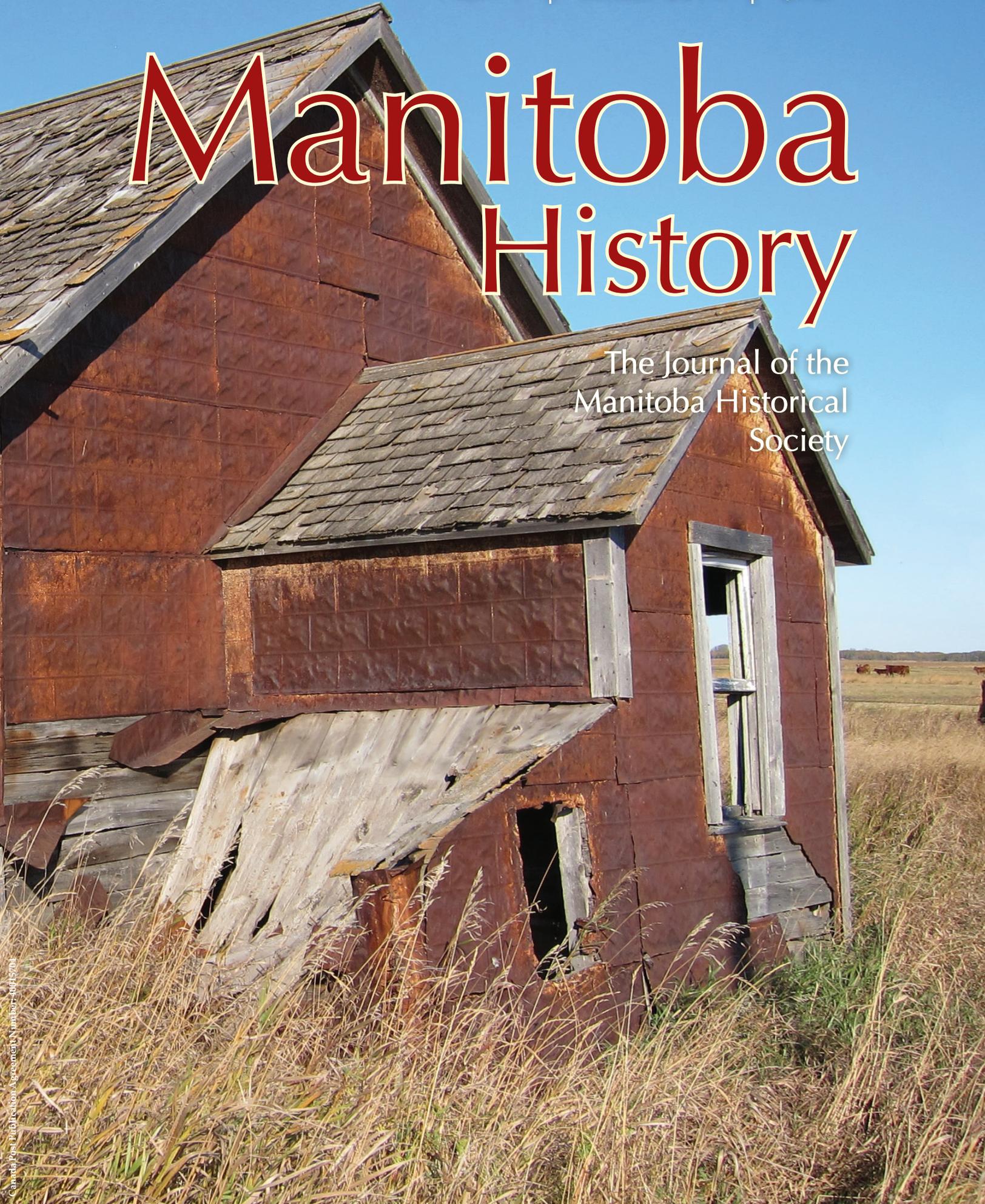


No. 74 | Winter 2014 | \$10.00

Manitoba History

The Journal of the
Manitoba Historical
Society





Manitoba History

Published by the
Manitoba Historical Society

ISSN 0226-5036
GST Reg. No. 12281 4601 RR0001

Canada Post
Publication Agreement No. 40015704
Return undeliverables to:

Manitoba Historical Society

61 Carlton Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3C 1N7
Telephone: 204-947-0559
Email: info@mhs.mb.ca
Web: www.mhs.mb.ca

Annual membership

CAD\$, includes subscription to *Manitoba History*

	Canada	USA	All other countries
Regular	45	50	60
Youth/Student	25	30	40
Family	50	55	65
Nonprofit	55	60	75
Corporate	275	280	295

Contents © 2014 of the
Manitoba Historical Society.

All rights reserved.
Reproduction inquiries
should be directed to the Editors.



A project sponsored by
Culture, Heritage and Tourism



The Manitoba Historical Society, established in June 1879, is the oldest historical organization in Western Canada. Its mandate is to:

- promote and encourage public interest in Manitoba and Canadian history
- encourage research and publications relating to the history of Manitoba
- foster the preservation of property relevant to an appreciation of the history of Manitoba
- assist in the formation and work of local historical societies in furthering the objectives of the Society throughout Manitoba

Manitoba Historical Society

The Honourable Philip S. Lee, C.M., O.M., Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba, *Patron*
James Kostuchuk, *President*
Dennis Butcher, *Vice-President*
James Cox, *Vice-President*
Annabelle Mays, *Past President*
Jane Fudge, *Secretary*
Eva Janssen, *Member at Large*
Jacqueline Friesen, *Chief Administrative Officer*
Jennifer Bisch, *Chief Program Officer and Curator*

Manitoba History

Editorial Staff

Robert Coutts, *Editor in Chief*
Esyllt Jones, *Associate Editor*
Gordon Goldsborough, *Pageant & Photo Editor*
Eva Janssen, *Gazette Editor*
Frieda Esau Klippenstein, *Reviews Editor*
James A. Burns, *Copy Editor*
Salix Consulting, *Design & Layout*

Editorial Advisory Board

David Carr, *University of Manitoba Press*
Lyle Dick, *Vancouver*
Jean Friesen, *History Department, University of Manitoba*
Jim Mochoruk, *History Department, University of North Dakota*
Michael Payne, *Ottawa*
Adele Perry, *History Department, University of Manitoba*

Printing

Premier Printing, *Winnipeg*

Inquiries

Editorial and advertising inquiries should be directed to journal@mhs.mb.ca.

Manitoba History publishes scholarly, feature-length articles as well as shorter, popular articles, documentary selections, essays, pictorial essays, news, and reviews relating to the social, economic, political, intellectual, and cultural history of Manitoba and the Canadian West.

Scholarly articles should not normally be longer than twenty-five double-spaced pages (7,500 words), including endnotes. Contributors should consult *The Chicago Manual of Style* when formatting citations, and should allow sufficient time after submission for peer review. Email submission is mandatory and all correspondence should be sent to journal@mhs.mb.ca.

Popular articles for the *Pageant* section should not normally be longer than ten double-spaced pages (3,000 words) and do not require endnotes. These articles are not subject to peer review. Email submission is preferred and all correspondence should be sent to pageant@mhs.mb.ca.

News articles for the *Gazette* section must be no more than one double-spaced page (300 words). These articles are not subject to peer review. Email submission is preferred and all correspondence should be sent to newsletter@mhs.mb.ca.

Contributors are not paid but will receive copies of the issue containing their article.

Illustrations provided with article submissions are welcomed. Scanned images must be of sufficient resolution for high-quality reproduction, and no less than 300 dpi. Permission to publish photographs and artwork from archives or other repositories is the responsibility of the contributor. Manuscripts should be submitted electronically, preferably in Microsoft Word format. The Manitoba Historical Society assumes no responsibility for statements made by contributors.

Readers' responses to articles published in *Manitoba History* are welcome. Letters that add substantial information or new perspectives may be published, and will be edited for clarity and length at the discretion of the Editors. Letters should be no more than 500 words and include the writer's name, daytime phone number, and address (including email, if possible) for verification. Letters should be sent to: Editors, *Manitoba History*, 61 Carlton Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 1N7, email: journal@mhs.mb.ca.

Manitoba History

No. 74 | Winter 2014



Tremblay School No. 707.

Source: Gordon Goldsborough, October 2011.

This former one-room schoolhouse in the Rural Municipality of Brenda, in southwestern Manitoba, closed in 1946.

[www.mhs.mb.ca/
docs/mb_history/74](http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/74)

"I think this is the greatest and best country in all the world, with its great sunlit spaces and its long, long roads, and best of all the roads that are not made yet, and the stories that no one has told because they are too busy living them."

