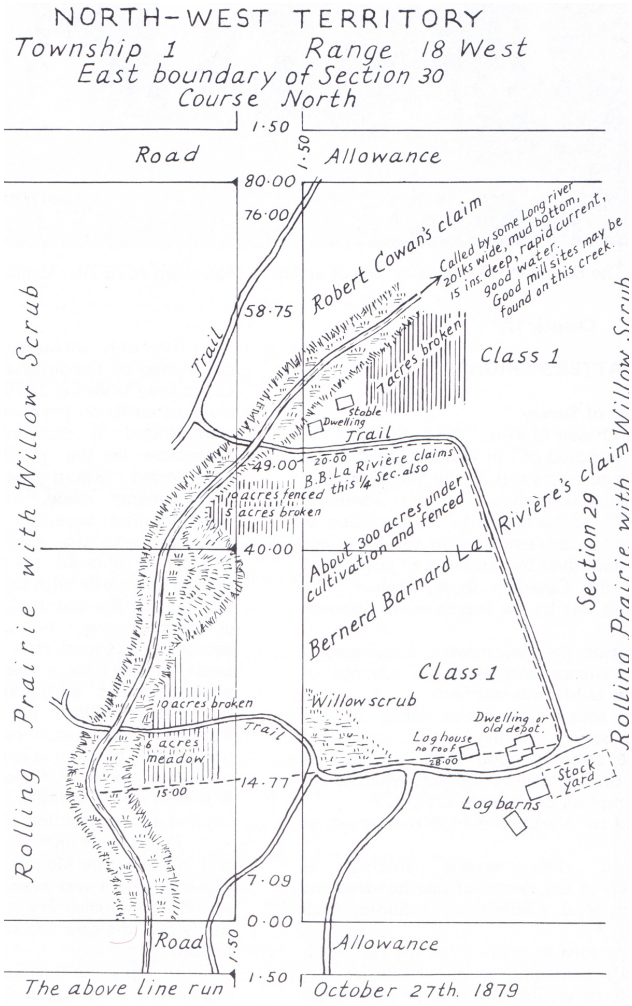
Wakopa - The first “Stopping Place” for settlers heading west

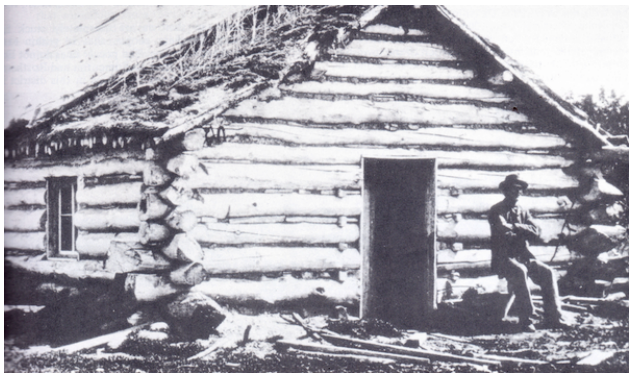


Wakopa was the first of the villages that were to pop up in the first few years of European settlement – before the arrival of the railway.

B. B. LaRiviere

The community began as a trading post. Bernard B. LaRiviere a fur trader from Minnesota was on a hunting trip to Turtle Mountain in 1876, when he got the idea to set up a store for new settlers who would soon be coming. They would need supplies.

On the Boundary Commission Trail near the eastern edge of Turtle Mountain, he found a place that the Commission had used as Depot. He bought it along with some remaining supplies and by late spring of 1877 he was in business. The Boundary Commission Trail became the main street of the very first settlement village in the southwest.



The LaRiviere house

By the spring of 1880, several settlers joined him. They had a grist mill and saw mill in operation as well as a boarding house and livery barn. Two blacksmith shops were set up.

The first church services were held in LaRiviere's home, but later the schoolhouse was used. The school, built in 1882, was the first school in all of the Turtle Mountain-Souris Plains area.

The village became a busy centre with the addition of a post office, another store and several log and sod houses.

Wakopa was the site if the first Municipal Meetings, the first Mounted Police Depot,
and the site of the formation of the ”Wakopa Branch of the Manitoba and Northwest Farmer’s Union.”

This well established community seemed ready to become an important regional centre, until the arrival of the railway changed everything.