.”⁶⁴

Beginning in 1952, a group of Regina citizens began to agitate for a full degree program. Their efforts were spearheaded by George H. Barr, whose uncle, G.W. Brown, had been the first chairman of the board of governors of Regina College. Barr, as a young man just beginning his law career, had attended meetings of prominent supporters of the Scott government held in April 1909 shortly after the Board of Governors voted to locate the university in Saskatoon. Facts had been disclosed, according to Barr, “showing that we had been betrayed by the politicians and that the youth of our city and this part of the province were sacrificed on the altar of political expediency.”⁶⁵ Forty-five years later, on 19 March 1954, 150 people gathered at City Hall to discuss the same topic. They organized a Regina College Citizens’ Committee and passed a resolution calling on the government “to take the necessary steps to give Regina College its rightful status.” Specifically, they wanted an amount earmarked in the provincial budget to make provision for a B.A. course in Regina.⁶⁶ Father Athol Murray, President of Notre Dame College at Wilcox, not only endorsed the proposal, but went a step further. What Regina needed, he said, was not just a



Field Husbandry Building, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, ca. 1956. Post-war demand for university education filled the campus and renewed calls for a university in Regina.

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degree course, but a “full-fledged, chartered UNIVERSITY OF REGINA [emphasis in the original].”⁶⁷

Woodrow Lloyd, the Minister of Education in the CCF government, asked for an official response from the university to the Regina College Citizens’ Committee resolution. A joint committee of the Board of Governors and the Senate prepared a report, which they duly presented to the minister on 25 May 1954. It defended the status quo, arguing that if the government were to act on the Regina request, “it would mean direct governmental interference in University affairs.”⁶⁸ The issue flared up in the 1956 provincial election campaign. A.H. McDonald, leader of the Liberal Party and of the Official Opposition, declared his support for a degree program in Regina. Woodrow Lloyd immediately attacked him for turning the university into a “political football.” Marjorie Cooper, a CCF candidate in Regina, said in a radio broadcast: “The decision regarding an arts course for Regina College is one that must be made by the university authorities, not by the government.” It was a “real tragedy,” she added, that the Liberals had brought the matter into the political arena.⁶⁹ The *Regina Leader-Post* observed that the issue had been handled quite differently in Alberta. When Opposition party members introduced a motion in the legislature to expand university facilities at Lethbridge and Calgary, no one had criticized them for interfering in the internal affairs of the University of Alberta based in Edmonton.⁷⁰ In Saskatchewan, by contrast, if a politician suggested a degree program somewhere other than Saskatoon, he was criticized for interfering with the university.

The incident cut to the heart of the myth. The fact that the university regarded government action to establish a degree course in Regina as an infringement of its autonomy showed how closely the identity of the University of Saskatchewan was bound up with its status as the only university in the province and its

ability to operate with minimal government interference. Monopoly and autonomy were not just goals of the university; they were regarded as part of its inherent nature. In Barthes’ terms, if the signifier (University of Saskatchewan) and signified (monopoly and autonomy) were one and the same, what was the point of discussing the relationship of the one to the other? Myth, he wrote, is “*depoliticized speech*” [emphasis in the original], that is, a type of speech that is beyond politics or debate.⁷¹ Thus, CCF politicians in 1956 were able to say, and be taken at least half seriously, that the Liberals were not allowed to talk about a revision to the University of Saskatchewan’s monopoly status. The monopoly provision in the 1907 University Act was deemed valid until the university said it was not valid.

By 1959 the pressure of baby boom enrolments made Saskatoon’s position untenable. The Board of Governors, aware of the need for large sums of money for the construction of new buildings on the campus, contemplated a major capital fund raising campaign. They hired G.A. Brakeley and Company, a firm that had conducted campaigns for a number of other universities, to prepare a preliminary study. Brakeley reported in May 1959 that there was a reasonable chance that \$2.5 million could be raised provided certain conditions were met. The provincial government would have to match donations dollar-for-dollar, and the university would have to make a clear statement of its policy regarding



Plans for the construction of a new campus in south-east Regina were well underway when this photograph was taken in 1962. Pictured from L-R: J.T.

Spinks, President of the University of Saskatchewan; A.E. Blakeney, Minister of Education; E Leslie, Chairman of the Board of Governors; M. Yamasaki, Architect; and W.A.Riddell, Principal of Regina College.

Regina College. The report made the latter point “very strongly.” If all the new development occurred in Saskatoon, Regina and southern Saskatchewan, whose support was needed, would not get behind the campaign.⁷²

Accordingly, University Council on 6 July 1959 approved a resolution to establish a degree program in Regina.⁷³ The Senate followed suit, giving its consent on 8 July 1959.⁷⁴ The decision appeared to have been made by the university without direct pressure from the government. Although Woodrow Lloyd had decided by December 1958 that the time had come for the expansion of facilities in Regina,⁷⁵ there is no evidence that he forced his view upon W.P. Thompson, the President of the University. At the same time, Thompson knew the way the wind was blowing. His parting words in November 1959 as he handed over the presidency to his successor, J.W. T. Spinks, were, “But don’t forget where the money comes from.”⁷⁶

Regina College introduced the second year arts course in the 1961 and the third year in 1964. The change in status led to an official change of name on 1 July 1961 from Regina College to University of Saskatchewan, Regina Campus. The Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix* claimed that Regina was trying to build its reputation by borrowing prestige from the parent campus. A more fitting name, the paper said, would have been “Pile-O’ Bones U” or “Palliser’s Prairie Paradise College of Knowledge.” The new name might not make any difference, the editorial went on to say, since Regina’s hard water might “atrophy the brain cells” and doom the whole venture. A cartoon contrasted Saskatoon’s well-developed and flourishing campus with the dry scrub plain that was to be the future home of the university in Regina [figure 1].

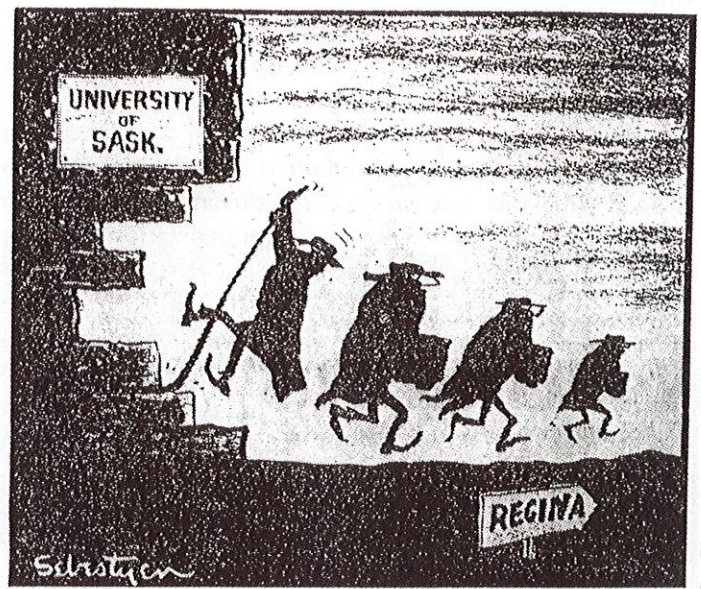
Optimism ran high in Regina as the new campus sprang up on the southeastern edge of the city. Minister of Education Allan Blakeney during the budget debate in March 1961 spoke glowingly of the day when “a great new university will arise in Regina.” He said that the campus would start with a college of Arts and Science, and in due time professional colleges, such as Commerce and Law, would follow. They would either be established as new entities or transferred from the Saskatoon campus.⁷⁷ R.H. Macdonald, a Saskatoon professor and member of Senate, protested vigorously that such decisions were for the university, not the government, to make.⁷⁸ A Saskatoon cartoon depicted thieves in the night dismantling University of Saskatchewan buildings stone by stone, and hauling them off to Regina [figure 2]. Blakeney replied that he was merely repeating what President Spinks had said—that the university planned first to set up a college of Arts and Science in Regina and