Nellie McClung, 1915

- 2 The Justice Mill: George William Baker at the Winnipeg Police Court, 1901–1903
by Stephen Grandpre
- 15 The Making of a Manitoban Hero: Commemorating La Vérendrye in St. Boniface and Winnipeg, 1886–1938
by Scott Berthelette
- 26 The Early History of Brewing in Winnipeg, 1668–1902: From Hudson's Bay to Patrick Shea
by Graham Stinnett
- 36 The Uno Railway Disaster
by Leslie Kozma
- 37 Manitoba's Historic One-Room Schoolhouses
by Gordon Goldsborough
- 40 Behind the Bamboo Curtain: A Nineteenth-Century Canadian Adventurer in Japan
by David Cooper

Reviews

- 45 Patricia Demers (ed), *Travels and Tales of Miriam Green Ellis, Pioneer Journalist of the Canadian West*
by Margaret Bertulli
- 46 Review essay: Magda Fahrni and Esyllt W. Jones (eds.) *Epidemic Encounters: Influenza, Society, and Culture in Canada, 1918–20*. Gregory P. Marchildon (ed) *Making Medicare: New Perspectives on the History of Medicine in Canada*. Laurie Meijer Dress, *Healing Histories: Stories from Canada's Indian Hospitals*
by Diane Dodd
- 49 Dora Dueck, *What You Get at Home*
by Frieda Esau Klippenstein
- 50 Doris Jeanne Mackinnon, *The Identities of Marie Rose Delorme Smith: Portrait of a Metis Woman, 1861–1960*
by Diane Payment
- 52 *Cool Things in the Collection: Hall & Lowe Cabinet Cards*
by Katherine Pettipas

The Justice Mill: George William Baker at the Winnipeg Police Court, 1901–1903

by Stephen Grandpre
History Department, University of Western Ontario

On 28 April 1903 a large crowd gathered at Winnipeg's James Street police court in anticipation of nearly two dozen cases set to be heard on that morning's docket. Presiding at James Street was the city's chief police magistrate, George William Baker. According to the *Manitoba Free Press* the spectators were particularly excited to see a "big gang of crapshooters" rounded up on charges of illegal gambling by the city police. To the crowd's disappointment, the dozen men in question failed to appear for the hearing. Baker immediately had warrants issued for their arrest before moving on with the day's business. Since being appointed to the post twenty months previously, Baker had garnered a reputation throughout the city as a no-nonsense lawman who dealt justice with speed and efficiency. Indeed, despite the many cases before the court, the *Free Press* noted that the morning's docket was "quickly disposed of" by the magistrate. While most were dealt with summarily, a number were held over for further adjudication. At least a half-dozen drunks, including two soldiers and a man "so incapacitated ... as to render his removal to St. Boniface hospital" were fined for their behaviour, as was a man summoned for "cycle coasting on the sidewalk." Before wrapping up for the day, Baker also sentenced two boys brought in on charges of theft to two years in the youth reformatory. In the words of the *Free Press* reporter one of the boys, Walter Nunnery, appeared to be "a youth of bright appearance, who ... had every advantage" in life, yet in the



Archives of Manitoba,
Winnipeg Police Department 1, N23466.

George William Baker (1854–1917) arrived in Winnipeg in 1881 and began practising law the following year. He served on the City Council in 1888, 1897, and 1898, and was a Police Magistrate from 1901 to 1903.

opinion of the police magistrate had "deliberately chosen a life of crime."¹ On a day that saw the regular tally of bylaw infractions and other run-of-the-mill charges common to a city police court, Baker felt it incumbent upon him to pronounce judgement when presented with an incipient criminal. His reputation rested on it.

The James Street police court was one of the best known buildings in early 20th-century Winnipeg. As the first level of the justice system, all those summoned or arrested on any charge, whether for bylaw infractions or serious criminal offences, could expect to appear before the police court bench. Indeed, for most citizens it was the only level of the justice system that they would likely ever experience. At the core of the institution was the police court magistrate. As the official responsible for deciding whether or not cases brought before the court merited dismissal, summary punishment, or transfer to a higher court, the police court magistrate exercised considerable authority and influence in the local community and within the provincial legal establishment.

Despite the importance of the police court in late 19th- and early 20th-century Canadian society, little has been written on the subject in its Winnipeg context. Legal historians have produced a number of studies charting the establishment and evolution

of judicial institutions in Manitoba from the early years of fur-trade society through to the 20th century. Many have focussed on the ad-hoc nature of legal procedure and

George Baker and the Winnipeg Police Court

criminal justice under Hudson's Bay Company rule and, in the period after 1870, on the office-holders, lawyers, and other personalities in the higher echelons of the provincial court system.² Though informative about the development of judicial practices and procedure, this literature seldom addresses the day-to-day workings of the criminal justice system. And while the institution has drawn considerable attention from Canadian police and criminal justice historians generally,³ the police court has thus far been neglected in studies of Winnipeg police and social history.⁴

This essay seeks to address this gap in the historiography by considering the career of one of Winnipeg's most infamous police magistrates, the aforementioned George

Baker had garnered a reputation throughout the city as a no-nonsense lawman who dealt justice with speed and efficiency.

William Baker. Baker served at the James Street police court from August 1901 to December 1903, a brief tenure relative to the standard of the office. During this time Baker was nonetheless responsible for the prosecution and sentencing of thousands of individual cases, ranging from minor bylaw infractions to more serious crimes against property and the person. While on the bench he also became involved in some of the city's most pressing social and political questions. Immigration, moral reform, vice, and the problem of juvenile delinquency were among the many issues debated at the James Street police court. Central to this investigation is the importance of image and reputation in the constitution of the police court magistracy. Baker's judicial style in many ways defined the experiences of those brought before him. It also contributed to his eventual dismissal from the James Street bench. Examining the workings of the police court during Baker's tenure adds to our understanding of the social history of early 20th-century Winnipeg, the role of the police court within the modern police system, and the relationship among citizens, legislators, and the law.

*

Baker's rise to the magisterial bench was similar to many of the men who rose to positions of political and economic power in Manitoba in the decades after Confederation. Born in Ottawa, Ontario in 1854, Baker was educated at local grammar schools, read law, and practised as a barrister before making the decision to join the migration of Ontarians to western Canada in August 1881.⁵ After arriving in Winnipeg, Baker quickly established himself as a hard-working and competent clerk in the offices of Walker & Andrews. Indeed, less than two months after his first day of work he was "acting as partner" in the firm and was put in charge of litigations. In 1882 he was officially

called to the Manitoba Bar.⁶ Like many new arrivals in the city, Baker spent his first months in a succession of hated boarding houses and rented rooms. Even though he spent most of his waking hours at the law firm, he saw enough of the city to be completely taken in by the bazaar-like atmosphere of boomtime Winnipeg. He recorded with amazement the frenzied real estate deals that took place in the auction houses and streets of the city, and in true booster style believed that Canada's future lay in Winnipeg and the West. "The more one sees of the Country," he wrote in his diary from this period, "the more one is impressed with its greatness."⁷

Unlike many of the men he shared rooms with, however, Baker arrived in Winnipeg with familial connections that would all but ensure his future among the city's social and cultural elite. He was related through his stepmother to Alexander Begg—local businessman, journalist, essayist, and a founding member of the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba. Through Begg, Baker was ushered into the social circles of the city's upper crust. By day, he built his career within Winnipeg's growing legal and business establishment; by night, he frequented the dinners and social soirées of such notable families as the McMickens and Norquays, and sat in all the right pews at Holy Trinity and Christ Church Anglican.⁸ Over the next two decades Baker continued to rise within Winnipeg's social and political establishment, and he confirmed his success in the city by way of election to City Council three times before the end of the century.⁹

The magisterial office that Baker was to occupy was central to the social fabric of late 19th- and early 20th-century urban Canada. As the first level of the justice system, police courts were the busiest public forums in the nation, overseeing thousands of cases yearly. The police court magistracy, as the successor to Crown-appointed justices of the peace and municipal courts chaired by elected officials, "had a part in processing virtually all criminal offenses" brought before the justice system during the period.¹⁰ Bylaw infractions and public order offences constituted the vast majority of cases brought before the court, and were dealt with by the police magistrate directly. In cases of serious offence—criminal charges of an indictable nature—proceedings in police court served as the preliminary hearing before being sent to the provincial court for adjudication.



Stephen Grandpre is a PhD candidate in History at the University of Western Ontario. His dissertation examines policing in Winnipeg in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He currently lives in Winnipeg with his wife Carissa and three black cats.

George Baker and the Winnipeg Police Court

Maintenance of the civic court system was thus one of the most important tasks of municipal governance, and along with the establishment of a full-time, salaried constabulary was a crucial element of 19th-century police reform.¹¹ In Winnipeg, the police court was so busy that it was required to sit almost every weekday from its inception. Initially consisting of the Mayor and aldermen “in their capacity as *ex officio* justices of the peace,” and later by appointed individuals from outside City Hall, the police magistrate heard and tried offences summarily against municipal bylaws after 1876.¹² It was formally established as a quasi-independent, stipendiary office in 1883.¹³ This reform also made police magistrates members of the Board of Police Commissioners who oversaw the operations of the police department. Thus not only was the magistrate a member of the provincial judiciary, he was also an officer of the municipal government. By the turn of the century the police court, located inside the central police station and gaol at 223 James Street across from City Hall, heard evidence concerning infractions from across the civil and criminal code.

On 8 August 1901, Provincial Secretary D. H. McFadden wrote to Baker informing him of Order-in-Council no. 7510, which appointed Baker provincial police magistrate for the city of Winnipeg, with a salary of \$600 per annum.¹⁴ The Attorney General’s office wrote to City Council informing it of the decision, and on 10 August the appointment was officially announced to the public in the *Manitoba Gazette*.¹⁵ Baker’s first weeks as magistrate were not without scandal, however, and the city press questioned the manner of his appointment. The sitting magistrate, Alexander Dawson, was removed from the bench by the provincial government the same week as Baker’s appointment. No reasons for the government’s decision were provided to the public.¹⁶ Accusations of political cronyism and back-corridor favours were levelled by the city press at the newly elected provincial administration of R. P. Roblin. It was suggested that the Roblin government, by summarily dismissing Dawson and replacing him with Baker, had acted improperly by placing their ‘own’ man on the bench. The *Manitoba Free Press* commented on the affair, stating that “The Police Magistracy of a city like Winnipeg is a judicial position and by tradition and by custom its occupant should hold office for life, or until retired in consequence of an investigation based on charges.”¹⁷ The *Winnipeg Daily Tribune* also criticized the manner of Baker’s appointment. Its editorial column stated that Baker was well suited for the job and could be held personally in the highest esteem, but regarded Magistrate Dawson’s summary dismissal without reason as highly suspect. There was concern that the “spoils” system risked making the office of police magistrate “a pawn in the game of partisan politics.”¹⁸ Under the BNA Act, however, the provincial government did reserve the legal right to dismiss and appoint magistrates, and Baker took his post without further dissension.

