THE SOUTH-WEST CORNER

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Hal G. Duncan

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ISBN 0-88925-564-4

Published by
Hal G. Duncan
Box 1194
Boissevain, Manitoba R0K 0E0
Canada

First printing, 1984

Printed and bound in Canada by
Friesen Printers
Altona, Manitoba R0G 0B0
Canada

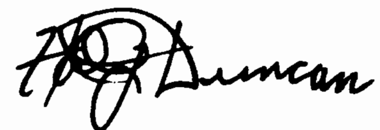
Acknowledgements

Sources

Historic Forts and Trading Posts ... E. Voorhis
Hunters of the Buried Years ... Alice B. Kehoe
Permission of Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History
The Saga of Turtle Mountain Coal .... A. D. Doerksen

To the following for their unstinting kindness and assistance in my gathering of data,

Graham Robertson .... Elgin
Charlie Baldock — William Cullen ... Wakopa
Ken Williams — W. R. Brockington .... Melita
Mr. and Mrs. Jack and Clint Whetter .... Dand
Mabel Godfrey — Ian Morton ...... Deloraine
Barry Fletcher — Jock McMurdo ..... Lyleton
The Boissevain Recorder Staff ..... Boissevain
The Brandon Sun Staff .... Brandon
Wallace Printers — Editor Wallace . Cartwright
Boissevain, Killarney, Deloraine, Melita, Virden Library Staffs
Pauline Baillie
— Killarney, whose sketches add immeasurably to this book
Harriet McColl
— Boissevain, for her invaluable assistance in the preparation of the manuscripts for this book.
my most grateful and sincere appreciation



The South-West Corner

The South-West Corner, an area in the Province of Manitoba lying south from the confluence of the Souris and Assiniboine Rivers and west to the Saskatchewan border.

Bounded on the north by the murky waters of the Assiniboine and on the south by the American state of North Dakota, it is a land of undulating plains, drained principally by the Souris River, which winds its way diagonally across the plains to join the Assiniboine on its journey to the historic Red River one hundred miles to the east.

Stretching along the International Boundary between Manitoba and North Dakota for a distance of some thirty-five miles, the Turtle Mountains, which explorer La Verendrye called, "the blue jewels of the prairie," provide a backdrop for the South-West Corner as it unfolds away to the north and west.

Now a thriving and prosperous agricultural area, with the bonus of once-worked coal fields and producing oil wells, the South-West Corner belongs to an era whose culture evolved from the periods of the Folsom and Clovis hunters. Indian tribes of unknown origin followed the hunters, to roam the land unhindered till the advent of the explorers and trappers of the fur-trade days, who in turn were followed by the settlers and homesteaders who laid the foundations of the South-West Corner of today.

From the eras of the hunters, the early Indians, the fur traders, and down through the pioneer days of settlement of the region, the South-West Corner was the scene of many incidents, developments and historical occurences that give

it an atmosphere enjoyed by few parts of the Canadian West.

Worthy of a place in the history of the area, and in the memories of those who now make it their home, the stories in the following pages are dedicated to the South-West Corner with the hope of perpetuating some of that history, character, and special status.

The Beginning

Some twenty thousand years ago, Racholabrean, the last of the Great Ice Ages, which geologists tell us covered the greater part of what is now Western Canada with mile deep ice, started its slow retreat from a thermal current that cut a corridor through the center of the ice mass.

Ten thousand years later nomads from Asia crossed the land bridge which joined that continent with North America. Arriving at the mouth of the ever-widening corridor they found a new land. Perhaps that was what they were seeking. Perhaps just the spirit of adventure beating in their hearts, even as does in the hearts of men today, led them to their new discovery. Whatever the reason they were pleased with the new land, and made it their home. Their descendants became the first human occupants of the South-West Corner.

Little is known of those people. They were hunters of the bison, which had evolved from the huge mammoth that roamed the land south of the ice mass thousands of years before.

* * *

A bull and cow bison carefully make their way through the tall, swamp grass at the edge of the lakes' cold water. They bend their heads to drink. At a hoarse shout they raise their heads, and a stone-tipped spear drives into the throat of the fat cow.

Struggling helplessly she flounders in the mud. Her blood stains the grass and water while her struggles grow weaker, and finally cease. Jubilantly the thrower of the spear pulls it from the

dead cow's throat, and hurries along the lake shore till he comes to women and children sitting around a fire. With the news of the kill the women excitedly pick up their skin bags containing flint knives and stone hammers. Quickly they make their way to the scene of the kill. They call out with pleasure at the sight of the cow and set about stripping off the hide and hacking off the limbs and meat.

* * *

The hunter's spear that killed the bison cow would in all probability be tipped with a Clovis or Folsom point of flint. The date of the periods following the ice ages known as Clovis and Folsom was established when knowledge of those periods was made known to archaeologists from finds of artifacts near Clovis and Folsom in eastern New Mexico in 1926. Carbon tests showed the age of the artifacts as between ten and and twenty thousand years, with Clovis being the older.

The bison cow could have grown fat on the grass of the South-West Corner, and the hunter could have killed her near the then forming Souris River. Folsom and Clovis people, like those who came thousands of years later, found the South-West Corner particularly adaptive. Folsom and Clovis points have been found in the Coulter-Melita district. And nowhere in the corridor of Western Canada did they build more of the mounds peculiar to their culture than along the drainage of the Souris, as it flows north from the International boundary.

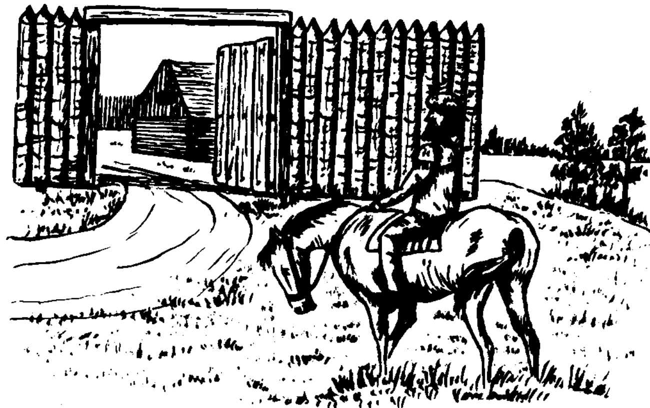
Those mounds, puzzling as to how they were built, served more than one purpose, and were

built in different forms and dimensions. South of Melita the largest mound extended two arms, some hundred feet in length, at a right angle north and south and east and west. Others in the same district are smaller and of spherical shape.

Scientists believe the mounds possibly served as fortifications or sacrificial alters, as well as burial tombs. Archaeologists have taken skeletons from at least one mound. A conch shell taken from a smaller mound is the prized possession of the Melita museum. It is believed the shell could have come only from the warm water off the coast of Florida, indicating that the builders of mounds mingled with the inhabitants of the far south.

Where the Clovis and Folsom hunters went is one of the mysteries of civilization. It is possible they hybridized with other cultures to evolve the later Indians who occupied the prairie land and made the South-West Corner part of their homeland hundreds of years before the first white man appeared there.

Who that man was, or just when he journeyed to the waving grass land of the South-West Corner, was never recorded. Possibly it was Sieur De La Verendrye, who led his party on its historical trek from Fort La Reine (Portage La Prairie) over the Turtle Mountains, to visit the Mandan Indians of Dakota Territory. If so then he would no doubt have been impressed with the panorama of rolling land that swept away to the horizon, and maybe he envisaged its future.



Forts and Trading Posts of the South-West Corner

The courier-de-bois of the fabulous fur brigades, that live in history, legend and song, sang their chansons and plied their flashing paddles, skirting the South-West Corner as they guided their fur and pemmican laden canoes down the Assiniboine River to Fort Garry on the Red River. At that time the South-West Corner was buffalo country, with its potential for the burgeoning fur trade not fully recognized.

Sieur De La Verendrye's report following his historical trek in 1738-39, from Fort La Reine (Portage La Prairie) to contact the Mandan Indians at their villages on the Missouri River, in present

day North Dakota, gave impetus to the interest in the almost untapped, virgin area, and its possible contribution to the riches of the fur trade.

Though Seigneur Verendrye did not chart his course on his first journey he surely must have entered the South-West Corner near the site of Killarney and come to the Turtle Mountains at their eastern end. There his first sight of the tree-covered hills, blue against the southern sky, no doubt led him to later refer to them as the "blue jewels of the prairies."

Following the northern slopes to the west before leaving to spend the night at the Souris River, before turning away to the south towards the Missouri, he would be impressed with the fur potential of the land that stretched away far beyond the limit of his eyes, and perhaps he visualized the trading posts that would be part of the young fur-trading area and the role they would play in the development that was to follow.

Fort Montagne a La Bosse

Fort La Bosse, the oldest and furthest north of the forts that served the South-West Corner fur trade. It received its name, literally "hump mountain", from the rounded hill that jutted up from the level plain to the south and east.

A North-West Company fort it was built some time before 1760, on the south bank of the Assiniboine River about two miles north of the site of Routledge on the Trans-Canada Highway south of Virden.

La Bosse was a well-built, stockaded fort, approximately 200 × 250 feet in dimension, situated on the high, south bank of the river, with a commanding view of the plains to the south, and an

open view of the wide, beautiful valley of the Assiniboine as it follows its south-easterly course at that point.

The stockade enclosed several well-constructed houses and storing sheds, and for the greater part of the year maintained several members of staff. It was supplied from the parent McDonnell's House, fifty miles to the east at the mouth of the Souris River, and was important as an intermediate point between that post and QuAppelle.

How long La Bosse was in operation is not definitely known but it was still occupied in 1812, and had the longest trading life of any of the posts or forts. It was well known in historic lore as the starting point of John Pritchard's unbelievable wanderings.

A native stone cairn marks the approximate location of Fort La Bosse, the only one of the South-West Corner fur-trading posts that has been recognized in that way.

Lena's House

In 1801, the Hudson's Bay Company established a post on the Turtle Mountains which was outfitted from the Company Fort, Brandon House, on the Assiniboine River.

The exact location of Lena's House is not clear but it was near the later established border, near the east end of the Mountains. The Company was getting annoying competition from small, independent fur men and John McKay, Factor at Brandon House, established the post with, as noted in his Journal, the avowed intention to "cut off every independent." On November the 24th, 1801, he appointed Henry Lena to take charge, and gave him 9 men.

That the post was in the neighborhood of 60 miles from the parent fort is indicated by a journal entry of January 3rd, 1802, which states that the, "Journey to the Mountain and back may be performed in 5 days." A previous entry of December 17th, states that, "long before daylight self, Jn Lyons and Jas. Anderson set off for B(randon) H(ouse) — in the evening we reached the Sourie, the plain we cross'd is upwards of 30 miles and no more grass upon it than upon my hand."

That Factor McKay was not successful in "cutting off" the independents is shown by a Journal entry of January 5th, 1802, that, "I understand from our men that XY have nigh built their house about a mile from Lena — I will be obliged to send a tent against them as they are right in the road of the Assiniboils should they come in." Later his journal noted that, "the want of men at the Mountain has hurt us much the XY having a number."