REGINA ROOTERS



Star-Phoenix (3 July, 1961)

Figure 1. This cartoon depicts the proposed location of the Regina campus as a barren wasteland.



Star-Phoenix (7 March, 1961)

Figure 2. Some equated the construction of the Regina campus with the dismantling of the Saskatoon campus.

then “examine the possibility of establishing colleges of commerce and law, either by transfer of those facilities from the campus of Saskatoon or by the establishment of second colleges here in Regina.”⁷⁹

Although no transfers ever took place, the university in the 1960s and early 1970s established at the Regina Campus professional colleges in Education, Engineering, Administration, Graduate Studies and Research, and a School of Social Work. Competition between the two campuses led to strained relations and disagreement over who should do what. The NDP government under Premier Allan Blakeney introduced in April 1973 Bill 90,

which preserved the one-university concept, while giving each campus its own president, board of governors and senate. A board of regents was to be responsible for allocating resources to the two campuses, but with no power over academic policy or the hiring of staff. Saskatoon for the most part opposed the bill. Spinks characterized it as the exercise of “naked and brutal political power... removing any real autonomy from the university.”⁸⁰ Blakeney contended that the proposed board of regents had the same composition as the board of governors—half government appointees and half non-government. The difference was that the existing board received reports and recommendations from Spinks’ office; the new board would rely on government personnel for advice and information. Blakeney bowed before the storm of protest, withdrew Bill 90, and appointed a Royal Commission to study the issue and make recommendations. Chaired by former Supreme Court justice Emmett Hall, the Commission received briefs and held hearings through the summer of 1973.

John Archer, Principal of Regina Campus, presented a brief advocating the establishment of a separate university in Regina, one that offered both liberal arts and professional degree programs. It would be a “true university” engaged in teaching, research, and service to the community. Archer maintained that while there was a need for the overall rationalization of university activities in the province, such rationalization had been based on a relationship between “equal partners,” not “senior and junior campuses.” He argued that the existing one-university model carried too much psychological baggage, “as much hindrance to understanding in Saskatoon as it is an irritant in Regina.”⁸¹ The brief from the Saskatoon Campus Council envisaged one university in Saskatoon providing “a complete range of courses,” and another in Regina confined to “pre-professional courses, liberal arts courses, and community-oriented courses.”⁸²

The Hall Commission in December 1973 recommended two separate universities for the province. It noted that Regina’s 1973-74 enrolment of 3,417 full-time and 2,280 part-time students exceeded that of five universities in Ontario, two in Manitoba, one in Alberta, one in British Columbia, five in Nova Scotia, two in New Brunswick, and one in Prince Edward Island. The Commission asserted: “The University of Regina has a right to expect to be something more than just a liberal arts college...” The statement, on the face of it, seems odd. What did “rights” have to do with deciding whether Saskatchewan should have one university or two? Barthes’ conceptualization of myth throws light on the language that was used. Myth is a type of speech in which one term signifies another term, analogous to an icon on a

computer screen. Clicking on the icon always produces the same result; there will be no change unless the computer is re-programmed. It is pointless to argue with an icon or symbol. This is why the Hall Commission, having made an argument for two separate universities, instinctively felt the need to break out of the mythic discourse that paralyzed the discussion. It made the declaration that Regina Campus had the “right” to be a university.

The Blakeney government in April 1974 introduced legislation implementing the major recommendations of the Hall report. Just as it was necessary for historians operating within the framework of the myth to de-emphasize the role of government in locating the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon in 1907, it was equally necessary to highlight its role in creating a university in Regina in 1974. Michael Hayden in *Seeking a Balance: University of Saskatchewan, 1907-1982*, placed a great deal of emphasis on the provision in the legislation that removed Spinks from the presidency and made campus principals, Robert Begg and John Archer, the acting presidents respectively of the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina. Hayden asserted that this action set a dangerous precedent: “It was now a matter of time—when would a government replace another president? When would a government abolish senate or council? When would a government appoint or dismiss members of the board of governors to change the academic direction of the university profoundly?”⁸³