Baker’s personality and judicial style in many ways made him a fitting choice for the job. The public regarded police courts not only as places of justice, but also of cheap (indeed free) entertainment. The personality and bearing of the magistrate was an essential feature of this urban theatre.¹⁹ Baker’s actions and demeanour during his first day on the bench served as overture to the way the James Street court would operate throughout his tenure. He arrived without fanfare and got straight down to business, trying a dozen men charged with public drunkenness. One was remanded, and the others fined according to the state of their inebriation. The *Manitoba Free Press* approvingly reported that the drunks received “but scant sympathy” from Baker.²⁰ He also remanded Archibald Walker on a charge of stealing the princely sum of \$1 from former mayor James Ashdown, one of the city’s wealthiest men.²¹ Baker was keen to assert his authority and define his image in the city from his first day on the bench, especially in his dealings with such miscreants as drunks and thieves. As the *Winnipeg Daily Tribune* recorded, it was clear that Baker was “determined to have the law respected.”²²

During his time at James Street, Baker cultivated an image of himself as a stern defender of British justice. Given the state of the police court when he arrived, this was not exactly an easy task. Police courts in the prairie west did not exude the kind of symbolic majesty found in some of the older colonial courtrooms of the east, and certainly not those of old England.²³ For decades the James Street court was known throughout the city as a filthy and wretched place. Upon Baker’s arrival, an attempt was made to make it look more the part of a chamber exhibiting the judicial power of the magistrate. The city carpenter got to work, a new desk was ordered, and the platform that it was set on was raised, in order that Baker could “preside in state.”²⁴ He used his new position to its fullest extent. Police magistrates were popular figures in late Victorian Canada, and were often sought out by the press for their opinions on a variety of issues.²⁵ From his perch, Baker frequently pronounced his views on the meaning and purpose of English law, which he believed was “the embodiment of the wisdom of centuries,” strict yet impartial, and was the glory of the British race.²⁶ He was also given to impromptu speeches on matters of importance to Canada and the British Empire. For instance, he called a public meeting to be held at the court in order to celebrate the British victory in the Second Boer War. On this occasion and others, he summoned members of the police force to listen to his perorations.²⁷

Despite the sometimes theatrical tone of Baker’s proceedings, the number of cases brought before the court meant that a great deal had to be dealt with swiftly and with little “procedural formalism.”²⁸ Baker especially disliked civil cases, and would often state that his court was to be used purely for the adjudication of criminal offences, and not for the collection of debts.²⁹ He thus took a cavalier attitude toward many civil cases, dismissing those that irritated him if he thought the complaint trifling or when

the tone of debate degenerated into childish bickering.³⁰ However, many criminal cases were dealt with in much the same way. Depending on the case load and Baker's mood, some "days" at court lasted little more than half an hour, some barely fifteen minutes. Liquor offences constituted the majority of cases brought to what the press labelled Baker's "justice mill." The charge "drunk on the street" was indeed so common that the clerk of the court had a rubber stamp reading the charge made specially in October 1902 to save him time in the record book.³¹ After a busy weekend's haul was paraded into the chamber, Baker had defendants stand together in order to dispose of the caseload quickly. Many, of course, pleaded guilty, which helped the process along. Nevertheless, Baker took the opportunity to comment on their behaviour, and along with the fine treated them to his "weekly Monday morning sermon" against the evils of excessive drink.³²

Many days at police court witnessed a wide variety of cases heard and the court docket was often packed, to the delight of police court reporters. One day in October 1901 saw thirty cases brought before Baker, ranging from drunk, drunk and disorderly, vagrancy, furious driving of a bicycle, wage disputes between master and servant, assault and battery, and spousal abuse.³³ The list of defendants brought before the court was equally diverse: labourers, contractors, mechanics, lawyers, tradesmen, wholesale dealers, and ministers of the gospel.³⁴ When presented with a captive audience, Baker rarely missed the chance to lecture all present, whether on personal follies or the importance of the newly introduced road laws. He often softened his harsh sentences with his own brand of gallows humour that the condemned even appeared to enjoy on occasion.³⁵

Baker was, however, very concerned to present himself as a man of compassion and decency in his dealings with the unfortunates brought before him. For example, he would sometimes pick one man out of the dozens in court, offer himself as the man's personal saviour and declare, as he did to Robert Halliday in November 1901, that he was "going to try to reform" him.³⁶ Men like Halliday would be taken aside for a personal chat with the judge about their condition in life. George Reid, for example, who was brought in for public drunkenness, was treated to a "heart to heart" with the magistrate about his alcoholism.³⁷ Baker used these episodes to add to his professional image. He pitied himself for giving in to charity, and patronized the drunks and prostitutes he felt he let off easy, stating that they were "the dilemmas I have to deal with."³⁸ As a result of this selective paternalism, individuals received vastly different sentences for similar, if not the very same, offence. The *Manitoba Free Press* defended Baker's inconsistent sentencing by arguing that while to the casual observer his record might suggest "confusion in the mind

of the man of rule," it was in fact an example of principled British justice, whose "application ... must ever vary with individuals and circumstance."³⁹ It remained, however, a tenuous balancing act, and could appear to run the gamut from discretionary to arbitrary. On Christmas Eve 1901, for example, Baker sentenced Thomas Machaffie, a soldier stationed at Fort Osborne barracks, to five years in prison for entering the house of F. W. Stobart while drunk. It was the heaviest sentence ever handed out in the history of the James Street court.⁴⁰ Yet only two days later, on Boxing Day, he dismissed ten drunks with only a reprimand and gave a woman charged with vagrancy a day to find gainful employment. According to the *Manitoba Free Press*, Baker was a model of Christian charity: "his worship ... tempered justice with mercy on account of the festive season."⁴¹

While some were fortunate to benefit from Baker's

judicial discretion, there were others who suffered on account of his misplaced benevolence which, when combined with late-Victorian ideas of domestic propriety and the sanctity of the private life, could make a mockery of James Street as a bastion of justice. Wife-beaters, in particular, could expect easy treatment by Baker; they were

usually simply fined and given a lecture on the "cowardice" of their behaviour.⁴² When James Garrett was brought in on charges of assault, Baker had the man's wife summoned. He "gave them both a straight talk on the value of domestic felicity" along with a \$5 fine and costs of court.⁴³ Similarly, when the drunken bully Rudolph Schor was arrested for assaulting his wife and violently throwing her out onto the street, Baker remanded him for a day "to see if some arrangement by which the couple can live together amicably" could be found.⁴⁴

There were certain offences, however, that did not escape Baker's wrath. He regarded vagrancy, petty theft, and other crimes against property and morality as among the most dangerous threats to the social order. In cases of theft Baker often handed out lengthy jail sentences, while recidivist thieves received little if any sympathy.⁴⁵ Such was his belief in the sanctity of property that even the most pathetic cases of petty theft received no quarter. In the winter of 1902, Baker sentenced an elderly man to two years' penal servitude for stealing a coat to protect himself from the cold. Despite the man's desperate pleas for leniency, Baker stated that he felt it best to protect the public from his very presence.⁴⁶ Baker also regarded vagrancy as a moral failing of the highest order. Under Canadian law 'vagrancy' had many meanings, and was applied equally by law-enforcement officials to people such as street-walkers, inmates of bawdy houses, and the homeless unemployed as a means of keeping the streets clear and defusing threats to public order.⁴⁷ Baker had a special distaste for the wandering unemployed. They

Depending on the case load and Baker's mood, some "days" at court lasted little more than half an hour, some barely fifteen minutes. Liquor offences constituted the majority of cases brought to what the press labelled Baker's "justice mill."

George Baker and the Winnipeg Police Court



Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg Police Department 11, N11699.

Members of Winnipeg's new police force stand in front of the Police Court on James Street, 1886.

were, he announced, nothing but “worthless individuals who ... refuse[d] to follow any honest calling,” were “the meanest sort of parasites,” and by far “the worst class of people” in the city.⁴⁸ Unlike other magistrates, Baker would often deliberately demean those brought before him on vagrancy charges before sending them to the provincial gaol.⁴⁹ In cases of vagrancy Baker often saw no chance for the reforming power of the Vaughan Street lockup. Instead, he recommended the individuals remove themselves from the city altogether, often suggesting the United States as a fitting exile.⁵⁰ In late 1903 he engaged in a public “war on vagrants” in concert with the city police force. He handed out lengthy prison sentences, and banished many vagrants from the city until he deemed them fit for return.⁵¹

*

Any given day at the James Street court witnessed a wide range of offences and offenders. Public order and liquor

offences, however, constituted the majority of cases heard. In this respect the police court experience under Baker was no different from that of other urban police courts across Canada during the period. From the beginning of his tenure, however, Baker was intent on asserting his own particular way of dealing with certain issues and people in court. As a result, judicial impartiality was often trumped by his personal prejudices. The ways Baker dealt with ethnic minorities, prostitution, and juvenile delinquency—people and issues of special concern in early 20th-century Winnipeg—illustrated the manner by which he sought to cultivate and preserve his image in the city. In the end, it also led to his dismissal.