It is not known how long Lena's House was in operation, but probably only a few years, as it was not fortified and was quite vulnerable to Sioux attack from the south. But it had the distinction of being the first, and only definitely known, post on the Turtle Mountains and of giving a name to one of the South-West Corner's early hamlets, the village of Lena.

Fort Mr. Grant

Fort Mr. Grant was built by Cuthbert Grant in 1824, under license to trade on the Souris River issued to him by Hudson's Bay Company Governor, George Simpson.

Situated on the Souris River, a mile or so from

the North-West Company's abandoned Ash House, up river two miles from present day Hartney, it was established by Grant in opposition to American traders who were moving north over the unmarked border line into the rich, South-West Corner fur country. It was not a large fort, roughly one hundred and fifty feet by one hundred and twenty, but well built, on the north bank of the river.

Though not a true Metis, being of Scottish and Indian blood, Cuthbert Grant was prominent in the founding of the Metis settlement of Grantown, now Headingly, and gained national and historic notoriety as the leader of the North-West Company Metis in the bloody massacre of Hudson's Bay Company Governor, Robert Semple and his men, at Seven Oaks.

The Metis of the North-West Company resented the takeover of that company by the Hudson's Bay Company, though an amalgamation had been ordered by the Imperial Government, and it was to gain their loyalty, and acceptance of Company rule, that Governor Simpson astutely persuaded Grant to trade for the Company, and granted him a license to trade in the Souris River basin of Assiniboia.

The bold American traders threatened to destroy Grant's fort on the pretext that it was on American soil. Governor Simpson replied to that threat by ordering surveyor, George Taylor, to go from Fort Grant and establish the 49th parallel along the Turtle Mountains. When Taylor's survey showed Fort Mr. Grant thirty-three miles north of the 49th parallel, well inside Canadian territory, Governor Simpson gave Grant authority to seize persons, and their property, not authorized to trade north of the 49th parallel.

The Americans recognized Grant's authority, and influence with the Metis trappers and buffalo hunters, and retreated to their own side of the border, ending the possibility of a second fur trade confrontation.

Fort Mr. Grant operated till the early 1860's, though its founder died as the result of a fall from a horse in 1854. It had the most political and social impact of any of the Souris River forts, as well as being a main trading post for many years. It is recorded that Grant travelled down the Souris in 3 bateaux carrying 50,000 musquash (muskrats) as well as buffalo robes and other furs. In its later years the fort operated only as a winter post but it still played a major role in the fur trade of the South-West Corner.

Ash House

Ash House was a North-West Company fort built in 1795, on a bow of the Souris River approximately two miles southwest of where the town of Hartney now stands. Trade knives, arrowheads and other artifacts found at a site northeast of Hartney indicate that a post was there before Ash House was built, but Ash House was the first fort built on that part of the Souris by one of the two large companies.

Ash House was almost encircled by the bow of the river in which it was built, and was considered to have most of its furs and trade arrive by canoe. It had a brief existence, being abandoned in 1797. Though vacated it was visited by David Thompson on a return journey from Mandan Indian country in 1798, and by Alexander Henry in 1806.

Ash House was no doubt built to draw the growing Souris River basin trade. It was supposedly abandoned because of its vulnerability to Indian attack, but a far more probable reason was that it was not a paying operation, either because of strong competition or poor management.

Fort Desjarlais

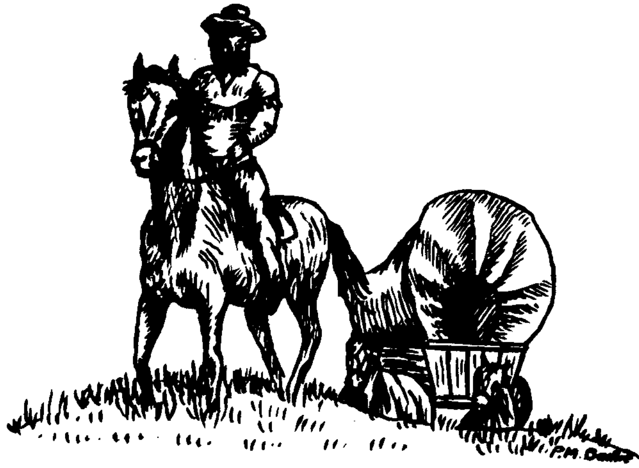
Fort Desjarlais was built by independent trader Joseph Desjarlais in 1836, on the north bank of the Souris River, almost due north of where the town of Lauder was later built. Fort Desjarlais was a large fort, and trader Desjarlais carried on an extensive operation in opposition to the Hudson's Bay Company and several other independent traders.

Foundation outlines showed the fort to be about 150 feet wide by 200 feet long. It was fortified with an oak stockade, which enclosed one large building and several smaller ones. It operated successfully for twenty years, with a work force of from 50 to 75 men. Horses and ponies were maintained as well as other livestock, and some small plots of grain were grown.

Part of Desjarlais' success was attributed to the believe that he smuggled furs to American buyers and used illicit American liquor in trading with the Indians. Whether the charges were founded or not Fort Desjarlais was the most prominent and successful of the Souris posts.

It met the almost inevitable fate of nearly all the Souris posts and burned to the ground in 1858. Trader Desjarlais promptly moved across the border into American territory and built another trading post. But several of his workers, wishing to remain in Assiniboia (Manitoba) established themselves in the surrounding sandhills and in the Grande Clairiere district, where they began farming in the early 1860's, to become the South-West Corner's pioneer agriculturists and the ones who paved the way for its agricultural development, and the economy that is its life-blood today.

The sites of the fur-traders forts and posts of the South-West Corner have all disappeared. A rusty knife, a broken cup, a lead musket ball, or possibly a flint arrowhead, buried deep beneath a cover of decayed grass and leaves, would be the only reminder of the era of the fur traders, their posts and forts, and the part they played in the transition of the South-West Corner from the days of the bison hunters to its present prosperity and social standing.



The Commission Trail

During the budding years of the early 1880's the Souris and Assiniboine Rivers were the main access routes to the more northern part of the South-West Corner for the fur traders and trappers of those years and the few venturesome settlers of the 1870's.

But inextricably linked with the settlement of the southern part, and the trail over which rumbled and squealed the wheels of wagons, Red River carts, and various other vehicles loaded with hopefuls seeking virgin land and a new future, was the Commission Trail.

In the year 1818, Canada and the United States agreed upon the 49th parallel, across the prairies from Kenora to the Pacific coast, as the boundary line between the two countries. But the agreement remained contentious, with factions in the United States claiming the boundary should be farther north, even claiming that from Oregon it should extend to latitude 54° 40', and that the area should be occupied by American force if necessary. That claim led to the historically famous slogan, 'Fifty-Four Forty or Fight.'

However in 1846 the two nations finally agreed on the 49th parallel, and the possibility of conflict was avoided. But in spite of the importance of the question little was done to establish just where the parallel crossed the plains until John Palliser made his Royal Geographical Society sponsored journey of exploration in 1857. Part of Palliser's commission was to establish the 49th parallel west from Red River.

It is interesting to note that Palliser, an ebullient, accomplished, 39 year old heir from a wealthy Irish family, led his party along the north slope of the Turtle Mountains early in August of 1857. From the crest of the Turtle Head he was probably the first of the explorers to use its eminence to view the plains that stretched away to the north. It is recorded that he thought the boundary line would pass through the Turtle Head; actually it passed approximately two miles to the south. It is quite possible though that his route was the embryo of the Commission Trail, and was followed to some degree by the Commission party.

Regardless of the fact that it had been dis-

putatious, and heedless of Palliser's warning that the boundary should be marked, it wasn't till fifteen years later, that the two nations finally moved to accomplish the task. For that purpose the Canadian commission, Her Majesty' North American Boundary Commission, and its counterpart, the United States Boundary Commission were set up.

Headed by Commissioner Captain Donald Cameron, the Canadian Boundary Commission was an efficient, well-organized body consisting of two principal surveyors, two assistant surveyors, a company of Royal Engineers, a corp of mounted scouts, and three hundred laborers and artisans.

A settlement headquarters for the Commission was established on the west bank of the Red River a short distance from the boundary line. It was named Dufferin in honor of Lord Dufferin, Canada's Governor General at the time. Commodious building contained offices, living quarters, mess hall, and barracks for the surveyors, astronomers, photographers, axemen, harness makers, wheelwrights, carpenters, blacksmiths, picket men and cooks who made up the force whose undertaking led to the blazing of the Commission Trail.

Each man was issued buckskin and leather clothing, moccasins and woolen mitts, and for bedding an oilskin sheet, a buffalo robe and two pairs of the famous four-point Hudson's Bay Company blankets. That the pleasures of life for the workers were not ignored by the Commission directors is evidenced by the fact that each man was issued one plug of smoking tobacco and two

plugs of chewing tobacco per week, and whisky was supplied for five cents a glass.

The Trail had priority, and the men laying its course worked ahead of those establishing the boundary line. West of the Pembina River at times they laid the course of the Trail along that of the Metis, buffalo hunters, established in their semi-annual hunting trips to the Missouri Plateau in what is now North Dakota.

In general the Trail was several miles back from the 49th parallel boundary line. Terrain made this necessary in places, but it was also a matter of caution to avoid trouble with the, 'Tigers of the Plains', the Sioux, who still had a burning resentment of the white man's encroachment on a land that had been theirs for as long as memory served. A preliminary survey to establish number one township along the boundary line was made in conjunction with the boundary survey, and may have been further reason for the Trail being some distance from the boundary.

All personnel were armed, and the mounted scouts, mostly Metis, patrolled regularly. There never was an attack, and really little danger of one. But the scouts lent prestige to the Commission and no doubt their presence was appreciated by the workers.

South of Killarney, near the hamlet of Lena, the Trail is still visible where it descended a slope to cross a small, rocky-bedded creek. After well over one hundred years the ruts made by the wagons and carts of the Commission crews, and of those who followed years later, are still discernible beneath a heavy covering of virgin, prairie grass.

Upon reaching the Turtle Mountains a lo building that was to serve as a supply center wa built on the east slope. Five years later, in 1877, B B. LaRiviere, with an eye to the future, built store and home on opposite sides of the Trail nea the site of the commission supply building. They were the first buildings of the South-West Corner's first town.

Under direction from the Federal Government to establish a Land Titles Office in a suitable location, C. F. Newcombe followed the Commission Trail to the high banks of Whitewater Creek to a point a few miles southeast of today's Deloraine. There in June, 1881, he established the Land Titles Office that served the settlers and homesteaders of the South-West Corner for many years.

Leaving the South-West Corner the Trail led the way for the fixing of the International Boundary on across the plains and rolling hills, of what was then the North-West Territories, through to the Rocky Mountains of British Columbia. That boundary line is now famous as the longest unfortified boundary in the world.

Nowhere in its course did the Commission Trail play a more important role in the settlement and development of a wide, new community than in the South-West Corner.