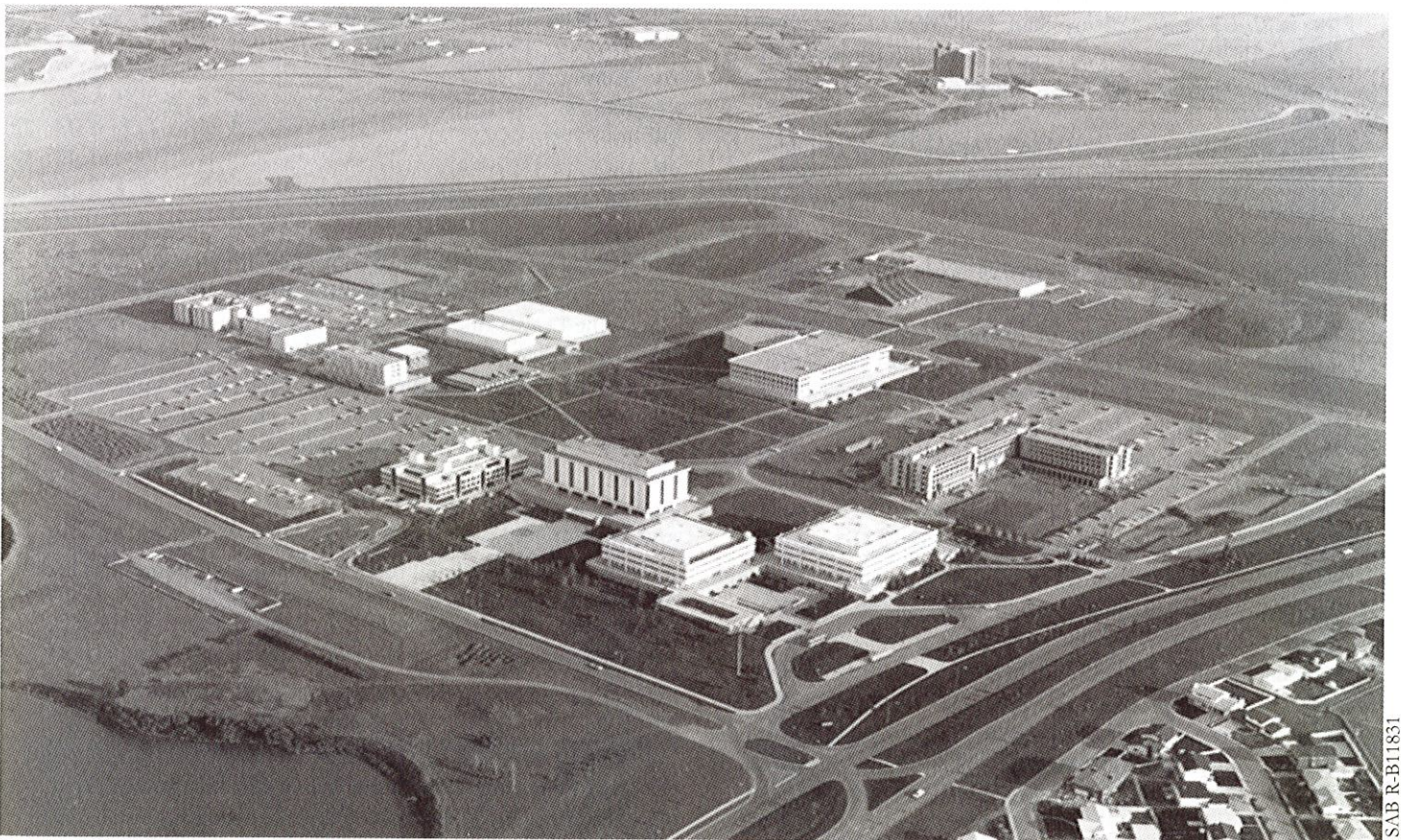
A case can be made that the legislation was not as precedent setting as Hayden claimed it to have been. Although it is true that Spinks was removed from office, the circumstances were unusual and not likely to occur again. In 1974 either President Spinks or Principal Begg was redundant. The University of Saskatchewan did not need two presidents. Some faculty members supported Spinks and others favored Begg, while a third group was “primarily concerned about preventing the establishment of the precedent of the government dismissing university officials and appointing others.”⁸⁴ The Saskatoon Campus Council voted on 30 January 1974 to postpone the change in university structure until 30 June 1975, giving time for new boards to be appointed and new presidents selected. This would have allowed Spinks to serve as president one more year until his retirement at age 67.⁸⁵ Begg thought this was an impractical solution, because it would prolong the uncertainty and instability at the university for another year: “The best plans and decisions are not made under these circumstances and a prolongation until mid-1975 would inflict additional damage and I consider the potential gains very dubious.”⁸⁶

The government followed Begg's advice, and the legislation removed President Spinks and Vice-President Lloyd Barber from their positions as of 30 June 1974. Barber had resigned the previous February, but Spinks held on to his office. When the Blakeney government first came to power, he had offered to resign if the government did not want him. Now he refused to go, presumably because he felt that an important principle was at stake.⁸⁷ The key question is whether the events of 1974 seriously damaged the university's autonomy. Hayden argued that they did, in part because they represented the culmination of a long process of government encroachment on university autonomy since the 1930s. He acknowledged, however, that "constitutionally, the University of Saskatchewan [was] now in no worse position than other universities in Canada and many throughout the English-speaking world. The shame is that originally it had been so much more independent."⁸⁸

Hayden also stated that the creation of the University of Regina was probably inevitable. Although Saskatoon tried to neutralize the demand for a second university, "public spirit [in Regina] and political influence made that impossible."⁸⁹ As we have seen, the decision to locate the university in Saskatoon was itself a product of "political influence." Arthur Morton played down this fact and tried to create the impression that the general

public readily accepted the policy that Saskatoon should have the only university in the province. Jean Murray acknowledged Scott's attempt to exert political influence, but intimated that he had been dissuaded from this course of action. Like Morton, she downplayed the resistance in Regina to the one-university model. Hayden discussed more fully the political factors behind the 1909 decision and the persistent campaign in Regina to modify it. His account of the legislation of 1974, which created two separate universities, emphasized the loss of university autonomy, especially the bad precedent set by the government's removal of President Spinks from office. Monopoly and autonomy were always partnered in the University of Saskatchewan myth. It was no coincidence that when monopoly was lost, autonomy was considered to have been gravely imperiled.

The myth can be detected in interpretations of the 1909 decision to locate the university in Saskatoon, accounts of public reaction to the decision, university policies that characterized the idea of a degree program in Regina as a "dangerous heresy," the attempt to stifle political debate in the 1950s on the proposal to establish a second university, the Hall Commission's counter-mythical assertion of the "right" of Regina Campus to university status, and the emphasis given to the negative impact of the 1974 legislation on university autonomy. The myth made it difficult to think about an alternative to the one-



Aerial view of the University of Saskatchewan, Regina Campus, 1972.

university model for higher education in Saskatchewan and helped account for the fact that the University of Regina was the last of the new universities that emerged in the 1960s in Western Canada to gain its independence.⁹⁰ From 1907 to 1974 the University of Saskatchewan signified that there was one university in Saskatchewan and that it operated with as much freedom as possible from government interference. The myth was powerful, and its effects have reverberated through the educational and cultural history of Saskatchewan.