Baker was appointed police magistrate during the period of greatest demographic growth in Winnipeg's history. Thousands of immigrants arrived from across eastern and southern Europe, and settled in ethnic enclaves in the city's infamous North End.⁵² Many appeared before

him in court, on much the same charges as the majority British-Canadians. While Baker shared the prejudices of the late-Victorian period regarding “foreigners” and their place in Canadian society, his was not the sort of brutish nativism characteristic of other police court magistrates.⁵³ Baker did, however, believe in the law as a civilizing agent in dealing with newcomers. “Foreigners settling in this country,” he stated, “must be impressed with the fact that the laws must be respected.”⁵⁴ When dealing with public order or liquor offences, for example, he rarely showed leniency if ‘cultural’ factors—language difficulties, unfamiliarity with the law—were offered in defence.⁵⁵

In his dealings with immigrants Baker seized the opportunity to exercise his discretionary powers. To his credit, he could not abide employment agents who took advantage of immigrants looking for work, and despite his dislike of civil cases he did not object to hearing wage disputes of this kind.⁵⁶ When three young Galician girls “in traditional dress” took their employer to court over non-payment of wages in December 1901, Baker took it upon himself to represent them from the bench after being convinced of their sound character. He easily found in their favour.⁵⁷ In January 1903, he informed City Council of frequent complaints brought to his court concerning the similar conduct of the city’s own employment agency. He stated that the “abuse” of the system by the officers in charge constituted a “great injustice,” and recommended steps be taken “with the view that this evil be remedied.”⁵⁸ The Christmas season could also have quite an effect on Baker’s mood. On Boxing Day 1902, Casell Eamgi, an Italian employed by the United Fruit Company, was brought in on charges of assault after drawing a knife and assaulting a fellow employee. Though found guilty of the offence, Baker took sympathy with Eamgi, whom he believed had been provoked by the plaintiff (he had in fact slapped Eamgi in the face during an argument). Giving the “enraged Italian” the option of a fine or jail time, Baker pointed out the error of his ways and informed him “that in this part of the world it was considered unnecessary to carry knives.”⁵⁹

Other immigrants, however, did not receive the same sympathy. Baker was concerned about allowing entry of “undesirables” into Canada, which in his mind included Britons of dubious intelligence and morals. When Thomas Corney was brought in on a charge of theft in November 1901, the man’s questionable mental capacity led Baker to take the extraordinary decision of having him deported back to England. Baker commented that the case was an example of “the evils of immigration that individuals of [his] caliber ... were allowed to migrate to the country.”⁶⁰ The Corney decision became a sort of benchmark for Baker. When other immigrants deemed suspicious were brought up on charges, he would refer back to the case to justify his heavy sentencing. Canada, he stated with regret, “was looked upon by some people as a sort of huge reformatory [for which] it was never intended.”⁶¹

The double-edged sword of judicial discretion was nowhere more apparent than in Baker’s treatment of the

city’s Jewish population. ‘Hebrews’ were treated with little respect in his courtroom, and were consistently and heavily fined for violating the city’s Sunday early closing bylaw. Although enforced only haphazardly by the city police, Jewish storeowners and peddlers were frequently summonsed for breaking the Sabbath law on information from private citizens.⁶² In court, Baker was known to talk in an arrogant and insolent manner to Jewish defendants, and a minor scandal erupted when Ben Zimmerman, a visiting JP, was arrested on Baker’s orders for contempt of court after protesting the way Baker mistreated Jews.⁶³ Baker’s actions led groups of Jews to crowd his courtroom when Jewish defendants appeared in the dock. The problem became so pronounced that a Jewish delegation from the North End approached the Attorney General to lodge an official complaint concerning Baker’s prejudicial attitude. It was the first of many brought to the province’s attention in the coming months.⁶⁴

Baker’s tenure also coincided with the peak years of Winnipeg’s social and moral reform movement. The movement regarded prostitution as the city’s most glaring evil and was its main target.⁶⁵ A widespread market in vice had been present since the incorporation of the city. Combatting it was a subject of perennial irritation to Winnipeg’s police establishment, who seldom had the resources or willpower to enforce anti-vice legislation in an effective manner.⁶⁶ As police magistrate, Baker inevitably became involved in debates over the ‘white slavery’ problem. While presenting himself as an opponent of organized vice, Baker’s sentences for prostitution-related offences ebbed and flowed with the degree of police enforcement. The occasional police action, centred on mass raids of known bawdy houses, was orthodox policy in the city. Baker employed a similar approach when dealing with vice cases. Conventional practice in his court was the obligatory fine and sermon, punctuated by the occasional prison sentence when an example needed to be set, or public opinion placated. Baker’s manner of dealing with vice was no doubt influenced by the outlook of the wider police institution. Most law-enforcement officials and civic authorities in the city believed that the vice problem simply could not be stopped, and that attempts to eradicate it served only to bring unwanted national press that would further tarnish Winnipeg’s reputation. Semi-tolerance was seen as the practicable solution and, during Baker’s tenure, was achieved by geographically containing the trade along Thomas Street in the West End, and later in the notorious Point Douglas area.⁶⁷

Baker, nevertheless, had to keep up appearances. He presented himself to the press as a determined foe of prostitution, and stated that the “unlawful traffic” had to be stopped. “The regeneration of poor fallen women,” he declared, was “one of the greatest dilemmas for the administration of justice.”⁶⁸ He also stated that his court “would take any means possible to put a stop to the keeping of such houses in our midst.”⁶⁹ Two months into his tenure the police engaged in a series of raids on local brothels and

George Baker and the Winnipeg Police Court

arrested several known madams. The raids received public support from Baker who, as the *Morning Telegram* put it, was seen as leading “a mild crusade” against vice.⁷⁰ At police court, however, Baker’s determination to prosecute vice was not so apparent. As in his dealings with drunken offenders, for example, he prosecuted certain individuals heavily, while offering others pity and advice. While some prostitutes and madams were punished with sentences of up to six months in the Vaughan Street gaol along with a hefty fine, others—usually younger girls and those who appeared painfully naïve—received suspended sentences and were cautioned by Baker “to lead a better life.”⁷¹ Perhaps he preferred to not have to deal with the matter at all: in 1903 he also began ordering prostitutes to leave the city instead of sending them to jail.⁷²

Banishment and fines, however, were not enough for the influential moral reform movement, which was determined that more concerted action was required. In the autumn of 1903 a massive campaign for the suppression of vice was undertaken by social reform activists and led by prominent clergymen such as the uncompromising Reverend Frederic B. Du Val.⁷³ Huge public meetings were held across the city in what was labelled a “moral crusade” by the city press.⁷⁴ Baker was present at these meetings as a member of the Board of Police Commissioners. The Board, along with the police and City Council, was put under intense pressure to combat the social evil. The police department stepped up action by leading well publicized raids on houses of ill fame as well as illegal gambling joints.⁷⁵ Baker’s attitude throughout the whole episode is notable in that he remained relatively aloof during the proceedings and refrained from publicly taking a position. At demonstrations and meetings he was content to play the role of mediator between City Council representatives and reformers, asking the movement’s more hard-line activists for patience and restraint in their demands on the police.⁷⁶

Baker undoubtedly sensed the gravity of the situation. For a man concerned with his reputation, his was in many ways an impossible situation. He could either crack down on prostitution and ingratiate himself with the reform movement, or follow the policy set by his colleagues at City Hall and the police department. As Mariana Valverde points out, prostitution was “caught up in a web of interests ... that made it impossible for authorities to settle on any policy and be consistent in its enforcement.”⁷⁷ As it turned out, Baker was unable to remain on the fence between social reform crusaders and an intransigent City Council: he was dismissed before mass police raids took place in January 1904 on brothel houses on Thomas Street, where much of the vice trade was centred. Until then, it was business as usual at James Street.

On the subject of juvenile delinquency, however, Baker showed no such reluctance. As with prostitution, there was widespread public concern during the period over the presence of “idle children” on the streets of Winnipeg. Truant children were seen as delinquent adults

in the making, and compulsory school attendance was a key topic in the fierce debates over education policy in Manitoba.⁷⁸ In 1908 the federal *Juvenile Delinquents Act* led to the creation of young offenders’ courts across the country, with Thomas Mayne Daly (Baker’s eventual successor at James Street) chairing the first juvenile court in Winnipeg in January 1909. As Tamara Myers argues, the Act “projected a national consensus that children ... were to be spared adult punishments in favour of treatment that began in the child-friendly juvenile court.”⁷⁹ Until then, however, children regularly appeared before Baker at police court, and it was on the “bad boy” problem more than any other that he chose to base his legacy and public image.