The Odyssey of John Pritchard

The story of the travails of John Pritchard during his bewildered wanderings on the uninhabited plains of the South-West Corner in June of the year 1805, has no recorded equal. That a human, naked for the greater part of the time, could survive the burning sun, the mosquitoes, thirst, starvation and fatigue, while lost for forty days, is beyond belief.

The Indians of the Corner, whose lifestyle inured them to physical and mental hardship, said that Pritchard couldn't possibly be alive after he had been missing for some thirty days. Such was his condition, when found by a band of Assiniboines, that to their amazed eyes he resembled a corpse, and they named him "the cheepi", the corpse.

Pritchard was described as being garrulous, optimistic, skilled in the ways of the fur trade, and adept at wilderness life and travel. That he was optimistic would seem unquestioned, for only deep-seated optimism, and faith in the Creator, gave him the power to struggle on long after death seemed inevitable. That he was adept at wilderness travel would seem questionable, but if so then that fact only adds to the mystery and unanswered questions connected with the odyssey of John Pritchard.

During the summer of 1805, the twenty-eight year old Pritchard was stationed at the XY Fur Company post, Rivierre La Souris, situated near the confluence of the Souris and Assiniboine Rivers, some thirty-five miles southeast of where the city of Brandon was later established. At that time there were three posts at that point, Brandon House, belonging to the Hudson's Bay Company, Assiniboine House, built by the North-West Company, and Rivierre La Souris, belonging to the XY Company, which had split off from the parent North-West Company.

Pritchard's adventure began early in June when a fellow clerk asked him to help him take two horses to Fort Qu'Appelle, and also help him look for his third horse, which he believed Indians had stolen. Though suffering from a lame leg, which must have added immeasureably to later trials, Pritchard agreed to accompany the clerk as far as Fort La Bosse, which was approximately fifty miles west of Rivierre La Souris. From La Bosse the clerk hoped to get a guide to accompany him the remainder of his journey to ___ .

However at La Bosse there was no guide available so the clerk and Pritchard, who evidently agreed to continue on to Qu'Appelle, decided to continue across the prairie without guidance. After a days travel they began to doubt the wisdom of their decision, and decided that unless they found the Qu'Appelle river the next day they would return to La Bosse. They did not find the Qu'Appelle for the very good reason that they had travelled in a due west direction instead of the north of west that would have taken them to their destination. Following their earlier decision they prepared to turn back to La Bosse.

In a letter to his brother, written at Nipigon, December the 20th, 1805, Pritchard told of the events that then took place which led to the immediate beginning of his ordeal.

"My friend went to fetch the horses and I began to gather wood in order to light a fire. I, perceiving my friend's horse unfettered, called to him not to endeavour to go near him, or they would both run and we should lose them. I then made a fire to entice them, as they were much tormented by the mosquitoes, and in that case will immediately gallop to a smoke. My friend payed no attention to my advertisement but kept running after the horses till I lost sight of them. It was in vain for me, who was still extremely lame from my misfortune the previous winter, to attempt following after him therefore I thought it most advisable to make fires upon all the banks near me, which might be a guide to him, should he not be able to find his way to me. Twelve o'clock came, but not my friend. I now began to be almost disconsolate and perceiving a hill at a

considerable distance off which appeared to me to be in the plains, I determined to go there and make a fire. After leaving a thick wood, to my inexpressible grief I found the hill to be in the midst of another adjoining wood. When I arrived at the hill from the top of which I had hopes of seeing the plains again to my mortification I found myself surrounded by thick and almost inexpressible woods. I then determined to return to the encampment. I had not advanced far before the sky began to darken and a heavy storm of thunder and rain came on. It was now impossible to find my way back having lost my guide, the sun. Towards night I found a small river with a considerable current in it. I determined to sleep there and the next day follow its course, well knowing that it must discharge itself with the great Red River."

Thus began the tortuous ordeal of John Pritchard. The small stream referred to must have been Pipestone Creek, which empties into Oak Lake, indicating that Pritchard and his companion were many miles south of the route to Qu'Appelle when they separated. The river which he thought the stream flowed into would be the Assiniboine, which was referred to by the early explorers and fur traders as the Upper Red River.

Hampered by his lameness Pritchard made his way slowly along the creek for several days. Without gun or knife he had little chance of killing game for food, and the first agonies of starvation began to plague him. It is hard to understand why a man, supposedly experienced in wilderness existence, would leave the encampment

without gun, axe, or even a knife. Fortunately he had his "firebag", containing flint and steel for lighting fires. Apparently he carried the buckskin bag throughout the whole period of wandering and distress. The fact that he could light fires for comfort and solace may have been the factor that kept the thread of life from breaking.

To add to the wanderer's suffering his boots, which must have been in poor condition to start with, began to fall apart. To protect his feet he used his clothing to wrap around them, which accounted for his complete nakedness during the last stages of his aimless peregrinations.

On the evening of the fifth day he believed he saw the Red River ahead of him, and felt a calm resignation to the fact that he might die along the river, but a certain thankfulness that his body would be found by the canoe brigades in the fall. Unfortunately the trees which he thought were the river turned out to be just a point on the stream he was following. But his spirits were bolstered with the finding of a hawk's nest with two pigeon-sized fledgelings in it. Building a fire he singed the down off one and devoured it raw, saving the other for the following day.

With his strength somewhat renewed he followed the creek for several more days in hope of coming to the Red (Assiniboine) River. During that part of his journey he lived on frogs, and three young magpies he found in a nest. His progress must have been very slow or he would have come to Oak Lake, which he never did see. Plagued by mosquitoes, and the viscious barbs of speargrass which stabbed his bare legs till they were black and bleeding, he was rapidly reaching

the intermediate stages of exhaustion and starvation.

Struggling along the creek, after a cold, stormy night that left him further weakened, he thought he saw, to the south, a river. Why he should think the river he was searching for would be to the south is unexplainable. Having left Fort La Bosse to the south of the Assiniboine and travelled west how could he think the searched for river was still to the south? And certainly by that time he must have been able to get his direction from the sun.

Sure the river must be the Red (Assiniboine) he was searching for he left the creek to cross the open plain to the hoped-for river. Tormented by the ever-present mosquitoes, and the burning sun on his unprotected body, he was fortunate to find a small spring whose water prevented him from collapsing from thirst and dehydration.

At this point he went into a period of melancholia and self-pity, deploring the circumstances that had led to his predicament, and the death that he felt was not far away. To his great credit he was able to recover himself and determine to keep cheerful to the end.

He arrived at the river the next day, only to find that it was not the hoped for Red. It was, of course, the Souris River, which he must have arrived at somewhere near present day Lauder. Somehow he managed to ford the river and proceed to a small lake, where he spent several days, existing on the occasional frog he was able to catch.

Wandering away from the pond he came to a small stream. Hoping there might be small fish in

the stream he made a fishing line from his hair, which was long, in the frontier style, and fashioned a hook from the wire of his hat buckle with his teeth. What he used for bait would have to be open to conjecture, possibly grasshoppers, but his valiant effort was of no avail as there were no fish.

Disappointment, hunger, and pain gave away to despair, and finding himself too weak to get up the creek bank he lay down to die. But shortly the enormity of giving away to such hopelessness flooded through him and he rose, determined to carry on.

Faint and weak he was using a stick to help himself scale the creek bank when a hen grouse, evidently with young, flew at him. As though impelled by an outer strength he threw the stick, which struck the bird and killed it. Once again the spectre of starvation was shoved into the background, this time by a miracle that Pritchard, a religious man, attributed to the goodness of the Creator. He knelt in humble, thankful prayer.

Strengthened by the flesh of the grouse he was following the creek when he found a bed of Psoralea, Indian Bread Root. The tuberous roots of Psoralea are quite edible being eaten by the Indians either cooked or raw. Pritchard found the effort of digging with a stick almost more than his pitiful condition would allow but he did get a few roots, some of which he ate raw and some he roasted. He remained along the creek, gaining strength from the Psoralea roots.

Eventually he left the creek to go to what appeared to be an elevation in the plains, only to discover that it was an island in a large lake.

Deciding to return to the creek he turned back and, to his great joy, saw Indians at a distance in a different direction. Changing his course he made [illegible] painful way to the place only to discover that the Indians were merely some low bushes. Whether the supposed Indians were aberrations caused by his weakened state, or a prairie mirage, they were the guiding hand that led to his rescue.

Recovering enough from his bitter disappointment to look around he was astounded to see two deserted wintering houses not far away. Thinking that they belonged to the North-West Company on the Qu'Appelle River he again moralized that there he would die, happy that at least his bones would be found. Why he would think he was near the Qu'Appelle is hard to understand as the Turtle Mountains must have been in plain sight to the south.

Shortly he found a piece of tarred cord, peculiar to the Hudson's Bay Company, in one of the houses and decided that he must be at the Company's Shell River Post. He then realized that was wrong as there were three houses at Shell River. The truth came to him suddenly. He was at the abandoned Hudson's Bay wintering post at Whitewater Lake, about sixty miles from his home fort near the mouth of the Souris River.

Greatly heartened by at last knowing where [illegible]was, and the possible chance that he might [illegible]ive, he had the further good fortune to find a discarded pair of moccasins and some socks in one of the buildings. Covering his feet, which were in a deplorable condition, with socks and the moccassins he set out in the direction that he hoped would take him home. That night he

reached a creek, probably Elgin Creek, which was familiar to him from previous buffalo hunts. Again he knelt in thankful prayer.

Struggling resolutely along near the evening of the following day he saw a band of Indians crossing the prairie. Too weak to overtake them he raised one of the mocassins on a stick. His signal was seen by two small boys, who came running to see what he was, but were so frightened by his appearance that he had difficulty persuading them to come near him. When the boys did come to him he was so overcome that he fell senseless at their feet.

When he revived the boys had signalled their father, who had carried him to the camp of several lodges. There all the drama of a revival from the dead was depicted on the faces of the women and children as they formed a silent, fearful circle around him. With his bones bare of even an atom of flesh, his paper-thin skin drawn over them like parchment, his blackened feet, and a dirty, scab-filled, forty day growth of beard and hair no wonder the Indians christened him "the cheepi."

After covering him with a blanket his benefactors carefully gave him a bit of pemmican and some water, then watched over him while he slept. The following day they placed him on a travois and set out for the fort. Upon arrival there he was so overcome by the miracle of his rescue that he again fainted away.

Hardly convinced that it really was John Pritchard, members of his own fort and the rival establishments gathered in a happy, subdued celebration, still fearful from his appearance that he wasn't really alive. John McKay, from the rival

Hudson's Bay fort, took over the task of nursing Pritchard, refusing to let him look in a mirror for fifteen days so frightening was the emaciated wanderer's facial appearance.

After a few days the clerk who had been his companion came to see him, and explained what had happened. He had caught the horses but was unable to find either Pritchard or their camp, and returned to La Bosse with the news of his companion's disappearance. So certain were Pritchard's friends and fellow workers of his death that after three weeks of his absence they referred to him as "poor deceased Pritchard."