Endnotes

- 1 Semiotics is the theory and analysis of signs and significations, and Roland Barthes (1915-1980) is considered one of its foremost practitioners. Building on the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, he developed a theory of myth that has had great influence on modern cultural studies. His work influenced the thought of psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, socio-historian Michel Foucault, and philosopher Jacques Derrida. For more on Barthes see John Lechte, *Fifty Key Contemporary Thinkers: From Structuralism to Postmodernity* (New York: Routledge, 1994) and Annette Lavers, *Roland Barthes: Structuralism and After* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982).
- 2 Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, selected and translated from the French by Annette Lavers, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972), 109. The literature on myth is vast, including such recent studies as Colin Grant, *Myths We Live By* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa, Press, 1998), Robert W. Brockway, *Myth from Ice Age to Mickey Mouse* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993) and Robert A. Segal, *Theorizing About Myth* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999).
- 3 *Ibid.*, 129.
- 4 James M. Pitsula, *An Act of Faith: The Early Years of Regina College* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1988), 135.
- 5 Barthes, 143.
- 6 Barthes, 120.
- 7 Jonathan F. Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 3.
- 8 Jenea Tallentire, "Strategies of Memory: History, Social Memory, and the Community," *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, 34, 67, May 2001, 198. On social memory, see James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).
- 9 Signification, however, is not the same as identification. There is obviously more to the identity of the University of Saskatchewan than monopoly/autonomy.
- 10 Arthur S. Morton, *Saskatchewan: The Making of a University*, revised and edited by Carlyle King (Toronto: published for the University of Saskatchewan by the University of Toronto Press, 1959), 18.
- 11 The line dividing "north" and "south" is hard to draw with precision, but it probably was about half way between Regina and Saskatoon. As it turned out, the board members from the north were all from Saskatoon or Prince Albert, and the south members came from Regina, Moose Jaw, Maple Creek, and Wolseley.
- 12 Although Morton's book was published in 1959, it is not known when he wrote the manuscript. At the time of his death in 1945, he left a 440-page typescript of an incomplete, "History of the University of Saskatchewan from 1907 to 1937." Carlyle King, a colleague in the English Department, edited a portion of the draft and had it published in book form. Morton, v.
- 13 *The Morning Leader* (Regina), 9 April 1909.
- 14 Morton, 50-51.
- 15 *The West* (Regina), 14 April 1909.
- 16 Cited in *Morning Leader*, 17 April 1909; cited in Jean E. Murray, "The Contest for the University of Saskatchewan," *Saskatchewan History*, 12, 1, Winter 1959, 21.
- 17 *Morning Leader*, 16 April 1909.
- 18 *West*, 21 April 1909.
- 19 Morton, 52.
- 20 SAB, Records of the Department of Provincial Secretary Companies Branch, R-348, Defunct Company Files, Leader-Post Publishing Co., Ltd., file 5314. See also J.W. Brennan, "Press and Party in Saskatchewan, 1914-1929," *Saskatchewan History*, 27, 3, Autumn 1974, 82, and *Historical Directory of Saskatchewan Newspapers*, prepared by Christine MacDonald (Saskatchewan Archives Board: Regina and Saskatoon, 1984), 61-63.
- 21 Gordon L. Barnhart, "Peace, Progress and Prosperity": *A Biography of Saskatchewan's First Premier, T. Walter Scott* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2000), 78.
- 22 SAB, Walter Scott Papers, M 1, I, J.W. McLeod to Walter Scott, 17 April 1909.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 20 April 1909.
- 24 Michael Hayden, *Seeking a Balance: The University of Saskatchewan, 1907-1982* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1983), 345.
- 25 Government of Canada, *Report on the Census of the Northwest Territories*, 1906; Census of Canada, 1911.
- 26 Murray, 3.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 9.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 13.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 14-15.
- 30 *The Morning Leader*, 16 April 1909.
- 31 Hayden, 44.
- 32 Murray favored placing the university in the seat of government because it would be better known and better supported by the Legislators, close to the Provincial Library, and capable of giving greater service to the State. He noted that the University of Wisconsin, located at the capital, "renders its State from three to five times as much service as the Universities which are distant from their capitals." Morton, 51.
- 33 Hayden, 43-44.
- 34 Morton, ; Murray, 7; Hayden, 44.
- 35 The well-oiled Liberal party machine in this period has been described in David E. Smith, *Prairie Liberalism: The Liberal Party in Saskatchewan 1905-1971* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975).
- 36 Information about Levi Thomson can be found in Mrs. Ashley Thomson, "Levi Thomson and His Descendants," *Bridging the Past: Wolseley and District, 1880-1980* (Wolseley and District History Committee, 1981), 464. See also "Levi Thomson," in John Hawkes, *The Story of Saskatchewan and Its People*, vol. 3 (Chicago-Regina: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1924), 1719-1720.

- 37 SAB, M 1, II 2, Levi Thomson to Walter Scott, 18 December 1905.
- 38 SAB, M 1, I, Levi Thomson to Walter Scott, 17 August 1908.
- 39 This was evident from Thomson's correspondence with Scott. A letter to Scott on 28 March 1910 enclosed an application from Mrs. C.J. Heazle for a job in the Land Titles Office. C.E. Sheldon-Williams applied on 10 October 1910 on behalf of her sister, who "is very anxious to secure a clerkship in the Land Titles Office by the New Year... Mr. Levi Thomson has kindly promised to write to either Mr. Scott or Mr. Turgeon [the Attorney General] on her behalf." SAB, M 1, IV, 15, Private Secretary to Levi Thomson, 30 March 1910; SAB, M 1, IV, 15, C.E. Sheldon Williams to J.A. Calder, 10 October 1910.
- 40 SAB, Government of Saskatchewan, Executive Council, O.C. 681/10, 27 October 1910; O.C. 1317/12, 2 December 1912.
- 41 Hayden, 44.
- 42 I interpret this to mean that Thomson wanted to talk about the extension of telephone service in the Wolsley area.
- 43 SAB, M 1, I, Levi Thomson to Walter Scott, 12 May 1909.
- 44 Ibid., Walter Scott to Mrs. E.F. Grover, 11 June 1909.
- 45 Hayden, 44. Morton says that Murray was disappointed and tempted to resign, but he does not attribute the disappointment to Murray's belief that politics had been involved in the decision. He suggests rather that Murray was disappointed that the Board had not followed his advice to give the university to Regina. (Morton, 52).
- 46 Hayden, 44.
- 47 W.P. Thompson, *The University of Saskatchewan: A Personal History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 219.
- 48 Walter Murray, "The University of Saskatchewan," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 3rd series, section 2, 35, 1941, 112.
- 49 Morton, 51.
- 50 A partial exception is James M. Pitsula, *An Act of Faith: The Early Years of Regina College*.
- 51 Morning Leader, 12 April 1909.
- 52 Pitsula, 8.
- 53 Ibid., 3, 8.
- 54 Walter Murray to Suzzalo, 14 June 1932. Cited in David R. Murray and Robert A. Murray, *The Prairie Builder: Walter Murray of Saskatchewan* (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1984), 191.
- 55 Hayden, 169.
- 56 University of Regina Archives [URA], URA, Principal's Papers, 75-2, 800-14, J.S. Thomson to William Ramsay, 25 October 1938.
- 57 URA, 75-2, 800-6, W.P. Thompson to Dean Basterfield, 14 August 1946; 75-2, 800.7, Dean Basterfield to W.P. Thompson, 6 February 1950.
- 58 URA, 75-2, 800-20, William Ramsay to J.S. Thomson, 20 May 1940.
- 59 URA, Regina College Board of Governors, Executive Minutes, P.E. Mackenzie, Chairman, Board of Governors, University of Saskatchewan, to Regina College Board of Governors, 19 January 1934.
- 60 URA, W.A. Riddell, *How Well I Remember*, 44.
- 61 URA, Deans'/Principal's Office Files, 75-7, 200.1, J.F. Leddy to W.A. Riddell, 18 April 1951.
- 62 URA, 75-7, 506.1-1, "Not submitted to everyone," WAR, April/1954
- 63 URA, 75-7, 300.1-2, F.E. Wagg to W.A. Riddell, 27 April 1952
- 64 W.A. Riddell, 44.
- 65 SAB, G.H. Barr Papers, R-8, 36, ¾, G.H. Barr to E.W. Stapleford, 15 January 1952.
- 66 SAB, W.S. Lloyd Papers, R-61.3 E-25, 22/37, Resolution, 19 March 1954.
- 67 URA, 75-2, 1500-1, Rev. Athol Murray, "Letter to the Editor," *Leader-Post*, 2 April 1954.
- 68 SAB, T.C. Douglas Papers, R-33.1 V 224 (5-3) 7/11, W.P. Thompson to W.S. Lloyd, 25 May 1954.
- 69 URA, 75-2, 1500-3, "MLA Says College Hurt," *Leader-Post*, 3 May 1956.
- 70 URA, 75-2, 1500-2, "Suggestions for the Opposition," *Leader-Post*, 3 March 1956.
- 71 Barthes, 143.
- 72 URA, University of Saskatchewan, Board of Governors, Minutes and Agendas, 13 May 1959.
- 73 Hayden, 237.
- 74 SAB, R-61.3 E-25 36/37, Minutes of a Meeting of the University Senate, 8 July 1959.
- 75 SAB, R-33.1 V 224 (5-3) 10/11, W.S. Lloyd to T.C. Douglas, 30 December 1958.
- 76 John Spinks, *Two Blades of Grass: An Autobiography* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1980), 93.
- 77 URA, 75-2, 1500.5, "Law, Commerce Colleges May be Moved to Regina," *Leader-Post*, 3 March 1961.
- 78 URA, 75-2, 1500.5, "Blakeney Said Overlooking Government, Varsity Separation," *Leader-Post*, 6 March 1961.
- 79 URA, 75-2, 1500.5, "Unwarranted Charge—Blakeney," *Leader-Post*, 7 March 1961.
- 80 URA, Vice-President University of Saskatchewan Fonds, 81-12, 5017.1, "Spinks Says Gov't Aim to Control University," *Leader-Post*, 11 April 1973
- 81 URA, 80-38, Principal's/President's Papers, 302.11-2, John Archer, "Submission to the Commission on University Structure," 20 June 1973
- 82 SAB, R-565, III 137a, Summary of Saskatoon Campus Council Brief re: Administrative Structure of the University.
- 83 Hayden, 289.
- 84 Ibid., 283.
- 85 SAB, R-565, III 158a, J.W.T. Spinks to A.E. Blakeney, 11 July 1974.
- 86 Hayden, 284.
- 87 Spinks, 144.
- 88 Hayden, 290.
- 89 Ibid., 287.
- 90 University of Calgary acquired degree-granting status in 1966; University of Victoria, 1963; Simon Fraser University, 1965; University of Lethbridge, 1967; University of Winnipeg, 1967; Brandon University, 1967. Walter H. Johns, *A History of the University of Alberta, 1908-1969* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1981), 368; A.G. Bedford, *The University of Winnipeg: A History of the Founding Colleges* (Toronto: published for the University of Winnipeg by University of Toronto Press, 1976), 372; C.G. Stone and S. Joan Garnett, *Brandon College: A History, 1899-1967* (Brandon: Brandon University, 1969), 200; Simon Fraser University Calendar, 2002-2003.