In late 1901 the press began reporting that juvenile crime in the city was reaching “epidemic” proportions. Baker had already been fining boys for unruly behaviour—offences such as using foul language, playing with catapults, and exhibiting disorderly conduct on the Sabbath—and stated that he was (not surprisingly) “determined to put a stop to such practices.”⁸⁰ The magistrate was keen to present himself as a progressive humanitarian in dealing with wayward youths. He stated that delinquency was the result of neglect and that parents were ultimately responsible for their children’s behaviour. Interviewed by the *Free Press* in December 1901 for his views on crime and policing, he opined: “I have to ascertain in the end, the history of the family life, the treatment of the boy at home, and the condition of the parents, in order to do the boy justice. I do not wish to brand the boy a criminal if I can help it.”⁸¹ When juvenile offenders were brought to James Street, Baker devised a system by which to assess the situation. He requested that parents be brought in with their children, and if unimpressed by the parents’ character would reprimand them for letting their children roam the city. As in his dealings with adult offenders, he also offered guidance to the child. As one sympathetic observer at court wrote, Baker “spoke to the young offenders as a kind and loving father might have done,” an approach guided by his belief that “many boys are more sinned against than sinning.”⁸² Baker later indicated that he believed that “99 out of 100 boys would keep on the right track if the better part of their nature was appealed to.”⁸³

Over the course of the next year the magistrate continued to deal with ‘bad boys’ brought before him in much the same manner. When young John Nicol was brought in for pilfering a bicycle in October 1902, Baker lectured the boy on the immorality of his actions before inquiring of the father’s role in his life. When the father claimed that he could not look after his son because his horses needed constant tending, Baker was incensed: “That is just the trouble in Winnipeg ... The reason we have so many bad boys is because of the neglect—the criminal neglect—of the parents. You think more of your horses than you do of the boy, and that is just the way crime commences that ends on the gallows.”⁸⁴ In the Nicol case and others, Baker employed a system not unlike parole: sentence was

suspended, the boy was ordered to report to him every Saturday on his progress in school, and the father to pay for damages and costs of court.⁸⁵

"Baker's Method," as it became known, was central to the image he constructed of himself at the James Street court. In the public eye he wished to appear as a reasonable, if not slightly indulgent, lawman who made an attempt to identify the "root causes" of youthful deviancy, an image supported by the genuine use of "progressive" judicial methods.⁸⁶ Moreover, despite his penchant for long prison sentences, when it came to young offenders Baker harboured doubts as to the reforming capabilities of the penitentiary. He was keen to keep boys away from places like Stony Mountain Penitentiary where, he warned, their transformation into irredeemable criminals would be all but complete.⁸⁷ He also spoke in favour of reformist institutions such as industrial schools for misguided youths, and suggested that the city implement coercive measures such as public curfews as a means to keep children off the streets.⁸⁸

Even with children there was a limit to Baker's compassion and understanding. While many young offenders were saved from the brink of degeneracy, he was always ready to make an example of others. Theft was always taken seriously at James Street, whatever the age of the offender. This was especially the case when Baker himself was personally aggrieved by juvenile crime. In June 1902, for example, he stepped down from the bench to act as prosecutor in a case of theft perpetrated by a young man he employed as a domestic servant. After being found guilty by acting magistrate Mayor John Arbuthnot, Baker took the opportunity to pontificate on the dangers of Canada's immigration policy and announced to those in court that the boy was "a sample of morally irresponsible people being brought to [Canadian] shores," and that "it was time that [Canada] was rid of such a class, and the system of dumping them on our shores stopped."⁸⁹ Baker ignored the fact that the boy had no parents to give him guidance, and suggested deportation as the best possible option.⁹⁰

The tediousness of the job and the frustration of dealing with repeat offenders eventually took its toll, and over the course of Baker's second year on the bench he began to regularly hand out longer sentences, especially for property crimes.⁹¹ Juvenile crime and truancy remained a topic of press interest during the spring of 1902. It was at this point that Baker's notoriety in the city reached a new level when he began implementing corporal punishment as a means of dealing with young offenders.⁹² It was, perhaps, only a matter of time. Despite statements to the contrary, Baker always believed that there were large numbers of boys in the city "that appeared to be entirely uncontrollable, and had no respect for the law," and that steps had to be taken "to bring them to a sense of their duty."⁹³ The first victim of his new offensive aimed at bad boys was Adolph Beetz, who was brought in and found guilty of theft in April 1902. After subjecting the boy to a stern lecture from the bench, Baker suspended sentence and "suggested" that corporal

punishment be administered, to serve as a public example of the new measures being taken at James Street.⁹⁴ The boy was taken to an upstairs room of the adjoining police station and, in order to give the event a kind of official gloss, flogged in the presence of Police Chief McRae. As the *Evening Telegram* reported, the boy "shrieked for mercy, but without avail, and his cries could be heard for blocks."⁹⁵

The physical punishment of children was by no means foreign to Canadian society during this period. The strap, the rod, the birch, and the hand were all widely applied in Canadian schools well into the 20th century. The legal basis for the use of corporal punishment in Canadian courts was, however, vague, especially in respect to youths. Flogging was sanctioned as a method of punishment for male prisoners for some violent and sexual offences. However, not until the *Juvenile Delinquents Act* were youths between the ages of seven and sixteen legally considered liable for such criminal prosecution.⁹⁶ Ambiguous in law, serious doubts were also being raised as to its practical and ethical efficacy, and was looked upon with increasing reluctance by parents, educators, and law-enforcement officials.⁹⁷ Indeed, in the Beetz case the boy's father initially declined to acquiesce to Baker's suggestion, as did several policemen who were present. Only when faced with a heavy fine did the boy's father thrash him in a manner "which satisfied the magistrate."⁹⁸ Satisfied Baker evidently was. It was not long before "applying the strap to the backs of incorrigible boys" was being reported as the "rule" at the police court.⁹⁹ Throughout the summer of 1902 the cries of children could be heard emanating from the James Street complex, and while Baker continued to follow his method of reprimanding and fining the parents, both parties were not to leave until the child was treated to "a good flogging" under the watchful eye of Chief McRae.¹⁰⁰ So convinced was Baker of the efficacy of the strap that its use was eventually extended to young girls. In August 1902, he found twelve-year-old Teresa Tapi guilty of stealing a bicycle and "ordered that she be given a whipping," which was administered by her mother.¹⁰¹ Others at City Hall were also won over to the new form of punishment. In the same month Mayor Arbuthnot, acting as police magistrate in Baker's absence, recommended the strap be used against a boy brought in for swearing.¹⁰²

If, as Douglas Hay argues, terror can be regarded as "the raw material of authority," then the use of corporal punishment by Baker was the fulcrum upon which his particular system of justice at James Street came to be balanced.¹⁰³ From his first day on the bench, Baker built a reputation as both a man of compassion and a man of rule: a persona he sought to sustain through the occasional act of judicial terror, tempered by the occasional act of paternalist mercy. The fact that it was all done on record, in plain view of the public and in the case of children with the involvement of the parents served only to provide the veneer of legality and the appearance of due discretion. So successful was Baker in cultivating this image that, to many, James Street itself came to be defined by his judicial

George Baker and the Winnipeg Police Court

style. By July 1902 the *Free Press* could write that because of his methods, the police court “has attained a reputation as a place where the evil-minded are turned from their way and the crooked are made straight.”¹⁰⁴

There were, however, many who were becoming uneasy with Baker’s methods. Since at least the autumn of 1901 members of the public questioned the fairness, if not the legality, of some of the magistrate’s decisions.¹⁰⁵ Public criticism of both his attitude on the bench and his heavy sentencing increased during the summer of 1902. Groups of citizens joined the city’s Jewish residents in lodging complaints with provincial ministers.¹⁰⁶ Baker’s penchant for the strap in particular received attention from many in the province. Word about the methods used at James Street also reached concerned ears in Ottawa. Officials from the federal Department of Justice wrote to Baker questioning his use of corporal punishment. Strikingly, considering the request, his reply simply read: “I have not yet imposed any sentence of whipping. Whatever whipping has been done was done by and with the consent of the Parent.”¹⁰⁷ However, Baker was much more candid when the police magistrate at Portage la Prairie wrote with the same question. In reply Baker had the clerk of the court point out that he “possesse[d] no power to award flogging in the direct sense.” However, by remanding the case and “intimating” that flogging may be desirable, he would then suspend sentence with the tacit understanding of the parents and the police authority of what would follow.¹⁰⁸

Baker’s actions did receive strong support from some of the city’s most powerful and influential citizens. Such support ranged from a general tough-on-crime attitude to opinions bordering on the masochistic. Former Mayor James Ashdown, for example, wrote in a letter to Baker: “Under the circumstances I thought it well to drop you a line to say that my own impression is (and I believe that of the great majority of the Citizens of Winnipeg) that you have been doing your duty thoroughly at the Police Court: that the sentences imposed have not been more sever [sic] than the circumstances called for and that your dealing with the boys has had a very beneficial effect, and that your whole action has been decidedly in the interest of the law abiding community.”¹⁰⁹ He went on to express his hope that Baker would have a long tenure as magistrate, and that he continue to “mete out justice without fear of favor.”¹¹⁰ Others were not so reserved. In a letter to the city press the Reverend H. St. George Buttrum wrote: “the fear of physical suffering seems in many cases the only way of appealing to some who either possess no moral consciousness, or in whom [it has] been dwarfed or blunted ... Corporal punishment, properly and mercifully administered ... is the best way of nipping in the bud embryo criminals.”¹¹¹ The lash was also seen by some in the city as a particularly salient punishment for a certain kind of young hood—the “moral degenerate from birth,” who, “possessing little brain power, his instincts are those of the animal, and like many animals, his sensibilities can only be touched through his hide.”¹¹²

Under pressure, Baker answered the criticisms in the press, arguing that his sentences were more than just and were proving an effective deterrent to malefactors. Despite reports to the contrary, he congratulated himself on “solving” the city’s bad-boy problem, which, he argued, had been achieved through his pioneering method of the biweekly check-in, many of the boys reporting to him directly. Baker pointed out that social-service and law-enforcement professionals in the city were in favour of his (non-violent) methods, among them Chief McRae and Superintendent of Winnipeg schools Daniel McIntyre.¹¹³ Most importantly, Baker claimed that fear of his court had led to a decrease in “actual crime” in the city. Given the inherent unreliability of crime figures, it is of course extremely difficult to test Baker’s assertions. However, a decrease in “actual crime,” however defined, is unlikely.¹¹⁴ In fact, the police court record shows a steady rise in the number of cases brought to James Street throughout the summer, and would continue to grow when thousands of agricultural labourers began arriving in the city for the summer harvest.¹¹⁵ Baker successfully defended himself against his critics, however, and public interest in the topic soon diminished.