With all the hardihood and resilience of the frontier man Pritchard recovered fully from his ordeal, and became Factor at Fort Experance, from which he retired in 1814, to become a colonist at Red River. But John Pritchard's lost wandering and struggle with, and rescue from death was discussed over the flickering flames of campfires for many years till the story became part of the lore of the South-West Corner.

The First Town

A train of several loaded wagons, with a small herd of cattle following, wound along the Commission Trail till it came to the small, deserted Mounted Police post at the east end of the Turtle Mountains.

After a brief halt at the post the owner of the train, B. B. LaRiviere, his son-in-law, Lee Severne, and the two other members of the train, moved a mile west where they came to a bend in the Long River. There, near the stream, on the south side of section 32-1-18, five miles north of the International boundary, they unloaded the wagons and pitched their tents on what was to become the site of the South-West Corner's first town.

It was spring 1877. LaRiviere had been in the district the previous fall hunting bear in the Mountains. Being an enterprising young man he

realized then the potential agricultural future of the unsettled land, and decided then to return and establish a trading center that would cater to the wants of the homesteaders that would surely come up the Commission Trail seeking land and new homes.

By early summer LaRiviere had his store and a home built, one on each side of the Trail, and was ready for trading. A year later Harrison brothers and W. Williams had built a grist mill and saw mill and were grinding grists and sawing lumber for the settlers. In 1880 they built a boarding house to accommodate the ever increasing number of homesteaders and settlers, and a livery barn to house their horses. Wakopa became the hub of settlement of the area.

LaRiviere was popular with the Indians who came to trade at his store and in recognition of their admiration a chief named the village, Wakopa (walk-a-paw) which meant "white father" in the Assiniboine tongue. The settlement had first been referred to as LaRiviere, after its founder.

Bustling Wakopa continued to serve the rush of settlement for some years till the Great Northern rail line went through to Brandon, and neighboring towns sprung up. The sawmill and grist mill were dismantled and many of the first homes disappeared. Morgan's store, an elevator and blacksmith shop were the last of later Wakopa, but they too disappeared when the rail line was abandoned.

But Wakopa is not a ghost town. The town site of Wakopa is still intact, with the plan of its streets still registered. And it can be truly said to be the

South-West Corners only one man town. It is owned by William Cullen, a former Killarney resident, who uses part of one of the original buildings in his saddle making business.

One winter morning twenty odd years ago, when I lived in British Columbia, the startling news came over the radio that a viscious blizzard was raking the barren, frozen plains of Manitoba, and that the residents of a backwoods hamlet in hills in the south part of the province were in dire straights.

The event received considerable coverage for a few days, and I listened with amusement as aspiring newscasters told of twenty and thirty foot depth snow lashed into a suffocating storm that had isolated the unfortunates of "Wah-Coe-Paw." Food was running low, heating fuel was gone, only a few candles supplied light.

Brave volunteers from a far-away town had failed to reach the beleaguered ones. A serious situation. Starvation or death by freezing was imminent. The rhetoric made B.C. a haven of sunshine that the frozen, glazed eyes of prairie dwellers turned to with longing.

At last the glad news. Hardy souls from "Wah-Coe-Paw", the pronunciation used, had succeeded in getting to Killarney. The crisis was over.

The good people of B.C. that shiverd for the fate of the Wakopians would have probably been surprised to know that the first purchase of the rescuers was the proper beverage to revive them from their ordeal. After all it had been a long storm, and stocks on hand had followed a natural course of evaporation.

But Wakopa was famous in British Columbia for a few days, as it will always be historically famous as the South-West Corner's first town.

Indian Retribution

Mrs. John Wright thought little of it when one summer day in the year 1881, she saw an Indian, with a young squaw riding double, hurrying down the trail on a laboring pony. Later they were followed by a band of feather-bedecked warriors, who also appeared to be in a hurry.

From their homestead near the Commission Trail, south of present day Melita, the Wrights maintained a guarded dis-interest in the Indians, bands of whom frequently passed up and down the trail, and roamed the countryside.

A few miles from the Wright homestead 22 year old John Stevens had built a shack and established himself as a homesteader. The Wrights were his closest neighbors.

As a sixteen year old Scotchman Stevens had enlisted in the Fifth Midlothian Mounted Rifles, with the intention of becoming an Imperial soldier. But at the end of his first term of service he decided to come to Canada. After a year or so of various jobs, and getting acquainted with the new country, the prospect of getting one hundred and sixty acres of land in a new and untamed area appealed to him, and he decided to become a homesteader.

In due time he arrived at his selected quarter and built himself a typical homesteaders shack. From it he was to witness an incident the memory of which was to remain with him the rest of his life.

Coming in from work on the evening of the day the Indian band had passed the Wright homestead Stevens saw smoke and flame in the coulee below his shack. There was the sound of drums, and milling about, and there appeared to be great excitement among the Indians gathered there. He payed little heed to the throb of drums and the chanting of dancers until screams of agony became part of the uproar.

John Stevens was not easily disturbed, but as the tempo of the disturbance below increased, the chilling screams sent shivers running through him. He was sure one of the Indians was being tortured but was at a loss as to what to do about it, though it was very much the adverse of his nature to think of a human being subjected to whatever was taking place. Contrary to the belief that Indians accepted pain with a stoicism that sealed their lips even to death, the victim was reacting with screams that, to him, were almost inhuman.

Stevens was tall, well built, and in fine physical condition, and had army training in how to take care of himself. He had a .44 calibre Smith and Wesson revolver, though few cartridges for it, and a double-barreled shotgun, but, though strongly inclined, he knew he would be foolhardy to interfere. He didn't regard the Indians of the area too highly, but he knew many of them were Sioux, some of whom could have been connected with the Custer massacre. He felt that a lot of them were arrogant, well armed, and not afraid of the white man, and in a highly fevered state, like that evident in the scene below, quite capable of killing.

As the evening shadows turned to darkness the crys and commotion lessened, and having finished his supper Stevens barred the shack door and went to bed. In the morning when he wakened, after a restless, troubled sleep, the Indians were gone and all was quiet.

After his breakfast he decided to investigate the scene of the disturbance, and, carrying his shotgun, he went down the sloping banks of the coulee to the spot.

The grass was trampled down and ashes from the fires were scattered about. Near the center of the area he saw what looked like two stones, one on top of the other. Going to them and lifting the top one he was horrified to see hair, blood, and a human head. Deep holes were burnt in the flesh of the cheeks, and death had evidently been finally administered by a crushing blow.

Nauseated and shaken by the evidence of such fiendish cruelty he replaced the stone and returned to his shack. He decided to go to the

Wrights for advice. A human had been murdered, and he felt the authorities should know.

Later he was to learn that the victim of the torture had had an affair with another brave's squaw, which led to the flight down the Trail and capture in the coulee. By tribal decree punishment for such philandering could be whatever the enstranged spouse dictated.

One of the most hideous forms of punishment practised by some tribes was to put the culprit in a hole in a standing position and fill dirt in up to his, or her, neck. Torture with burning brands was inflicted on the hapless one's head till he, or she, was dead, and the sadistic urge satisfied. John Stevens was an unwilling witness, and one of the few white people to ever be in contact with that barbarous orgy of punishment.

Greatly troubled he went to the Wright's homestead and told them what had happened, and said he thought the authorities should know. But the Wrights took a different view. They felt it was better not to interfere in a strictly tribal affair. They also felt the government would be little interested and would probably take the same attitude.

Still feeling that murder had been committed Stevens returned to his shack unsatisfied, but realized he could do little. The vision of the burned, crushed head bothered him, and steeling himself he decided to go and cover it. Arriving at the scene to his further horror he found that the coyotes had eaten the body down to the shoulders. Revolted and sick he covered it with dirt and piled stones over the spot to keep the animals from further maiming the remains.

He never went down into the coulee or near the spot again.

The memory of the chanting, the smoke and f[illegible] the chilling, agonized screams, and the appalling aftermath haunted John Stevens till he felt that the ghost of the murdered man must surely linger in the silent coulee that he could look down into from his door.

In spite of resolving to forget the incident it kept flooding back till he decided to leave the place. Giving up the homestead he roamed to many places, including service in the Boer War of 1900-1901, and panning for gold in British Columbia. But the memory of that day, its happenings, and the horrible climax was still fresh in his memory when he died in Winnipeg, at over eighty years of age.

The Town That Might Have Been

Whitewater Lake stretches for several miles along the level prairie at the northern foot of the Turtle Mountains.

Maintained by creeks that hurry down from the mountain during spring runoff, and periods of heavy rainfall, its shallow waters are favorite nesting and gathering grounds for waterfowl and shore birds of many species.

During the fur trade days of the Souris River posts and forts no doubt Whitewater was well known to the trappers, for its marshy reaches were ideal habitat for fine mink and muskrat. And in the years of early settlement it was quite famous as a waterfowlers paradise.

But to suggest that Whitewater Lake would be the site of a town that would dock large pleasure craft that plied back and forth on its saline, and sometimes slightly miasmic water, would require rather naive credulity. Yet such was the case.

Moberly was not to be a small, straggling, unplanned village that was typical of the early days. Rather it was to be a model town, with carefully planned streets, and a park in its center. Covering roughly eighty acres it had an esplanade that curved gracefully along the edge of the lake, which was shown as White Lake on the plan registered in the Land Titles Office on the 14th day of January, 1882.

Somewhere along that esplanade there were to be docks, and one can picture the ladies of the town, with their parasols and widely flounced, slim waisted skirts, strolling casually along the esplanade on a bright summer day, and waving to friends on the sleek pleasure craft, as depicted on

picture cards that appeared in London, England in the 1880's.

Neatly laid out on the square, Moberly's streets were wide, ninety-nine feet, and backed by sixteen foot alleys. Lots were fifty feet by one hundred and thirty feet, with an average of sixteen to the block. With seventy blocks of that dimension and several smaller ones the proposed town site could accommodate one thousand dwellings.

There was a market square near the south center of the town between West Main and St. Paul streets. Curving Walton Crescent edged five acre Turtle Park in the north center. The park could be entered from Barada or Twanda streets, or Homewood avenue. Truly a model town. But it wasn't to be.

Benjamin B. Johnston, resident of Emerson, Manitoba, purchased section 8, township 3, range 22, three miles east of present Deloraine, from the Hudson's Bay Company on the 8th day of February, 1881, for the sum of two thousand eight hundred and eighty dollars.

The plan of the town of Moberly was prepared under the provisions of the Manitoba Land Act by Joseph A. Carbert, Dominion Land Surveyor, at Emerson, December 15th, 1881. It was received and filed by A. P. Stewart, Registrar, as plan No. 1, on the 14th day of January, 1882. It was cancelled thirty-eight years later, on May 26th, 1920. William Renton of Deloraine purchased the subdivision of Moberly at tax sale in August, 1892, for $125.00. Thus the statistical story of the town of Moberly.