People & Places

Destroyed by Fire

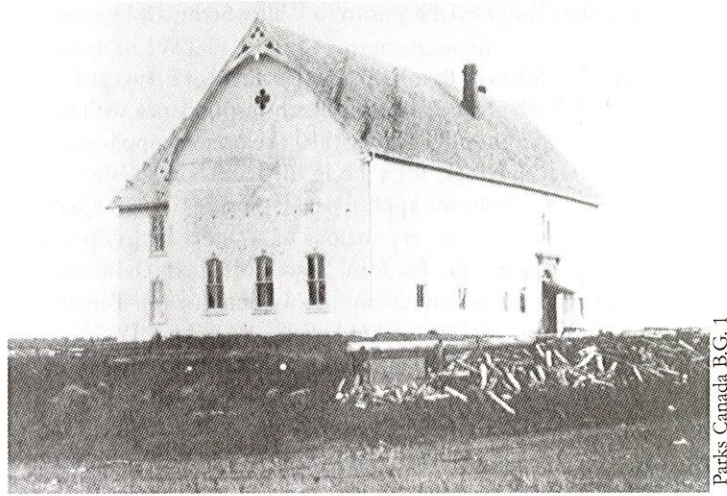
by Frank Korvemaker

Too often, when reading through a history of some site or structure, we come across that irreversible phrase "... it was destroyed by fire ...". On June 7, 2003, fire claimed yet another historic building. This time it was one of Saskatchewan's best-known landmarks, Old Government House National Historic Site in Battleford, the first permanent seat of government for Canada's North West Territories.

Prior to 1876, the North-West Territories, then covering over 2/3 of Canada, was administered by a Lieutenant Governor in Red River and a distant government in Ottawa. The *North-West Territories Act* of 1876 provided for a resident lieutenant governor who was to be assisted by an appointed council. Battleford was selected as the Territorial capital.

While suitable buildings were being built at Battleford, the Mounted Police barracks at Swan River, known as Fort Livingstone, served as the temporary seat of government. The first session of the newly created council was held here in March 1877.

Frank Korvemaker has spent the past twenty-five years researching historic buildings in Saskatchewan. He is currently the Research and Restoration Advisor for the Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation.



Above: Government House as it appeared shortly after it opened in 1877.

Left: Battleford photographer Menno Fieguth captured several stunning pictures of the fire which destroyed Government House on June 7, 2003.

The new Government House at Battleford was to serve a dual function: as a residence for the Lieutenant Governor and his family as well as accommodating government offices and a meeting place for the Territorial Council. The large L-shaped two-storey structure with a steeply pitched gable roof strove to express an image of authority. Although made of post-on-sill log construction, it was covered with siding, to give it a more dignified appearance. The building was completed in 1877 and anchored the cluster of buildings overlooking Battleford on what was called Government Ridge.

The Territorial Council met in Battleford only three times before an Order-in-Council of March 27, 1883 transferred the capital from Battleford to Regina.

In May 1883, the vacant building and surrounding land was transferred to the Indian Department and was converted into western Canada's first Indian Industrial



Several more windows were added to Government House when it was transformed into the first Indian Industrial School.

School, under the direction of the Church of England. The school was closed during the North West Conflict of 1885, and converted into the headquarters for Colonel Otter and his troops, who christened it "Fort Otter." In the winter of 1885-86 the building was requisitioned as a barracks for the "A" Battery by the Militia Department.

By spring 1886, the Indian Industrial School had reopened. Over the next few years, Old Government House underwent a number of alterations to increase space and improve residential accommodations. However, the basic elements of the House could still be clearly distinguished. The School closed in 1914.