It was not until the autumn of 1903 that his methods were again under scrutiny. This time, rumours of his dismissal began to circulate. The period from August to December 1903 was especially trying for Baker. Not only was the crusade against vice intensifying, record numbers of cases were also being brought before the James Street bench. Each month the police court docket grew larger: by the end of the year, a record 3132 cases were adjudicated.¹¹⁶ Baker’s position within the police institution was questioned when it was noticed that Mayor Arbuthnot was sitting in for him more often than usual. Eyebrows were further raised when the Attorney General’s office refused to comment on the matter when asked by the press.¹¹⁷ In October, the *Winnipeg Daily Tribune* reported that there was “dissatisfaction in certain circles” with Baker’s performance.¹¹⁸ The increasingly arbitrary nature of his decisions and his flippant manner were cited as causes. Baker’s habit of dismissing cases on a whim had become noticeably more frequent. It was claimed that many of his decisions were increasingly based not on the nature or circumstances of the offence, but on such factors as whether or not he approved of the prisoner’s attitude, deportment, or tone of voice.¹¹⁹ There were also concerns over Baker’s apparent disregard for proper legal procedure. In August Baker’s professional fitness was questioned when the events surrounding the Herbert Dore case became public. Dore, arrested on a charge of obstructing the sidewalk and interfering with police business, claimed in court that he was assaulted by Police Constable Newton at the central police station. After a two-day trial complete with counsel and multiple witnesses called, Dore was found guilty and fined.¹²⁰ Scandal erupted when it was reported that Baker appeared to have arrived at a guilty verdict before proceedings had even finished. Witnesses claimed

that his decision and comments on the case appeared to be read from a prepared manuscript. When asked by the defendant's lawyer whether this was indeed the case, Baker freely admitted that he had come to his decision before the hearing.¹²¹

Up to this point Baker's grasp of legal procedure was rarely called into question. However, there were instances over the course of the previous two years that could have affected the way in which observers subsequently viewed his actions. In October 1901 he became the first stipendiary magistrate in the city's history to send a man to Stony Mountain Federal Penitentiary directly from the police court. The fact that the defendant, an American citizen, entered a self-defence plea was seen by many as cause for the case to have been sent to a higher court.¹²² On that occasion Baker argued that after consulting judges of the supreme court on the extent of his powers (which of these powers was not made clear), he felt he was in the right.¹²³ This practice was not uncommon: from September 1901 to September 1902, only twelve cases at James Street were sent to the provincial court for trial, compared to seventy-one for the previous year.¹²⁴ Questions were raised as to how many cases tried summarily should have, according to proper procedure, been sent to the higher courts for adjudication.

Certain inconsistencies in his judicial method throughout his tenure were also apparent. For instance, while he often justified heavy sentences on the basis of defendants' past infractions, at other times he would disregard previous convictions, stating that "having [once] suffered for the crime, whatever it was, it was cancelled."¹²⁵ Moreover, as his tenure progressed, his pronouncements from the bench became increasingly spiteful and at times (even when the exaggerations of police court reporters are considered) verged on the paranoid.¹²⁶ Baker also went from humiliating defendants to lecturing lawyers in his courtroom. In September 1902 attorney Harold Turnbull claimed that Baker had considered evidence not heard in court in arriving at a decision against his client. Furious at this challenge, Baker retorted: "I have a right to obtain what information I please from any source I please, and I have the precedent of the British, German, and French courts to sustain me," and after continued protestations by Turnbull, ordered him to keep quiet.¹²⁷

Given Baker's reputation on the subject of juvenile crime, it was perhaps ironic that it was a case involving young offenders that precipitated his final downfall. In October 1903 Baker fined two young girls brought before him \$10 and costs of court on a charge of taking wood from a city woodlot. Police court reporters noted that there was widespread revulsion at how Baker leered at the girls, "like he is wont to do upon the most disgusting criminality,"

and the manner in which he spoke to their terrified mother, whom he accused of bringing up her children to be criminals.¹²⁸ One noted that several of the policemen present in court were especially unnerved at the sight of "two little girls, scarcely old enough to know the meaning of the word 'steal'," standing in the prisoners' dock and having evidence given against them by an older man, in this case the yard attendant.¹²⁹ The case was the latest in a series in which citizens had "frequently appealed" to the Mayor regarding Baker's demeanour in court and his harsh sentencing. As in earlier cases, Baker was accused of ignoring proper judicial procedure by basing his decisions on testimony from the police before the cases were heard in court.¹³⁰

Public indignation led to the matter being discussed in the chamber of the provincial legislature and at a cabinet meeting presided over by Premier Roblin. The government's dissatisfaction with Baker was made clear the following morning when a representative of the Attorney General's office arrived at James Street to "request" that the sentence against the girls be revoked and the fine refunded to their mother. Baker duly acceded.¹³¹ Continuing public

disquiet over the following weeks, however, led the provincial government to take action. On 22 December the Provincial Secretary's office wrote to Baker informing him of Order-in-Council No. 8870, which rescinded his appointment as police magistrate effective 31 December.¹³² Two days later, Baker served his last recorded day on the bench when he heard three cases of theft and one of wilful damage.¹³³ A suitable replacement was quickly found. On 29 December Attorney General Colin H. Campbell wrote to City Council informing them that Thomas Mayne Daly, K. C., would be taking over as police magistrate on 2 January 1904.¹³⁴

It was not lost upon interested parties that the furor over Baker's actions and his eventual dismissal was similar to the removal of Alexander Dawson, his predecessor at James Street. The *Manitoba Free Press* portrayed the affair as an exercise in cynical realpolitik. It charged that the Roblin Conservatives were unhappy with the bad press "their" man on the bench was attracting, charges made plausible given the government's refusal to comment on the matter and their reluctance to offer an official reason for Baker's removal.¹³⁵ Citing the Dawson case, the *Free Press* again expressed worry that the police court magistracy in the city risked being turned into an office of political patronage (it was apparently lost on the paper that this is what it indeed was).¹³⁶ As more details surrounding the affair became known, however, it was acknowledged that other factors might have influenced events. After his dismissal was confirmed, it was reported that members of the legal profession in the city had complained of Baker's

Baker's actions did receive strong support from some of the city's most powerful and influential citizens. Such support ranged from a general tough-on-crime attitude to opinions bordering on the masochistic.

George Baker and the Winnipeg Police Court



Archives of Manitoba, Personalities - Daly, T. M. 2.

Thomas Mayne Daly (1852–1911) had already been a lawyer, Brandon City Mayor, and Member of Parliament by the time he succeeded George Baker as Winnipeg Police Magistrate. When the Juvenile Court was organized in 1909, he became its first judge.

“discourteous” manner toward them in court.¹³⁷ No doubt this was the case. When the many grievances from across the city are taken together, it is unsurprising that the Roblin administration felt compelled to exercise its authority. All levels of government took the public reputation of police court magistrates seriously, as Baker himself knew well. They had an obvious interest in appointing respected men to the job, and had a stake in their subsequent performance: public opinion mattered. If the local magistrate did not command public confidence, the entire system of governance suffered.¹³⁸

*

Baker’s career did not suffer from the indignity of summary dismissal from public office. As patron of the St. Charles Country Club and the Manitoba Club, and as an active member of the Masonic Lodge and provincial synod of the Anglican Church, his life within the social world of the British-Canadian ruling class of Winnipeg continued.¹³⁹ And despite its somewhat ignoble end, his magistracy was not completely tarnished. In the weeks after his dismissal Baker received private letters of commendation from across the province expressing regret at the government’s decision. He also received public tribute from members of

the police force who, though uncomfortable with some of his methods of punishment, nevertheless appreciated his constant support and frequent praise.¹⁴⁰ Nor did the uproar over the use of violence against children and his record of judicial ineptitude damage his legal career. Paradoxically, in the years following his exit, he became a sort of local expert on the subject of juvenile delinquency. Social-reform activists and the city press often called on him for his opinions on the subject, and his sins were ultimately forgiven when, in 1914, he was made King’s Counsel.¹⁴¹

This examination of Baker’s reign at James Street serves merely as a glimpse into the daily workings of an important early 20th-century urban institution. When compared to other police magistracies of the period, Baker’s time on the bench can appear rather trifling. Colonel George T. Denison of Toronto, for example, served for more than four decades, while Baker’s predecessor at James Street, Colonel Adam John Laing Peebles, served for close to twenty years.¹⁴² Undoubtedly a larger, more nuanced story remains to be told; only future work on the institution and the individuals involved with it can place Baker’s magistracy in its proper legal-historical context.