But the other part of the story, the part that

tells of the promotion of Moberly, the brochure pictures of boats filled with holidayers edging in to the dock, the picture postcards in London, England, the desirability of Moberly because of its proximity to the growing city of Brandon, its advantages over the rival town of Deloraine. An entrepeneurs coup, and the entrepeneur himself, the mysterious Benjamin B. Johnston.

The documented story of Moberly tells little of its founder, or why he selected a site for his town on the shallow-banked shore of Whitewater Lake. Was he an ingenuous visionary who really believed that Moberly would be the town of his dreams? Or was he an unvirtuous promoter seeking monetary gain from the promotion of questionable property? If that was the objective then as a promoters coup Moberly was a failure. Nowhere in the legal dealing with section 8 and the sub-division of Moberly, in the Land Titles Office in Boissevain, is there a single record of sale of, or application for title to, a single lot in Moberly.

In the booming days of the early 1880's land was the thing, and Emerson was the hub. The hopefuls, the greenhorns, and the eager gathered there to follow land sales. Sharp at 4 PM, in the afternoon, the crier appeared, vigorously ringing a large handbell as he strode up and down the street announcing in a trumpet-toned voice the parcels of land for sale that day. Years ago an octogenarian resident of Emerson recalled the bell ringing land sales, and the name, Benjamin Johnston. But he had no recollection of lots in the townsite of Moberly ever being part of a sale.

But of course not, the other part of the story

says. The lots were all sold to gullibles in Ontario, the United States, and even England. Everyone knows that no taxes were ever collected because [illegible] law said that mailed tax notices had to be registered, and the Municipality just couldn't afford the cost.

Before a tax notice can be presented, the purchase, or other transfer of property, must be registered with the Land Titles Office. That office then notifies the Municipality, which enters the property description and owners name in its rolls, after which it may issue the tax notice.

No where in the available records of Winchester Municipality dating back to that period is there a single record of purchase of a lot, or application for title to a lot, in the town of Moberly.

If, as the other part of the story says, the town of Moberly was only a promoters scheme why did Ben Johnston pay $4.50 per acre for sub-marginal land? Better land sold then for from $2.50 to $3.50 per acre. Two thousand eight hundred and eighty dollars for section eight, a lot of money in those days. And was it only by fortuitous circumstance that the promised railroad, which was variously supposed to run to Deloraine (Old) or north of Whitewater Lake, instead runs along the side of section eight, just one half mile from Moberly?

As I stroll through the grass on the townsite of Moberly a pipit's song fills the air from where he [illegible]ters high overhead. Again and again the clear, ringing notes float down, before he plummets down, like a miniature rocket, to land beside his nesting mate in the grass that could have been in Turtle Park.

Moberly, the town that might have been. A promoter's coup? We will never know.

Stampede

The year 1903 lived long in the memories of inhabitants as the year of one of the most dramatic events to ever take place in the South-West Corner.

By that time in settlement most of the homesteaders and settlers were owners of a good number of cattle. Barbed wire wasn't in too good supply and was expensive, so few had fenced pastures. The day of the open range was past, and my father took care of summer pasture for cattle owners by running a herd on the open grassland along the northeast corner of Whitewater Lake.

The usual charge for herding was fifty cents a month per head, and if a herder could gather a herd of some hundred head he realized a pretty [illegible] return for his summer's labor.

Two miles west Tom Stephenson, a crusty, old bachelor, also ran a smaller herd made up of a few of his own cattle, some belonging to cattle buyer Bill Stewart, and those of owners needing summer pasture.

The early days of September had been smiling and sunny, with the smoky haze of fall promising good weather for the harvest threshing, which was just getting underway.

It was the twelfth day of the month. It had been a day in the pattern of the previous ones, but a sudden change swept in with a north wind that blew hard and cold. Low, dark clouds built up in the fading, evening light.

The cattle shook their heads as Stephenson spurred up his pony and headed his herd for the home corral to the north. Some of the half-wild, spookier ones tried to turn back but his two faithful dogs kept the flankers up in their place and by riding hard, and swinging his lariat on any laggards he soon had the herd in the corral. A few big, soft snowflakes splattered against the poles of the corral gate as he swung it shut. He cussed the country, and headed for his shack to get his supper.

Sometime after finishing his supper he looked out to see what the weather was doing. It was still snowing, but not very hard, though the wind seemed to have increased somewhat. Stephenson shut the door and went to bed, sure the weather would be clear by morning. After all it

was only the middle of September, and a few snowflakes in September were not unusual in those days.

But Tom Stephenson, like everyone else in the country, was wrong. During the night the wind increased, and howling down over the prairie swept in the most disastrous storm that ever hit the area. When Stephenson opened his shack door the next morning there was two feet of snow piled against it, and he could only make out a dim blurr of the corral through the driving snow that swirled down in dense clouds.

He pulled on whatever warm clothes he could find and hurried out to see how the cattle were faring. They were gone. Buffeted and lashed by the storm they had smashed down a section of the corral and stampeded.

By ten o'clock the storm was abating somewhat so Stephenson mounted his cow-pony and calling his dogs set out in search of the cattle. He knew that they would go with the storm, which would take them towards the lake, and he hoped to find them in the shelter of the tall rushes and canes that grew out from the waterline. He tried to tell himself that the herd would be all right. But a sense of foreboding filled him as he rode along.

As he neared the lake he began to see evidence that he was on the right trail, but it wasn't until he was within a hundred yards or so of the water that he could see the first animals, standing knee deep in the slush and mud churned up by their feet. He knew then that his fears were only too true.

Driven relentlessly by the storm and their own terror the herd had stampeded right into the

lake, the ones behind shoving the leaders out into the soft mud bottom till they went down, to drown in the snow-clogged, icy water.

It was a grim sight. In places the bodies were almost piled on top of each other. Some had plunged out two or three hundred yards before they became exhausted and sank down. Many that were mired down but still alive kept up a low, terror-stricken bellowing that was like a dirge.

The storm had ended almost as quickly as it started and Stephenson rode for help. Soon the nearby settlers were gathered with teams, ponies, chains and ropes to pull the live animals to safety. With the temperature below the freezing mark it was a cold heart-breaking task, the more disheartening because many of the animals died after they were pulled ashore.

It was nightfall before the rescue work was finished and a tally made. Nearly half the herd had perished, over one hundred head had died in the mud and water that stopped their mad rush through the storm and darkness. It was a severe loss for the owners, particularly hard to face for those whose stooked crop was covered deep with snow.

With true fickleness the storm was followed by bright, warm weather that melted away the snow and lasted into a long, open fall that allowed the threshing of the crop to be finished.

Mocassin telegraph carried the news of the stampede almost as quickly as the later day telephone would have, and soon bands of Indians from North Dakota and Griswold arrived on the scene.

They set up their tepees, gathered some

wood, sharpened up their knives and went to work. With one, two and sometimes three ponies to a carcass they hauled the dead animals ashore, where the squaws took over the job of skinning. They then cut the better parts of the meat into long strips and hung it on racks of poles to dry in the sun in the same way that their forebears had dried the meat of the buffalo that had fed along the same lake edge not so very many years before.

It took many days for the task, with the stench getting stronger and the flys getting thicker each day. It was a bonanza for the Indians though, and the meat, waving like red blankets from the drying racks, meant a good winter for them. The hides, too, were a source of revenue which, fortunately, wasn't available every day.

Doctor Schaffner, later Senator Schaffner, health officer for the district, ordered three barrels of kerosene sent out from Boissevain with which to burn the refuse. The Indians frugally decided that would be a waste of good "bright light," oil, but they did pour enough on the pile of decomposed carcasses to send a towering column of black smoke into the air, which wrote finis to another episode in the history of the South-West Corner.

Murder in The South-West Corner

"Oh, yes! He was a nice enough fellow. Very quiet! Kept to himself mostly. But a good worker."

Those were the words my uncle Alec Grant used to describe Walter Gordon to me. But concealed beneath that quiet demeanor Walter Gordon had a character that allowed him to commit two brutal murders to get possession of a quarter section of land.

Alec Grant came from England in 1898. One of his first jobs in Canada was working on the farm of Leonard Thompson in the All Saints district, eight miles southwest of Boissevain.

Walter Gordon worked for Thompson at the same time as Alec Grant. But Uncle Alec never suspected that the quiet man he was working with was capable of committing murders that would trigger a nation-wide search that ended with a dramatic capture as the murderer was

going up the gangplank of a troopship bound for the Boer War in South Africa.

Charlie Daw came to the Whitewater district from North Devonshire in England. He was a cheerful, hard-working young fellow, about 24 years of age. After a year or so in the district he bought the homestead of Charley Sankey, 9 miles southwest of Boissevain, and started farming for himself.

Jacob Smith, a powerfully built man, 45 or 46 years of age, had come to Whitewater from Croyden, Ontario. He worked on farms in the district, and was highly regarded as a workman and a man of good character. His one weakness was occasional drinking sprees, but during those periodic bouts he was unobtrusive and mildly good humored.

An attack of pneumonia triggered the incident that was to hold the district in uncertain, suspicious suspense for two years. Following a visit to his home in England Charlie Daw contracted a severe attack of pneumonia, from which he failed to recover properly. In failing health he decided to sell his farm and return to England. It was a fateful decision for him.

Walter Gordon came from Whitby, Ontario in April, 1898. He was the same age as Charlie Daw, of average build, weighing about 180 pounds. His distinguishing features were a rather narrow, tapering forehead, and several gold-crowned front teeth. He claimed to have had mining experience.

Gordon worked on farms in the Whitewater and Boissevain districts, including that of Leonard Thompson, then left for New Mexico in

the fall of 1899. Returning to Whitewater the following spring he offered to buy Daw's farm. Whether he had learned of Daw's wishing to sell his farm while he was still in New Mexico never was definitely established. But it was believed that he had, and that he became obsessed with the desire to have the farm.

Shortly after returning from New Mexico he offered Daw six thousand four hundred dollars for the land, implements and standing crop. He claimed that while in New Mexico he and a partner had discovered a mining claim, which they had sold for $10,000, and he would use his share to pay Daw for the farm, but that he, Daw, would have to wait a while for the money as the mining deal hadn't been quite completed. Still unwell, and anxious to sell the farm, Daw agreed, and a bill of sale was drawn up by barrister N. P. Buckingham, in Boissevain, on July 16th.

Following the signing of the agreement Gordon moved in with Daw and Jacob Smith, who Daw had hired to look after his farm while he was ill.

A few days later Gordon gave James Jackson, a man he had hired, instructions to go to a hayfield in the Mountains and stay several days making hay. That was his first step in his murderous plan to acquire Daw's farm.

On the last day of July he and Charlie Daw drove in Gordon's buggy to Whitewater, where they bought groceries. They then left to drive to Boissevain. It was 5 o'clock in the afternoon.