The vacant complex was leased to the Western Canadian Union Conference of the Seventh Day Adventists in 1916, and renamed the "Battleford Academy". The Adventists remodeled the building dramatically. The original steeply-pitched roof was replaced with a third



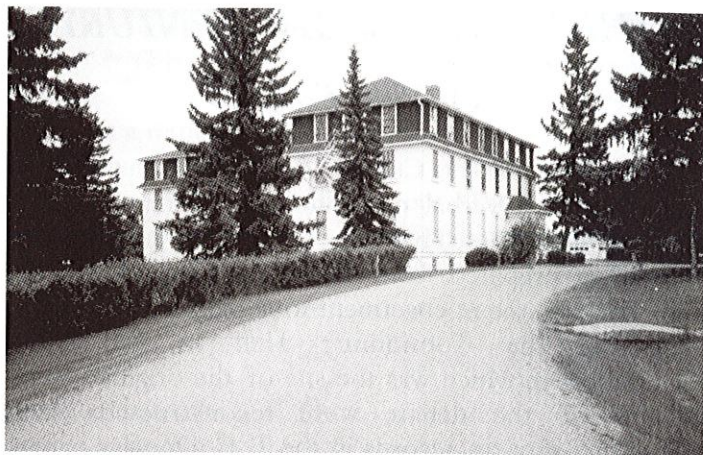
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Changes made by the Seventh Day Adventists, who bought the building in 1916, included a new roof line.

storey and modified mansard roof. Also, the whole building was lifted up and a new, full concrete basement was constructed. While the basic floor plan of Old Government House could still be discerned, to the casual observer the original appearance had all but vanished.

In 1931, the site was sold to the Missionary Oblates of St. Mary's Province, a Catholic religious order. The Oblates established a seminary and boarding school on the property. The seminary, long known as St. Charles Scholasticate, operated until 1972. By 1984 only a handful of elderly priests remained at the House, and so a newer facility more suitable to their needs was constructed nearby.

Old Government House stood vacant for most of the next two decades, while plans for its rehabilitation and



Frank Korvemaker / Culture, Youth and Recreation

Although vacant for several years, the building still displayed grace and dignity, as can be seen in this 2001 photograph.

transformation into a viable heritage attraction were developed within the community. Finally, in June 2003 arrangements were concluded to transfer the property from the Oblates to the Town of Battleford. However, as Fate would have it, time ran out for the old building, and it was completely destroyed by fire on the morning of June 7, 2003.

The destruction of Old Government House, Battleford marks the first time in Saskatchewan's history that a National Historic Site was totally destroyed by fire. It also marks the loss of a once common but now extremely rare prairie building form – a log post-on-sill structure. However, more significantly, the destruction of Old Government House represents the loss of Canada's oldest surviving Territorial Era administrative building and of Canada's first Indian Industrial School. While both these stories can be told in other ways, the opportunity to tell them from the very building where these activities occurred has been lost forever.

Portions of the 1917 Seventh Day Adventists School foundations and one of its associated brick chimneys survived the fire. These foundations still include the footprint of Old Government House. As well, the archaeological remains of Fort Otter and of other Territorial Era buildings on Government Ridge may exist, as does the 1877 brick Land Registry Office. People in The Battlefords are now assessing how these remaining heritage resources might be incorporated into a new interpretive program at Battleford to tell the story of 127 years of nationally significant history at this site.

Information for this article was taken from "Heritage Character Statement for Government House, Battleford, Saskatchewan" (Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation, 2001).

“THE DEBATE OF THE CENTURY”

by Mike Fedyck

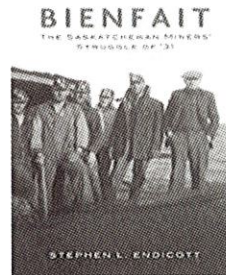
“The Debate of the Century” re-enacted the famous May 20, 1957, verbal confrontation between Tommy Douglas and Ross Thatcher. Scripted with verbatim transcripts prepared from the radio broadcast of the actual debate, the re-enactment took place on June 28th, 2003, at the Community Hall in Mossbank, Saskatchewan, which was the site of the original event. Details of the debate were reconstructed using newspaper reports, records in the T. C. Douglas papers and *Rumours of Glory*, Dale Eisler’s account of Thatcher’s political career. The principal actors used audio copies of the debate and pictures and videos of Douglas and Thatcher to prepare for their roles while other realistic touches were added by the actors who portrayed CCF and Liberal hecklers. The hecklers along with spontaneous shouting and cheering from the 600 people who attended the two sold out performances created a raucous atmosphere that captured the ambience of the original event.

The re-enactment drew people from all over the province and even a few people from Alberta were in attendance. Mossbank rolled out the welcome mat for its many visitors and hosted numerous other activities, including a pancake breakfast, a buffet supper, a parade and tours of the town and the local museum and blacksmith shop. When all the dust had cleared a profit of approximately \$10,000 had been realized and by all accounts everyone enjoyed themselves. The success of “The Debate of the Century” demonstrated the potential of historical tourism as entertainment, as education and as a form of economic development.



Regina actors Kelly Munce (left) and Will Barber portrayed Ross Thatcher and Tommy Douglas in “The Debate of the Century” staged at Mossbank.

Book Reviews



Bienfait: The Saskatchewan Miners' Struggle of '31,

Stephen L. Endicott,

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002, 224 pp.

“They fought for bread: they got bullets instead.” (96-97) The banners carried at the funeral reflected the drama and tragedy of the 1931 lignite coal miners’ strike in southeastern Saskatchewan. On September 29, a peaceful motorcade of striking miners and their families, hoping to publicize their cause and express their unity, was intercepted by the RCMP in Estevan. During the clash that ensued, the police fired into the crowd, killing three miners and wounding more than twenty. This incident has become a staple of Canadian labour history, emblematic of the ferocity of class conflict in Canada in the early years of the Great Depression.

Struggle and death, though, were no strangers to the coal miners. Stephen L. Endicott focuses his lens eight miles east of Estevan to the village of Bienfait (pronounced ‘Bean-fate’) where the miners and their families worked and lived and, in 1931, attempted to form a union affiliated with the Communist-linked Mine Workers’ Union of Canada (MWUC). Here Endicott tells a multi-layered story. We learn about the qualities of lignite coal and the challenges of mining and marketing it. We learn about the structure of the industry and of the men who owned the mines. Most of all, though, we learn of the people of Bienfait: the miners, their families, the merchants, and the mine managers. Among the great strengths of this book is the recognition of community. The boardinghouse keeper who rose at 4:00 a.m. to make lunches for the miners and who washed their clothes on a scrub board is as central to the tale as the miner or union official.

Coal mining was both arduous and dangerous and, in the context of the Great Depression, it became increasingly oppressive. The oversupply of lignite coal, exacerbated by the development of a new strip mining operation at Bienfait, squeezed the coal

operators who, in turn, squeezed the miners. The low, and already irregular, wage rates were cut and the “understanding” that miners’ buy their goods in the overpriced company stores became more overt. For support, the miners turned to the MWUC.

Organizing workers in this context was not for the weak of heart. We meet both local activists who built the union and many of the national leaders of the Communist Party who appeared in Bienfait to rally and encourage the strikes. All appeared at the “Red Hall” associated with the Ukrainian Farmer-Labour Temple Association and left indelible marks on the memories of the participants.