However, while this account cannot claim to be representative of the police court experience in Winnipeg during the period, Baker’s tenure should not be seen merely as a dramatic episode in the city’s legal and criminal justice history. As we have seen, it coincided with a period of significant social, political, and cultural change in both Winnipeg and the Dominion. James Street and other police courts across the nation were the places where fundamental questions regarding family life, public morality, and ethnic and class relations were negotiated. In many ways Baker shared the same views on crime, public order, morality, and the law as the people brought before him, regardless of class or status. Compared to the record of other police magistrates of the period, many of his actions and decisions were not untypical.¹⁴³ However, he also brought a particular style of jurisprudence to the Winnipeg police court which was indeed cruel and unusual. Perhaps, then, it is through the experiences of the victims of this brand of justice that Baker’s career should be judged. The considerable discretionary powers reserved by police magistrates of the period meant that those on the urban margins could reasonably trust in the law to defend their interests if a sympathetic judge could be found.¹⁴⁴ As we have seen, some undoubtedly left Baker’s court satisfied that justice had been done, and mercy shown. Others, however—abused women, Jews, neglected children, the transient unemployed—could not expect much from Baker’s court. ❧

Notes

1. *Manitoba Free Press* (hereafter *MFP*), 28 April 1903, p. 10.
2. Roy St. George Stubbs, *Lawyers and Laymen in Western Canada* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1939); Dale Gibson and Lee Gibson, *Substantial Justice: Law and Lawyers in Manitoba, 1670–1970*, Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1972; R. C. Macleod, “Law and Order on the Western-Canadian

George Baker and the Winnipeg Police Court

- Frontier," in John McLaren, Hamar Foster, and Chet Orloff, eds. *Law for the Elephant, Law for the Beaver: Essays in the Legal History of the North American West* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1992); Dale Gibson, "Company Justice: Origins of Legal Institutions in Pre-Confederation Manitoba," *Manitoba Law Journal* 23 (1996): 247-292; Russell Smandych and Karina Sacca, "The Development of Criminal Law Courts in Pre-1870 Manitoba," *Manitoba Law Journal* 24 (1996): 201-257; H. Robert Baker, "Creating Order in the Wilderness: Transplanting the English Law to Rupert's Land, 1835-1851," *Law and History Review* 17, no. 2 (1999): 209-246; Dale Brawn, *The Court of Queen's Bench of Manitoba, 1870-1950: A Biographical History* (Toronto: Osgoode Society/University of Toronto Press, 2006).
3. Notable examples include, but are not restricted to, Gene Howard Homel, "Denison's Law: Criminal Justice and the Police Court in Toronto, 1877-1921," *Ontario History* 73 (1981): 171-186; Paul Craven, "Law and Ideology: The Toronto Police Court, 1850-80," in David H. Flaherty, ed. *Essays in the History of Canadian Law, Volume II* (Toronto: Osgoode Society/University of Toronto Press, 1983); Thomas Thorner and Neil Watson, "Keeper of the King's Peace: Colonel G. E. Sanders and the Calgary Police Magistrate's Court, 1911-1932," *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine* 12 (1984): 45-55; Amanda Glasbeek, *Feminized Justice: The Toronto Women's Court, 1913-1934* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009); Michael Boudreau, *City of Order: Crime and Society in Halifax, 1918-35* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012).
 4. Accounts of policing in Winnipeg, both amateur and academic, either completely overlook or examine uncritically the role of the magistrate's court within the wider police institution. See, for example, Robert Hutchinson, *A Century of Service: A History of the Winnipeg Police Force, 1874-1974* (Winnipeg: City of Winnipeg Police Force, 1974), and Jack Templeman, *From Force to Service: A Pictorial History of the Winnipeg Police Department, 125th Anniversary* (Calgary: Bunker to Bunker, 1998). For a more sophisticated approach that nonetheless ignores the police court, see Megan Kozminski, "Empty-handed Constables and Notorious Offenders: Policing an Early Prairie City 'According to Order'," in Gerald Friesen and Elyll Jones, eds. *Prairie Metropolis: New Essays on Winnipeg Social History* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2009): 44-62.
 5. *Pioneers and Early Settlers of Manitoba* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Library Association, 1971), 9; Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 206-208.
 6. Archives of Manitoba (AM), MG14 B2/1, George William Baker Fonds, George William Baker Diary (hereafter Baker Diary), p. 7; *Pioneers and Early Settlers*, 9. The diary included in the collection covers only the years 1881-1882. Unfortunately no personal record exists of Baker's time on the police court bench.
 7. AM, Baker Diary, p. 4. On the subject of "boosterism", see Alan F. J. Artibise, *Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth, 1874-1914* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975), 13.
 8. AM, Baker Diary, p. 5.
 9. *Pioneers and Early Settlers*, 9.
 10. John Weaver, *Crimes, Constables, and Courts: Order and Transgression in a Canadian City, 1816-1970* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 69.
 11. Greg Marquis, "The Contours of Canadian Urban Justice, 1870-1875," *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine* 15, No. 3 (1987): 269.
 12. Gibson and Gibson, 125; Brawn, 15, n. 50
 13. *Ibid.*
 14. AM, MG14 B2/3, Baker Fonds, Scrapbook of Clippings Relating to His Term as Police Magistrate, Winnipeg, 1901-1903 (hereafter Baker Scrapbook #3), McFadden to Baker, 8 August 1901. (Baker did not actually hold court, however, until the beginning of September). Note: much of the material used in the writing of this essay was taken from the large scrapbook presumably compiled by Baker and deposited as part of the Baker Fonds in the Archives of Manitoba. Newspaper clippings that could not be cross-referenced to their actual source are cited as the page number where they appear in the scrapbook.
 15. City of Winnipeg Archives and Records Control (hereafter CWARC), Council Communications, no. 6457, 28 August 1901; *Manitoba Gazette* No. 32, Vol. XXX, 10 August 1901.
 16. *MFP*, 2 August 1901.
 17. *MFP*, 31 October 1901.
 18. *Winnipeg Daily Tribune* (hereafter *WDT*), 5 August 1901.
 19. On the subject of the police court as urban theatre, see Craven, "Law and Ideology", and Glasbeek, *Feminized Justice*, 1.
 20. *MFP*, 4 September 1901.
 21. *Ibid.*; Alan F. J. Artibise, *Winnipeg: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Co., 1977), 31.
 22. *WDT*, 27 September 1901.
 23. Weaver, 72-3.
 24. *MFP*, 11 October 1901.
 25. Thorner and Watson, "Keeper of the King's Peace": 45.
 26. *Evening Telegram* (hereafter *ET*), 2 June 1902; *Morning Telegram* (hereafter *MT*), 11 February 1902.
 27. *ET*, 2 June 1902.
 28. Craven, "Law and Ideology: The Toronto Police Court, 1850-80."
 29. *MFP*, 16 December 1901.
 30. *ET*, 1 March 1902.
 31. AM, G4129, Winnipeg Police Court Record Book #10, 17 October 1902, p. 262.
 32. In November 1901, for example, of the 216 cases heard at the James Street Court, 121 were for public drunkenness. *MT*, 2 December 1901; *WDT*, 8 August 1902; *MFP*, 9 December 1901; AM, Baker Scrapbook #3, p. 21.
 33. *MT*, 18 October 1901.
 34. *Ibid.*
 35. *MFP*, 4 March 1903; *ET*, 7 January 1902.
 36. *Evening News Bulletin* (hereafter *ENB*), 27 November 1901.
 37. *ET*, 31 December 1901.
 38. *ENB*, 30 November 1901.
 39. *MFP*, 27 December 1901.
 40. *MFP*, 25 December 1901.
 41. *Ibid.* (my italics).
 42. *MT*, 15 February, 1902.
 43. *MT*, 20 February 1902.
 44. *ET*, 30 December 1901.
 45. See, for example, *WDT*, 13 February 1902.
 46. *WDT*, 20 January 1902.
 47. John McLaren, "Recalculating the Wages of Sin: The Social and Legal Construction of Prostitution, 1850-1920," *Manitoba Law Journal*, Vol. 23, Nos. 1&2 (1995): 527.
 48. *WDT*, 29 November 1902; Baker Scrapbook #3, p. 39, 69.
 49. The best known police magistrate of the period, Toronto's George Denison, despite his reputation as a stern disciplinarian was not known to talk down to or morally condemn those brought before him, and could reasonably claim to have practised "a tolerant if paternal toriyism." Gene Howard Homel, "Denison's Law": 178.
 50. AM, Baker Scrapbook #3, p. 69; *ET*, 5 August 1902.
 51. AM, Baker Scrapbook #3, p. 52, 68.
 52. Population statistics for the period, as well as the obligatory discussion of their (perhaps exaggerated) unreliability, can be found in Artibise, *Winnipeg*, pp. 129-131, 250.
 53. See Homel, "Denison's Law"; Thorner and Watson, "Keeper of the King's Peace."
 54. *ET*, 5 August 1902.
 55. *Ibid.*
 56. *WT*, 5 August 1903.