The purpose of the drive to Boissevain was never revealed, nor which of the two suggested it. Nor was it known whether or not Daw knew

that Gordon was carrying a .32 calibre revolver. Somewhere east of Whitewater the two men were met by Mrs. Brondgeest, a lady belonging to a pioneer family of the district. Gordon was sitting on the right-hand side of the buggy, and driving. Somewhere after meeting Mrs. Brondgeest he shot Daw twice in the head with the revolver. After covering Daw's body with grass and brush in a willow-edged draw he drove on to Boissevain.

Gordon returned to the farm late that evening. Smith had gone to Deloraine on one of his occasional celebrations and with the hired man safely away making hay Gordon took a stoneboat to bring Daw's body to the farm, where he dumped it in an unused well. Partially screened by willows the wellhole was some seventy-five yards down the slope of the coulee that the house stood on.

Smith, unexpectedly, arrived back at the farm the next morning, and the scene was set for a second murder. During the course of the morning he and Gordon got into a violent quarrel over payment for feed that Gordon had bought from Smith. In the heat of the argument Smith accused Gordon of harming Daw, whose absence had aroused his suspicions.

Gordon ran to the house and seizing the revolver that had killed Daw he shot twice at Smith, missing with both shots. Smith picked up a stone to defend himself with and, foolishly brave, held his ground. In a killers rage Gordon then grabbed a shotgun and fired one shot, which partially hit Smith. Realizing Gordon's deadly intent to kill him Smith started to run. Gordon caught up to

him and shot him in the back. Smith staggered a few yards and fell, dead. Gordon waited around all day, intending to shoot anyone who might find the body. At nightfall he dumped it in the well on top of his other victim.

There was an unknowing witness to the shooting of Jacob Smith. S. Graham was on his way to a hayfield past the Daw farm when he heard shots, and saw two men running over a field north of the house. He observed one of them fall down but assumed it was just the young fellows skylarking, and went on to the hayfield. That anyone could take such a casual view of unusual actions, including gunshots, was indicative of the shrug-of-the-shoulders attitude with which questions regarding Daw and Smith were later answered.

The day following the shooting of Smith, Tom Ellis, who lived on the adjoining section, went to the Daw farm for tobacco. When he asked Gordon where Daw and Smith were Gordon told him that he had paid Smith for the feed and he had left, but didn't say where he was going. And that Daw had gone to Boissevain and probably left for England.

A day or two later young John Brondgeest went to the Daw farm. He mentioned to Gordon that coming up the ravine, that was on the road to Boissevain, he had seen a lot of dried blood on a spot where the grass and brush was tramped down. Gordon told him that Smith's dog had fought a badger there, and was so badly cut up that they had to shoot it. The dog had been howling, and looking for its master. Gordon, afraid its

actions would draw attention to the well, shot it, and added it to the well's gruesome contents.

Walter Gordon appeared to take over Daw's farm, and though the absence of Daw and Smith caused some comment most neighbors appeared to forget the matter. Most were occupied with the coming harvest, and besides it really wasn't unusual for people to come and go without any particular explanation. The district was still more or less in a state of settlement, with considerable changing of ownership, and many itinerant farm workers.

But Tom Wilson, a well known, pioneer farmer, with large holdings of land near Whitewater, didn't believe Gordon's stories. Following up his suspicions he consulted Police inspector Forester in Brandon, who promised to begin an investigation.

Gordon learned of Wilson's contacting Forester, and, it was rumored later, waited at Whitewater station with the intention of shooting him. But Wilson was forewarned and got off the train when it stopped for water at the tank a half mile east of the village.

Sometime later a neighbor going to the Daw farm found it deserted. Alarmed, Gordon had fled. His disappearance aroused fresh interest and suspicion, but as yet there was nothing definite to connect him with Daw and Smith's absence, and interest flagged again.

In the days that followed Gordon was variously reported to have been in Souris, Deloraine and Estevan. But it was not until news came that a Canadian made buggy, with a bloodstained floor, had been found near Towner, North Dakota, that

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a rather belated search of the farm was made and the well, with its grisly contents, discovered.

Dr. Schaffner, coroner, presided at an inquest in Boissevain. The badly decomposed bodies made the task a most nauseating one. Identification was established by known physical characteristics, and wearing apparel, including in Daw's case, a belt he always wore. A .32 calibre bullet had lodged at the base of Daw's skull. Another, believed of the same calibre had passed through his head. Shot was found in Smith's head and back.

Following the inquest a formal charge of murder was laid against one, Walter Gordon, formerly of Whitewater, Manitoba, whereabouts unknown. It was the end of October, and the suspicions about Gordon had been confirmed. But bringing him to justice was to involve more mystery, and a search of many, many months. A reward was offered for information leading to his capture.

His indicated escape to the United States complicated the task of apprehending him. Border regulations and crossings were not checked as thoroughly as in later years, and no doubt his assumed entry into the States would be made illegaly. Once there he could hide himself, with little hope of detection.

The efforts to locate Gordon stalled with a report that he was in Mexico, but were renewed when it was confirmed in July, 1901, that a former resident of the district had seen and talked with him in Duluth. During the conversation Gordon said he was going to go to South Africa.

It was due to Ed Allen, Boissevain Town Constable, that a picture of the wanted Gordon was printed in Eastern Canada, and in Chicago newspapers. The circulation of the picture revealed a bizarre, though possibly debatable, period in Gordon's flight.

A young friend visiting a Toronto detective happened to see the picture, and immediately recognized it as that of a man he had worked with on a rubber plantation in Brazil. The man was known as Campy Kelly. Kelly was a good worker, but was not popular, and when he slashed a man with whom he was quarelling with a knife, he was asked to leave. The young man was positive the picture was that of Campy Kelly.

It isn't known when but eventually Gordon enlisted in the United States Army, and was stationed at Fort Meade, South Dakota. A fellow soldier happened to see a Chicago newspaper that carried a brief account of the murder, and a picture of Gordon. Believing Gordon to be the man of the picture he confronted him, asking him about the murder. Gordon panicked again, deserted from the army, and made his way to British Columbia. There he again took refuge in the army, enlisting under the name of John Gray, in a troop of the army training for service in the Boer War.

The troop was ordered to Halifax preparatory to embarking for South Africa, and no doubt Gordon felt he was on his way to safety. But the case had received considerable publicity and Detective Arthur Power, of Halifax, aware that Gordon might be using the obscurity of the army as a hiding place, in checking the newly arrived troop spotted a man he was sure was Gordon.

Aware that the troop was scheduled to embark he hurriedly wired to Winnipeg for detailed information and a full description of Gordon. Satisfied that the man he was after was the killer of Charlie Daw and Jacob Smith he arrested Gordon on the Halifax dock as he was preparing to go up the gangplank to board the troopship for South Africa, and safety.

A restless crowd thronged the C.P.R. station platform in Boissevain, February 11th, 1902, when Walter Gordon was taken from the afternoon train and hurried to the town jail. There were some threats, and many angry faces. Daw and Smith had been well liked.

A preliminary hearing took place the following day in Wright's Hall. Magistrate William Gordon presided, with Prosecutor Caldwell, of Brandon, and Magistrate John Morrow defence. With the charge read the prosecution was about to proceed when William Hyndman, police investigator who had returned Gordon to Boissevain, stunned the hearing with the information that he had obtained a full confession from the accused.

In the confession Gordon stated that he had shot Charlie Daw twice between 6 and 7 P.M. on July 31st, covered the body and gone on to Boissevain. The confession also admitted to the shooting of Jacob Smith, and also that the mining claim sale, with which he persuaded Daw to sign the farm bill of sale, was a fabrication. Throughout the hearing Gordon maintained a stolid silence, and showed little emotion.

Following the hearing in Boissevain and commitment to trial Gordon was removed to Brandon

jail. His father, John Gordon, of Brooklin, Ontario, visited him there in March.

Walter Gordon went on trial for murder in Brandon Court House April 20th, 1902, twenty-one months after his shooting of Charlie Daw and Jacob Smith. H. M. Howell, KC, of Winnipeg acted as defence lawyer in the trial, held before Judge Dubuc.

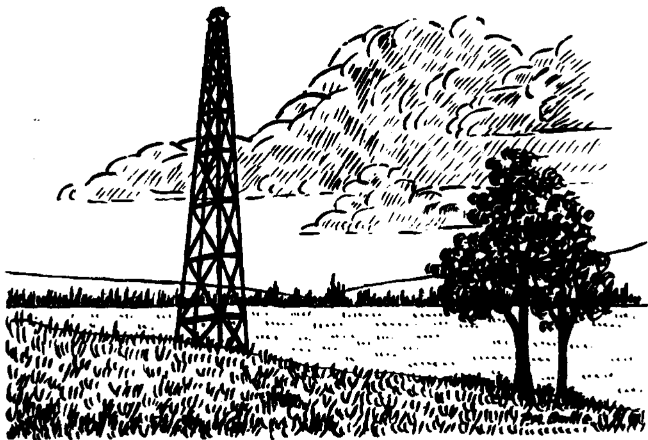
Sergeant J. F. Sears on the 13th U.S.A. Cavalry of Fort Meade, gave evidence that while at Fort Meade the accused had admitted to having trouble in Manitoba. Local residents gave testimony that the accused was a nice enough fellow, but reserved, and there was some attempt by the defence to question Gordon's confession. But, as expected, Walter Gordon was convicted of the murder of Charlie Daw and Jacob Smith, and sentenced to be hanged between the hours of 8:00 A.M. and 10:00 A.M., on the 20th day of June, 1902.

Promptly at 8:00 A.M. on the appointed day of June 20th, Walter Gordon payed for the murder, of Charlie Daw and Jacob Smith, on the gallows erected in the Brandon Jail courtyard. He was buried in the courtyard one hour later.

The aftermath of the Gordon case, which has had no equal in crime history in Manitoba, lingered long, and left many unanswered questions. It is unquestioned that Walter Gordon was a dual character whose malevolent side pushed him to murder to satisfy his avaricious desire to acquire Daw's farm.

After his confession and throughout his trial he maintained a stolid, uncompromising silence, though it was revealed at the trial that he had tied

Daw's body to the axle of his buggy to transport it to the old well, rather than using a stoneboat, as first assumed. The body had fallen and dragged, leaving the bloodstains that puzzled young Brondgeest. Hardly the actions associated with a "nice enough fellow." Perhaps the picture of "Campy" Kelly at the Brazil rubber plantation was more accurate.



Liquid Gold

Millions of years ago decaying minute plant, insect, and marine animal life of the vast, shallow ocean waters of the earth were changed to petroleum by bacterial action, heat, and pressure from the sediment which covered them. That rock-forming sediment absorbed the oil, named petroleum from the latin, petro, meaning rock, and oleum, meaning oil. That is the generally accepted, scientific theory of the forming, and containing of, petroleum.

Since the ancient Egyptians first lubricated the wheels of their racing chariots with 'rock oil', from ground seepages, petroleum has become nature's most valuable gift to mankind. It is the liquid gold of civilization. And, as with the coal, when distributing her gifts Nature smiled on the South-West Corner, Manitoba's only petroleum producing area.