The drama unfolds through the nuanced stories told of each side in the struggle. Once the strike began, the mine owners were keen to provoke a confrontation, hoping to draw the miners into a battle with strikebreakers, forcing the hand of the RCMP and undermining the strike. But it was not so easy. The union effectively discouraged strikebreakers from entering a village where they would have difficulty finding food or shelter. And the local RCMP Sergeant, a man who understood the miners’ plight and had little interest in acting as the managers’ stooge, refused to play along. Nonetheless, the owners and the local elite eventually saw to it that he was replaced and, of course, got their battle with its infamous results.

Central to the broader view of the strike was what was dubbed the “flag” issue. Hiding behind the Union Jack, the mine owners played up the Communist associations of the miners’ union, accusing them of disloyalty and treachery. Endicott argues that the union effectively deflected such attacks. The Communists portrayed here are a far cry from the Hollywood automatons of Cold War mythology. These were men and women with remarkably different styles and skills. And they were far from monolithic, as Endicott describes deep divisions over strike strategy. At the same time, Endicott avoids discussing some of the harder questions about the Party’s role in the workers’ movement. The early 1930s – the so-called “third period” of Communist history – was a time in which, many have argued, the Party alienated potential allies due to its sectarianism and rigid organizational structures of Stalinism. That said, Endicott effectively demonstrates that we cannot assume that day-to-day events followed that model. Still, there is perhaps more to be said about the relations between Bienfait miners and Communist leaders than Endicott acknowledges.

For Stephen Endicott, this was a personal journey. The story is punctuated by accounts of his own encounters

with the children and grandchildren of the Bienfait miners. This is a fascinating tale of the lineages of struggle – of pride, anger, suspicion and comradeship. It serves as a reminder that this is a history that is still very much alive in the hearts of the community and in the veins of coal that are still dug out of the southeastern Saskatchewan countryside. It deserves to be widely read and the miners’ struggle appreciated.

James Naylor
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***PlainSpeaking: Essays on
Aboriginal Peoples and the
Prairie.***

Patrick Douaud and Bruce Dawson, eds
Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2001. 115 pp.

PlainSpeaking: Essays on Aboriginal Peoples and the Prairie is a collection of essays based on a two-day conference designed to encourage communication between academic researchers and community-based experts on relationships between First Nations and Métis peoples and the Canadian Prairie. Essays included in this book explore past and present connections generally using a holistic framework with some emphasis on historic, cultural, political and artistic themes. The editors, Patrick Douaud and Bruce Dawson, honoured each of the eleven contributing author’s writing styles, including: word verbatim speeches and interviews, research papers, a photo essay, and a transcribed Elders roundtable. A map is provided for those unfamiliar with the landmarks referred to in the different essays. The end result is an exciting, multi-faceted presentation that brings the reader into this important discussion of Aboriginal People’s relationship to the land.

Blair Stonechild and Bruce Dawson’s presentations review historical factors influencing contemporary relationships with the land. Blair Stonechild presents a historical perspective, addressing the issues arising immediately following the signing of Treaty Number Four in 1874 and the North West Rebellion in 1885, including the loss of sacred items that reflected ones’

connection to the land which ended up in museum collections. Bruce Dawson contributed an essay focussed on a critical review of the Greater Production Campaign which began in 1918 to increase agricultural production by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Peoples on reserve lands.

Neal McLeod, Jean Okimasis, and Patrick Douaud's papers focus on the role storytelling, language, and spirituality have in expressing ones' connection with the Canadian Prairies. Neal McLeod discusses the power land gives to Aboriginal ways and the relationship between Cree story telling and Western post-modernism. Jean Okimasis unlocks the relationship between land and Cree language, including the meaning and significance embedded in modern place names, and the distortion created when using Cree terms in the English language. Patrick Douaud shares insightful perspectives by comparing the spiritual significance of land in Aboriginal, Oriental, and Western belief systems.

Linda Otway and Bev Cardinal bring to light the impact that political factors have had in influencing changing connections between people and the land. Linda Otway explores Aboriginal Women's position on the Prairies, beginning with a summary of the impact of colonization on women's health and summarizing with the critical need for community-based cultural renewal. Bev Cardinal shares her own personal journey to re-connect with the land as a Métis woman and reinforces the need to protect the land for the holistic health of future generations.

Randy Lundy, Floyd Favel Star, Finn Andersen, and Heather Hodgson

Randy Lundy discusses the conflict between writing as a creative process and writing as an "Aboriginal" author. He demonstrates the powerful connection between land and Aboriginal People through thought-provoking examples selected from numerous Aboriginal authors. In Floyd Favel Star reflections on the relationship between contemporary theatre and historical pictographs, different perspectives on how the meaning and significance of land is depicted by Aboriginal Peoples is presented. Finn Andersen examines 24 images of Aboriginal Peoples' daily life taken by a non-Aboriginal photographer from 1941 to 1965 to demonstrate the genuine appreciation for the relationship between the land and Aboriginal cultures held by this non-Aboriginal individual. Each of the images are included in the book in colour and are an excellent resource for other individuals interested in learning more about the relationship between people and the land. In Heather Hodgson's interview with Sheila Orr, the artist that created the painting on the cover of this book, intimate

views on the powerful importance of the connection with the land are shared.

The Elders' Roundtable discussion provides a holistic conclusion to this publication. Elders talk about childhood experiences, traditional lifestyles, the meaning of being an Elder, and so much more. As Irene Jacques (p 103) states, "...the earth from which you were born is where your soul lives forever...". This book provides exceptional insights into the holistic connection to the land for Aboriginal Peoples. It would be useful to scholars in a variety of fields including geography, native studies, anthropology, human ecology, environment, health, and education.

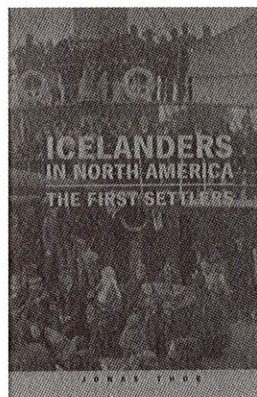
Jill Oakes, Ph.D.

Professor

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Icelanders in North America: The First Settlers

Jonas Thor

Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2002. 260 pp.

Between the early 1870s and 1914 more than 14,000 Icelanders immigrated to North America. One of the most significant Icelandic settlements, referred to as New Iceland, was established on the western banks of Lake Winnipeg. Icelandic communities also developed in Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, Utah, Washington, Ontario, Nova Scotia and other parts of Manitoba. Those Icelanders who came to Saskatchewan settled near Tantallon (Holar District), Churchbridge (Thingvalla and Lögberg Districts), Foam Lake (Vatnabyggdin District), Lesile, Elfros, Mozart, Wynyard and Kandahar.