Fifty odd years ago W. Thompson, an entrepreneur from the United States, arrived in Melita. What information triggered his idea of an oil empire in the district isn't known, or what his qualifications as an oil man were, but he used whatever persuasive methods were necessary to interest a group of Brandon business men and Melita resident, W. R. Brockington, into forming the Wheat City Leasehold and Development Company, whose purpose was to drill for, and produce, petroleum.

Details regarding the company are sketchy but under the guidance of its founder rights were secured in the Broomhill district north of Melita.

The company went into operation with the beginning of drilling, of what was to be Manitoba's first oil well, west of Broomhill, in October, 1929.

Information regarding the drilling is almost non-existent, but it was a true 'wildcat', with drilling only reaching a depth of a few hundred feet, nowhere near a possible oil producing strata. Through official decision the unusual ninety-

nine year leases, which had been secured, were cancelled and returned to the lessors.

The first ever oil exploration ended with that feeble effort, which served only to confirm the general belief, at that time, that oil in the South-West Corner was only an imaginative dream to be classed with flying to the moon. Both of those impossibilities have become realities.

What led to the belief that there was liquid gold beneath the fertile farming land of the Lyleton district isn't known. There had never been any indications of oil seeps or gas in water wells, both of which sometimes indicate the presence of petroleum.

Little interest had been stirred by the abortive 1929 Broomhill promotion, and when in the spring of 1946 it was rumored that an oil rig from Texas was arriving to drill for oil near Lyleton the news was received with much scepticism, and the expressed believe that the promoters of the venture, like those of seventeen years before, had lingered bare-headed in the Texas sun too long.

However the sceptics were proven wrong, to a degree, and for the following two or three years Lyleton was proudly able to announce itself as "the oil capital of Manitoba".

The unlikely became a reality with the arrival in Peirson by rail, of a drilling rig owned by R. J. Owens, of Oreston, Texas. Without the trucks and trailers of today the rig was moved to the White farm, section 5-3-27, three miles southeast of Lyleton, by winch and flatbeds, where Jock McMurdo, a resident of Lyleton, who had the distinction of being the only Canadian to work on the rig in the drilling operation, had dug the

sump pit that is a necessary part of an oil well drilling.

There on the White farm, under the financing and promotion of the Souris Valley Oil Company, the well that was to prove that there was oil in the South-West Corner was drilled. That well led to the discovery of a virgin oil field that has expanded into a major producer, with all the financial and social benefits associated with a successful oil field development.

With a crew of three drillers, three derrick men, three motor men and the tool push, the summer long drilling sank a well to the Mississipian formation 6000 feet below the surface.

The actual drilling of an oil well in the district created a vast surge of interest, with the drilling site taking on an almost carnival atmosphere. On weekends crowds from Brandon, Estevan, Minot, and all the local towns gathered to watch the drilling, with it being a bonanza day if there happened to be a change of drill bit or a core sampling, which always require special activity on the part of the drilling crew. Peirson storekeeper, Walter Murray, added to the holiday atmosphere by setting up a hot dog stand to alleviate the hunger pangs that developed after hours of watching.

The grand climax came with the news that the well was a producer. The impossible was a fact. It was the opening of a new era in the South-West Corner.

Following the initial success of well #1 three other wells were sunk in adjoining fields. Unfortunately acidization produced water problems and the wells, including #1, were not financially

practical. Their pumps sit dormant, possibly awaiting the day when new techniques will bring them back to production.

The discovery of crude oil at Lyleton, though not successful production wise, established without doubt that a productive oil field in the area was a distinct possibility and new, extensive seismographic testing for oil bearing strata covered most of the South-West Corner west of highway #10. Those tests resulted in the drilling of a producing well in the Daly district, six miles southwest of Virden, by California Standard Oil Company, in January, 1951.

The well proved a success, with a good flow of good grade crude oil. Rapid development and drilling activity followed, with spirited competition for oil rights by various companies.

Imperial Oil, British American, Shell Oil, Trans-Prairie Pipeline and others, including the founder of the original well at Lyleton, the Souris Valley Oil Company, moved in rigs that pushed their towers high above fields around Virden and in the town itself. There are several producing wells beneath the towns streets. By the end of the year Virden had taken over as the oil capital of Manitoba.

Further expansion of the South-West Corner's oilfield was indicated with the drilling by California Standard Oil Company, in 1952, of a well on the E. A. McGregor farm, section 30-1-26, two miles west of Waskada. Core samplings and oil flow of the well were promising, leading to further test drilling and the later development of the present highly productive Waskada oil field. By 1983 there were one hundred and seventy-five

producing wells in the Waskada field. Waskada had become the oil capital of Manitoba.

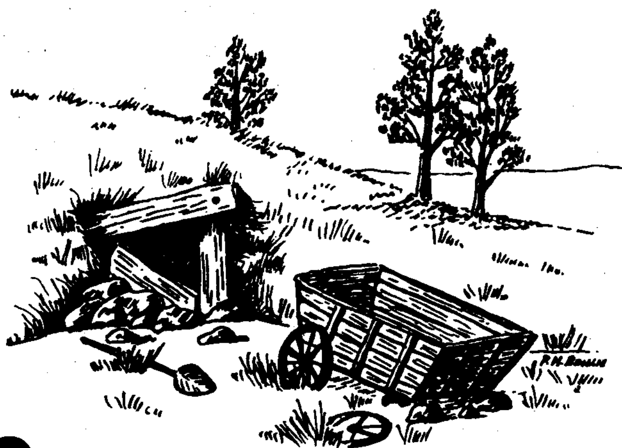
The Waskada field is a well-designed field, probably one of the best in Western Canada. Arrow straight in line rows of nodding pumps, with their container tanks, stretch for miles in a checkerboard pattern. Well-gravelled service roads, just wide enough for the big tanker trucks, use as little as practical of the farm land. That planning cooperates well with the general large scale farming of the district and lowers the loss of farm to the minimum.

With the development of the oil field the pretty village of Waskada, and the surrounding district, blossomed with all the activity associated with an oil field, and the glamour of possible financial benefits. But the farming community didn't hang up their plough shares and back their combines into the fence corner to await the reaping of oil largess. Knowing that agriculture is, and always will be, the heart of the South-West Corner, Waskada and community continue on the tenor of their ways, ways that were established by the pioneers long before oil was even dreamed of.

Indications of the scope of South-West Corner petroleum bearing strata was shown with the drilling in 1953, again by California Standard of a producing well on the farm of Jake Dyck, three miles east of Whitewater, near the south side of Whitewater Lake. Three more wells on adjacent land were all brought into production, and though those wells were thought to only have a production period of possibly twenty years they are all still pumping.

Recent drilling on the slope of the Turtle

Mountains a few miles southwest of Boissevain has established a brand new field, with eleven wells now in production. A field of seven or eight wells has been in production northeast of Hartney for several years, and two new wells have gone into production in the Lake Oscar area of the Turtle Mountains near the site of two wells that have been producing for several years. And on the southwest outskirts of Deloraine pumps on three recently drilled wells are bringing up the liquid gold with which Mother Nature so richly endowed the South-West Corner.



Black Diamonds

During the Carboniferous period of the era in the formation of the earth known as the Paleozoic, which occured 280 million years ago, tree and plant growth covered the then forming con-

tinents. Later stupendous land upheavals covered the tree growth and vegetation with massive weights of earth. Chemical action and the enormous pressures exerted by the earth covering formed the vegetation into coal, 'black diamonds.'

That Nature had favored the South-West Corner with one of her most valuable evolutionary gifts became known when coal was discovered in the Turtle Mountains, the only area in Manitoba to ever have producing coal mines, and, so far the only established area in Manitoba with coal fields.

History doesn't tell us who was the first person to make use of the soft, lignite coal that was formed from the vegetation that covered the South-West Corner millions of years ago. Perhaps a bison hunter dropped a piece, broken from one of the ravine seams, into his cooking fire, and wondered, curiously, at how the black 'wood' burned.

On his journey along the Mountains in 1857, John Palliser's expedition turned away to the north-west to Fort Ellice. When crossing the Souris River Doctor James Hector, medical doctor, geologist and naturalist with Palliser, found and recognized a lump of coal. He believed it came from Roche Percee, where the Estevan coal fields were later developed. But far more probable it had come from a seam of one of the strata-bearing creeks that drain into the Souris River from the western slopes of the Mountains. And quite possibly Doctor Hector's find was the first discovery of South-West Corner coal.

To an unknown well digger must go the dis-

tinction of being the first recorded person to find and use South-West Corner coal. Near the settlement village of La Riviere (Wakopa) along the Commission Trail at the southeast edge of the Turtle Mountains the unknown, whose labor divulged the presence of coal, decided to dig a well, in the summer of 1879.

The unknown digger wasn't successful in his quest for water, but at twenty feet he uncovered a shiny seam of coal. Lumps of the coal taken to the well top burned well in a fire kindled there. The whole output taken from the three foot deep seam burned bright and hot, and no doubt the well digger had visions of a remunerative mine that would supply fuel for the stoves of the settlers that would soon be occupying the fertile, prairie land that extended away further than the eye could see.

If the well digger entertained such visions they never came to fruition. It was three years later at the opposite end of the Mountains that another coal strike was made. That find was to lead to the first actual mining of the coal, and was the beginning of a period in the South-West Corner that saw the birth of proposed rail lines, the formation of mining companies, actual production from several mines, and a rising and falling atmosphere of hope and excitement that was to last for over forty years.

Two miles from the International Boundary, at a point approximately fourteen miles southwest of present Deloraine, coal could be purchased from Lennox mine in 1882 for two dollars per ton. The exact location of that first venture into the use of one of Nature's gifts to the South-West Corner,

and who it was that dug the 'black diamonds' that had been created aeons before, is not known.

Though the operation and fate of the Lennox mine is hidden in obscurity there is little doubt its operation was instrumental in the establishment of a second mine, the Voden. Those two embryo mines confirmed the fact of extensive deposits of good quality lignite coal in the area, and broke the way for the excitement and activity that was to create the mining history of Deloraine and the South-West Corner.

The Voden's record is blurred also, but it was located near the Lennox, and produced, it is believed, from 1885 to 1888. Like the Lennox its output must have been all used locally. Water was a problem, as it was to be in later mines. A quite efficient pumping system controlled the problem till a cave-in buried the pump and ended the mines operation.

The end of the Voden mine was to see the beginning of the period of production that was to draw the attention of financial circles and tantalize the Deloraine district with a promise of economic abundance that never really materialized.

The formation and incorporation under the Manitoba Joint Stock Companies Incorporation Act in January, 1889, of the Manitoba Coal Company Limited, was the first definite move towards the mining of the coal on a larger scale, with a volume that would not only meet local demands but that would reach out for a wider marketing field, and the consequent benefits to Deloraine, and the whole area.

Manitoba's first ever coal company was headed by a Killarney resident, David Hyssop,

and had its head office in Winnipeg. Its capital stock was $49,000, derived from the sale of 490 shares valued at $100 each. The energetic directors of the young company put the mine on section 13-1-24 into immediate pick and shovel production, and prepared to install machinery for an efficient operation that would mine a tonnage that would meet an increasing demand.