In *Icelanders in North America: The First Settlers*, Jonas Thor examines the Icelandic immigrant experience from a continent-wide perspective. He describes the mass movement of peoples from Iceland to North America in the late nineteenth century which was motivated by a

variety of factors, among them poor economic conditions in Iceland and immigrants' hopes for a better life. In detailing the founding of the various Icelandic settlements, Thor's study reveals that chain migration played a significant role in the growth of Icelandic settlements in North America as immigrants were drawn to areas where they could settle with family, friends and fellow Icelanders. At the same time, Icelandic immigrants also demonstrated a tendency for geographic mobility, often moving several times between various settlements in both Canada and the United States in search of better economic opportunities.

One of the most interesting aspects of Thor's book is his discussion of the Icelanders' attempts to maintain their Icelandic cultural heritage as well as their ultimate assimilation into North America mainstream culture. At one end of the spectrum was the attempt to establish an exclusive all-Icelandic colony at New Iceland. According to Thor, these Icelanders experienced a number of hardships, in part because of the poor location chosen for the settlement. At the same time, Thor points out that in cases where Icelanders did not isolate themselves and settled among people of other ethnic backgrounds, their adjustment to life in their new setting was easier. These Icelanders endeavoured to transplant their heritage of a strong literary tradition through the collection of books, organization of reading societies and publication of periodicals and newspapers in the Icelandic language. For, as Thor notes, "As long as they spoke, wrote, and read Icelandic, they believed their heritage would be safe" (264). Thor concludes that the ultimate struggle for many of these Icelanders was how to reconcile their loyalty to their adopted land and love of their motherland.

Thor's book is meticulously researched. Utilizing letters, Icelandic and English periodicals and newspapers, census reports and various archival sources, he presents a comprehensive picture of life in the various Icelandic settlements across Canada and the United States. Readers seeking a good general overview of Icelandic immigration to North America will not be disappointed. This book will be of particular interest to anyone of Icelandic descent, whose grandparents or great-grandparents came from Iceland. For the readers looking for more than a broad survey, however, Thor's study is somewhat disappointing.

Some readers may find themselves frustrated by the how the book is organized. Thor breaks the subject down geographically and discusses the development of each area Icelandic settlement individually. This geographic approach, while it may be convenient, is not the most effective way to illustrate the similarities (or differences) between the various North American Icelandic commu-

nities. The book would be more useful if Thor organized it thematically, discussing the many commonalities between the Icelanders' experiences in the various communities. Many topics, such as religion, attempts at establishing Icelandic language newspapers, and the establishment of literary societies, for example, could merit their own chapter. Most disappointing, however, is Thor's concluding chapter, which is a mere five pages. While he does highlight some of the common themes that emerge throughout the book, he does not attempt to place the Icelandic experience into a larger Canadian or North American context.

Despite its shortcomings, *Icelanders in North America* is an important contribution to the existing literature. Thor thoroughly documents the various Icelandic settlements. Hopefully Thor's book will encourage others to delve deeper and undertake more in depth studies that will further enhance our understanding of the Icelandic immigrant experience.

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***"Your Loving Son":
Letters of an RCAF
Navigator***

Stephen L.V. King, ed.

Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2002. 216 pp.

Recent years have seen a flurry of first-person accounts from World War II, and *"Your Loving Son"* fits this mould, though with one major difference – it is not the story of a survivor. The title is aptly chosen, for the phrase was how a young Saskatchewan-born RCAF navigator, George McCowan King, frequently closed the letters he wrote to his parents. The assembled collection is an unabashed tribute, edited expertly and sensitively by a nephew who, from childhood, had "gotten to know an uncle who was destined never to know me."(3) His role, he readily acknowledges, "simply was to collect, organize, and transcribe the documents so that they can tell [the story] on their own with as little editorial intervention as possible."(23) In this regard, he understates his

contribution. Clearly, much research was done – particularly by interviewing surviving family and friends – to provide the useful explanatory notes accompanying the letters. Research on the operational history of the RCAF and RAF, to provide a larger context for the events, was not as thoroughly done, but the errors and omissions are mostly minor.

The story, amply illustrated with evocative photographs, unfolds in five chronological chapters and an epilogue. George King's war was typical enough, if all too brief. He enlisted in Regina in late November 1941, and subsequently trained as a navigator. Finally, in late August 1943, he was assigned to RAF 218 Squadron. Less than a month later, he and four of his six crewmates lost their lives when their Stirling heavy bomber was shot down returning from a raid on Hannover.

Stephen King argues that the contribution of his uncle's letters lies in the basic story of a life they tell – regrets about leaving home, reasons for enlistment, trepidation as combat neared, the bonding of aircrew, and the simple day-to-day pleasures of service life. In fact, the contents of most of the letters are remarkably mundane, and not surprisingly so, given George King's youth, his awareness that all communication would be censored, and even more, perhaps, his conscious attempts at self-censorship. Yet, there is poignancy in their very "ordinariness". In a letter to his mother five days before he went missing he inquired about the harvest, chided on a air force friend who hadn't written (George wasn't aware he'd been killed), thanked her for some dried lilacs she'd sent, and promised to write more often. Two days later, the 21-year-old provided his brother with a rather more lively account of recent days - an eager English WAAF "coming on" to him, a spectacular brawl at the base, and the predictable accounts of aircrew drunkenness.

However, the real value of this collection is not the story it tells of George King. Rather, it is found in the chapters entitled "Missing after Air Operations", "Killed in Action", and "My Deepest Sympathy in Your Great Loss". To use the modern term, these document a search for "closure". Few Second War reminiscences delve into the coping, sometimes successful and sometimes not, of the "other casualties" – the loved ones and comrades who survived the war but not the loss. In tackling this aspect of the war's human cost, *Your Loving Son* makes a lasting contribution. Some of the telegrams included are simple form letters, unavoidable under the circumstances, but searing in their impact on the King family. Others are attempts at comfort penned by well-intentioned commanding

officers and chaplains. There is the closing of a bank account to attend to and a polite request to sell a pair of unused shoes, sent as a present, to augment his Squadron's benefits fund. No other account I've come across so graphically reveals the emotional consequences of the RCAF's practice of making available to parents and wives the next-of-kin addresses of other crew members. When news came after six weeks that the rear-gunner was a POW, the young wife (and widow, though she didn't yet know it) of the pilot excitedly wrote George's mother: "Gosh, isn't it wonderful news? Ours will be next, so keep hoping and praying." (132) When a couple of weeks later, the bomb-aimer's wife wrote with the news her husband had now been listed as killed, and inquiring about word of their son, her "please wire immediately collect" (134) spoke volumes. In fact the Kings had received their own telegram two days earlier. "We mourn with you. Sorry. George also reported killed," (135) was Mr. King's sad reply. The letters continue for years after the war, as the family (George's father died in 1950) slowly learned details about the circumstances of his death, the location of his grave, and other information that piece by piece helped them come to terms with their loss.

More than an account of an airman's war, *Your Loving son* is the story of a family's war, indeed, of several families' wars. It is a poignant and revealing account of the **aftermath** of one young airman's death and, as such, a historical document of great value.

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A Note Card with a Saskatchewan Design



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Fire at Old Government House in Battleford, June 7, 2003
(Menno Fieguth/Menno Fieguth Collection)