Wood from the poplar, oak and birch stands in the Mountains had supplied fuel for the district since the first days of settlement. But the use of coal was increasing and demand was greater than supply. The Manitoba Coal Company had reason to be optimistic.

The growing mining prospects awakened interest in the transportation possibilities. It was an interest that was to create some manipulation, considerable rivalry, and several prospective railways, but no railway.

Previous to the coal mining development a charter had been issued to both the Manitoba South-Western Colonization Railway and the Turtle Mountain and Rock Lake Railway Company, both of who would purportedly run lines to the Turtle Mountains. Neither company met their obligation. If either had they would have been in an advantageous position to provide the transportation so necessary to the development of the coal fields.

The Canadian Pacific, already through Deloraine, didn't display much interest till it was known that an American line, the Northern Pacific, was doing surveys with the view of running a line to serve both the Turtle Mountain and Estevan fields. However the Northern Pacific's in-

terest ended with the survey, probably because of the C.P.R. renewed interest and better location.

A fourth proposed line, the Turtle Mountain and Manitoba Railway, was to run from the coal fields near the border northwest to the Manitoba-N.W.T. (Saskatchewan) border. Another proposed rail line that created a flurry of interest was to run from Bismark in the newly formed state of North Dakota to the coal fields in Manitoba. The alert, business-men Americans were aware of the financial potential of coal for the American northwest. Deloraine coal had drawn considerable favorable interest from the news media and financial circles in New York. In contrast Winnipeg and Brandon investors showed little interest.

In late 1889 a new company entered the transportation field when the Brandon and South-Western Railway Company was granted a charter. Formed by the Manitoba Coal Company in a bid to get the railroad essential to its mining hopes, and given a government land grant and promise of cash assistance it seemed that a railway for the coal fields was assured. It was hoped that the proposed line from the International Border through Deloraine to a point at, or near, Brandon would be the impetus to get the coal fields somewhat stuttering operations to a full and profitable level. But like the other rail lines it was never built, though some preliminary work was done.

During the following years several mines, including the Salter, Henderson and McArthur were operated at various locations with fairly good success. But water was usually a problem and without financial backing and a rail line to

carry the coal to an expanded market they were not profitable and eventually ceased operations.

The "dirty thirties" coupled with a world-e depression revived the South-West Corner coal industry for a brief span in which it proved an economic blessing to the district during the years of swirling dust clouds and rainless skys.

In 1939 John Nestibo reopened the Salter mine on section 13-1-24, southeast of Goodlands, and one year later contractor George Cain put the former Henderson mine, on the same section, into production.

By hard work, ingenuity and cooperation from their inexperienced miners both operators put their mines on a mostly winter production that provided efficient, low-cost fuel, badly needed employment, and a moral stimulant to the district that couldn't be measured in dollars.

The two mines employed from forty to fifty men each, and provided business for truckers hauling the coal to Deloraine and nearby towns. Two carloads of coal were shipped from the Cain mine to Winnipeg and buyers from North Dakota trucked coal across the border to local towns until the U.S. authorities imposed an embargo on Canadian coal. But the greater part of the mines output was used locally.

Aware of losing a market to the Turtle Moun- coal Estevan and Bienfait coal companies cut es. Unable to compete with the financially backed, strip-mined coal prices John Nestibo closed the Salter mine in 1938. George Cain sold out to an Estevan based company, the Goodlands Coal Company in 1939. That Company operated the mine till 1943 when wartime labor shortage

forced it to close, virtually ending the days of South-West Corner coal.

The coal is still there beneath the hills and along the creek enbankments, and though its promise did not reach its potential it created an era in the South-West Corner enjoyed by no other part of Manitoba.

The Friends of Chain Lakes

On a low, rounded knoll beside provincial highway 23, seven miles south of Hartney, Manitoba, a neat row of headstones stand in memory of members of a group of settlers that were unique to the South-West Corner. They were members of the religious sect, the Society of Friends, or as commonly known, Quakers.

George Fox, founder of the society, called

upon his followers to "tremble at the word of the Lord." In his official capacity an American magistrate, Gervase Bennet, aware of the exhortation, referred to the Friends as "quakers", which caught on and quickly became the name generally used in connection with the Friends.

My first knowledge of Quakers was the picture of a rather portly gentleman with a wide rolled-brim hat, dressed in a single-breasted white waistcoat, thigh length single-breasted coat and knee-length breeches. His white stockings were encased in round-toed, slightly turned up shoes. That picture adorned the Quaker puffed wheat box, the contents of which I would substitute, if the opportunity presented itself, for the oatmeal porridge that was the mainstay of my boyhood breakfasts.

I used to study that picture as that of a person from a far-off land, little knowing members of the sect which affected that style of dress, that of the period of King Charles II, had settled a district not twenty miles away.

In the late 1890's families of the Friends faith left their homes in Ontario to 'go west' to Manitoba. The Dales and John Matthew Hodgson were amongst the first to arrive in the Chain Lake-Hartney district. Alma Dale and Mr. Hodgson were to become very prominent in the settlement of the Chain Lakes district.

Other families, the James', Bakers, Godfreys, Walmsleys, Whetters, and many others followed to take up land in the community and build their lives around the belief and teaching of the Friends Society. Though none dressed in the traditional style of my friend of the puffed wheat box they

did still use the idioms of speech, thee and thou, associated with the Quaker philosophy.

The first meeting of the Friends was held at the home of Alma Dale in Hartney, January 3rd, 1899. At that meeting it was decided to build a Meeting House, the Friend's term for a place of worship. A committee headed by John Hodgson was appointed to select a site and supervise construction. Building of the Meeting House started in August on the knoll now occupied by the small cemetery. Mr. Hodgson had donated three acres of land for the site. Friends in Ontario, Pennsylvania and England contributed over six hundred dollars towards the buildings cost.

A plain building outside its interior reflected the quiet dignity and belief in the Creator that is the basis of the Friends' faith. An outstanding feature was the small choir loft, high above, and opposite the pulpit. It is interesting to note that $1486.75 had been raised for the construction cost. Cost of the building was $1487.02, leaving a treasury deficit of exactly twenty-seven cents.

The first meeting was held in the new building on the 15th of October, and Alma Dale, who played such an important part in the establishment of the community, was engaged as minister at a salary of five hundred dollars per annum. She held that position till ill health forced her to resign nine years later.

Alma Dale was of the spirit of the pioneer west. An excellent judge of horses she covered her parish with a team of nimble, cream-colored ponies at speeds that todays equivalent would bring her a speeding ticket. During the building of the meeting house she pushed a saw and

wielded a hammer, even in the shingling of the roof.

Following the widespread union of other religious denominations across Canada the Friends' Chain Lakes Meeting House became the Dand United Church, in 1925. Fourteen years later it was moved to the village of Dand, where it still serves the community.

The establishing and development of a community in the early days of settlement centered largely around the church. The building of character, the guiding of life, and the accomplishment of aims by the Chain Lakes Society of Friends left a heritage that is proudly carried on by the present generation.

Cartwright Gold Rush

There were no bearded miners slamming down pokes of gold on the bar and calling for drinks for the house. There were no brocade-vested gamblers riffling the cards with slender, avaricious fingers, nor painted dance-hall girls dancing to the tinny music of the player piano in the smoky haze of the corner saloon.

No! There wasn't even a saloon. But there was the vibrant, stirring magic of gold in the air in Cartwright.

It was summer, 1931, and rumor said gold had been discovered along Cartwright's Badger Creek. Impossible! Ridiculous! Where would gold come from in Badger Creek, a small, quiet stream that meanders through the wheat fields around Cartwright, to end up in Rock Lake to the north?

No craggy mountains, no precipitous canyons, no rushing creek thundering down from the hidden mother lode. Just impossible! But it wasn't. There was gold on Badger Creek. It was even in the gravel from the creek bed that was being used to gravel the local highway. And as the news spread Cartwright bloomed with that special aura that surrounds gold, and the town's residents began to dream of the golden metal rather than the wheat that prairie farmers are supposed to dream about.

Just who it was that discovered Badger Creek's golden promise isn't known. Supposedly an unknown, walking the creek's edge, thrilled to the dull glow of pea-sized pebbles in the clear water. They were gold. Possibly the gravel shovellers wondered at the yellow dust that clung to their

boots. An assay of the gravel showed gold, the magic metal.

The news of gold spreads like an uncontrolled tide, like a stirring breeze that seeks all corners. And so it was with Cartwright gold. In feverish haste inchoate miners arrived from Winnipeg, and local hopefuls sharpened mining claim stakes. The Badger Creek Syndicate was formed, and obtained staking rights along the creek as far as Rock Lake. A tent town blossomed on the south side of the town as local accommodation was taxed far beyond its limit.

Richard Cox, Recorder of Mines, arrived from Winnipeg, and set up an office to record claims, and Dr. J. S. DeLury, head of the Mining and Geological Department of the University of Manitoba, also arrived to assess the situation.

Excitement continued to build. In early June an enthusiastic Argonaut, possibly with visions of a second Klondike, phoned the Winnipeg Tribune to say that farmers were renting sleeping accommodation in their barns at two dollars per night, supply your own blankets, and that eggs in Cartwright were selling for one dollar apiece. At that time eggs in Cartwright, and everywhere else, were ten to fifteen cents a dozen; the early throes of the Depression.

Activity maintained a rapid pace, with the sound of sledges meeting wood ringing up and down the creek as claim stakes were driven to indicate the extent of each hopefuls golden property.

H. H. Kinley, member of a long established Cartwright family, was one of the local people who drove the stakes for a recorded claim. He

didn't pan for the elusive metal but he recalls some who did, including Helmer Guns, who was unofficially credited with being the first to pan gold from the gravel of Badger Creek. Mr. Kinley doesn't recall any cases of claim jumping or gun play, in the tradition of the famous California and Klondike gold rushes.

With a Mines Branch report of over one hundred claims staked the Hudson's Bay Mining and Smelting Company sent an official to Cartwright to investigate the improbable. Though confirming the presence of gold his findings were that it was 'flour' gold, very fine, and difficult to recover, and not present in sufficient volume to warrant further investigation.

According to the report on Cartwright gold by Dr. DeLury, following his visit to Cartwright, the Badger Creek's one hundred and fifty foot deep channel was formed by glacial melt run-off from the glacier which covered the land thousands of years ago. Retreating to the south it carried with it fine gold ground from the gold-bearing rock formations far to the north. His report stated that gold could only be present in minimal quantities.

Following those reports the Cartwright gold rush languished into becoming just a part of South-West Corner history, with claim stake post No. 4, claim No. 10, and a map of the staked claims in the Cartwright Museum being the last remaining evidence of Manitoba's only placer gold rush. But as a heritage of that gold rush Cartwright citizens can rightfully claim to have the only gold paved road in Canada. And who knows? Gold is where you find it, and possibly,

just possibly, some day Cartwright will again hum and thrill to the lure of gold.

The End