George Baker and the Winnipeg Police Court

57. *MFP*, 3 December 1901.
58. CWARC, Council Communications, no. 6836, 7 January 1903.
59. *ET*, 26 December 1902.
60. *WDT*, 25 November 1901.
61. *MT*, 2 December 1901.
62. *WDT*, 29 November 1901; *WDT*, 6 December 1901; *MFP*, 30 November 1901.
63. *MFP*, 30 November 1901; *WT*, 29 & 30 December, 1901.
64. AM, Baker Scrapbook #3, pp. 4, 22.
65. Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Soap, Light, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991), 77-78.
66. As did many police departments across the Dominion, especially in the West. See McLaren, 529-530.
67. Rhonda Hinthner, "The Oldest Profession in Winnipeg: The Culture of Prostitution in the Point Douglas Segregated District, 1909-1912." *Manitoba History* 41 (2001): 2-13; Artibise, *Winnipeg*, 294.
68. *MFP*, 30 November 1901, p. 14.
69. *Ibid.*
70. *MT*, 2 December 1901.
71. *MFP*, 22 April 1902.
72. *MFP*, 13 August 1903.
73. Melanie Methot, "Reverend Frederic B. Du Val: Winnipeg's Fearless Foe of Social Vices," *Manitoba History* 44 (Autumn/Winter 2003): 32-41.
74. James Gray, *Red Lights on the Prairies*, Spectra Ed. (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1986), 35-42.
75. *WDT*, 13 November 1903; *MFP*, 17 November 1903.
76. *Ibid.*; *MFP*, 19 November 1903.
77. Valverde, 88; McLaren, 534.
78. See W. L. Morton, *Manitoba: A History, 2nd Edition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 283, 310-313; Artibise, *Winnipeg: A Social History*, 202-206.
79. Tamara Myers, *Caught: Montreal's Modern Girls and the Law, 1869-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 5.
80. *WT*, 27 November 1901.
81. *ENB*, 16 December 1901.
82. AM, Baker Scrapbook #3, p. 2.
83. *MFP*, 27 December 1901.
84. *ENB*, 6 October 1902.
85. *Ibid.*
86. *MFP*, 16 December 1901.
87. *ENB*, 16 December 1901.
88. *MFP*, 16 December 1901.
89. *WDT*, 17 June 1902.
90. *Ibid.*
91. *ET*, 20 September 1902.
92. *MFP*, 2 & 5 June 1902.
93. *WDT*, 10 October 1901.
94. *ET*, 5 April 1902.
95. *Ibid.*
96. Carolyn Strange, "The Undercurrents of Penal Culture: Punishment of the Body in Mid-Twentieth-Century Canada," *Law and History Review*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Summer, 2001): 350; Paul Axelrod, "No Longer a 'Last Resort': The End of Corporal Punishment in the Schools of Toronto," *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 91, No. 2 (June 2010): 264-267.
97. Clive Emsley, *Hard Men: The English and Violence since 1750* (London: Continuum Publishing, 2005), 165.
98. *WDT*, 5 April 1902.
99. *WDT*, 6 October 1902.
100. *Ibid.*; *MT*, 15 April 1902; *WDT*, 18 October 1902.
101. *MFP*, 5 & 6 August 1902.
102. *Ibid.*
103. Douglas Hay, "Property, Authority, and the Criminal Law," in D. Hay et al., eds. *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), 25.
104. *MFP*, 12 July 1902.
105. *MFP*, 29 October 1901.
106. *MFP*, 5 July 1902.
107. AM, MG14 B2/3, Baker to A. Power, 8 August 1902.
108. AM, MG14 B2/3, Clerk of the Court to W. James, 10 July 1902.
109. AM, MG14 B2/3, J. H. Ashdown to G. W. Baker, 7 July 1902.
110. *Ibid.*
111. AM, Baker Scrapbook #3, p. 77.
112. *Ibid.*
113. *MFP*, 5 July 1902.
114. On the myriad problems posed by crime statistics, see Clive Coleman and Jenny Moynihan, eds. *Understanding Crime Data: Haunted by the Dark Figure* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1996).
115. See AM, Police Court Record Book #10, March to September 1902, pp. 79-279; *MFP*, 1 October 1902.
116. *WDT*, 2 January 1904; AM, Baker Scrapbook #3, pp. 80-81.
117. *WDT*, 16 October 1903; *MFP*, 10 December 1903.
118. *WDT*, 16 October 1903.
119. *MFP*, 25 November 1903.
120. *WT*, 19 & 20 August 1903.
121. *WDT*, 19 August 1903.
122. *MFP*, 26 October 1901.
123. *Ibid.*
124. AM, Baker Scrapbook #3, p. 79.
125. *Ibid.* p. 42.
126. See, for example, *MFP*, 2 June 1903; *MFP*, 1 August 1902; *MFP*, 18 May 1903.
127. *ET*, 30 September 1902; *MFP*, 1 October 1902.
128. AM, Baker Scrapbook #3, p. 67.
129. *Ibid.*
130. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
131. *Ibid.*
132. AM, MG14 B2/3, James Hooper to G. W. Baker, 11 December 1903.
133. AM, Winnipeg Police Court Record Book #10, p. 186.
134. CWARC, Council Communications, no. 7080, 29 December 1903.
135. *MFP*, 16 December 1903.
136. *MFP*, 12 December 1903.
137. *MFP*, 25 December 1903.
138. Jonathan Swainger, "'Dime Novel Toughs': Legal Culture and Criminal Law in Red Deer, Alberta, 1907-1920," *Criminal Justice History* 14 (1993): 119.
139. See AM, MG14 B2/4, Baker Fonds, Scrapbook #4; *Pioneers and Early Settlers*, 9.
140. *Ibid.*; *MFP*, 5 July 1902; *WDT*, 4 August 1903; Baker Scrapbook, p. 99.
141. AM, MG14 B2/2, Baker Fonds, Scrapbook #2.
142. For Denison, see Homel, "Denison's Law"; For Peebles, see *Pioneers and Early Settlers*, 182-183.
143. See Homel, "Denison's Law"; Craven, "Law and Ideology"; Thorner & Watson, "Keeper of the King's Peace."
144. Jennifer Davis, "A Poor Man's System of Justice: The London Police Courts in the Nineteenth Century." *Historical Journal* 71 (1984): 309-335.

The Making of a Manitoban Hero: Commemorating La Vérendrye in St. Boniface and Winnipeg, 1886–1938

by Scott Berthelette
History Department, University of Manitoba

On Sunday, 11 September 1938, a giant canoe procession of 700 participants disembarked on the east bank of the Red River in the City of St. Boniface, Manitoba. The participants were mostly members of the Winnipeg Canoe Club, and some were even dressed in 18th-century period costumes, which were provided courtesy of the Hudson's Bay Company. The costumed procession arrived amongst the many dignitaries and guests of honour who had gathered in St. Boniface to unveil a monument and to dedicate a park to the French fur trader and explorer, Pierre Gaultier de La Vérendrye. The unveiling of the monument was the apex of a nine-day bicentennial celebration commemorating the arrival of La Vérendrye and his *voyageurs* at the confluence of the Assiniboine and Red rivers in 1738. According to the Souvenir Programme of the La Vérendrye Bi-Centennial Celebration, the La Vérendrye monument and celebration sought to "pay tribute to the achievements of one of the world's great men—The Pathfinder of the West."¹

The monument depicted three figures. The largest figure is the virile and robust La Vérendrye himself, surveying the northern horizon. Next to him stands a Jesuit missionary priest, Father Jean-Pierre Aulneau, who holds his left arm outstretched grasping a crucifix. Finally, in the lowest position of the monument is an unnamed Aboriginal guide. The inscription at the bottom of the monument reads: "LA VÉRENDRYE ISTAS INVENIT TERRAS EASQUE HUMANITATI ET FIDEI APERUIT." *La Vérendrye discovered these lands and opened them to humanity and the faith.* The monument in La Vérendrye Park constitutes one of eight sites commemorating La Vérendrye in the City of Winnipeg (including St. Boniface).

In a concerted effort to catalogue Canadian monuments and plaques dedicated to the commemoration of New

France, Alain Roy and Gratien Allaire have employed French historian Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire* conceptual framework in their analysis of the commemoration of La Vérendrye in Canada. The *Inventaire des lieux de mémoire de la Nouvelle-France* is an ambitious project out of Laval University that seeks to catalogue and categorize all the *lieux de mémoire* in Canada pertaining to the French colonial period, both inside and outside the province of Québec.² Pertaining to the La Vérendrye expedition, there are 33 established *lieux de mémoire*.³ It should be noted that Roy and Allaire have used Nora's *lieux de mémoire* framework in the most literal sense of the term "memory sites," meaning that they have not taken into consideration the less tangible conceptions, such as festivals, anniversaries, commemorations, fraternal orders, and even generations.⁴ Rather than simply viewing "memory sites" as physical or empirical sites, I follow Nora's conceptual framework and analyse the 1938 bi-centennial celebration itself as a *lieu de mémoire*.

Pierre Nora has argued that for a *lieu de mémoire* to be created, whether a celebration or monument, "there must be a will to remember."⁵ Therefore, this essay will determine why La Vérendrye was chosen to be commemorated as a *lieu de mémoire* by residents of both Winnipeg and St. Boniface in the form of a bicentennial anniversary and as a monument in 1938. Aside from Roy and Allaire's cursory survey, there has not been a comprehensive analysis of the commemoration of La Vérendrye in Manitoba. The 1938 bicentennial celebration is a suitable focal point for an analysis of the commemoration of La Vérendrye, as it was the apogee of commemorative activities in Winnipeg and St. Boniface. Although La Vérendrye was initially commemorated as an exclusively French-Canadian hero, by 1938 he had become an influential historical figure in both the Anglo- and Franco-Manitoban communities. Following the Great Depression and the Great Drought of the 1930s, Manitoba's economic recovery began in 1938 with the first bountiful wheat harvest in nearly a decade. At the same time, the businesses and factories of Winnipeg and St. Boniface boomed, as tractors, cultivating equipment, and harvesting machines were in demand once again. Economic prosperity had returned to the once shining "Buckle of the World's Wheat Belt."⁶ The prosperous year



In May 2014, Scott Berthelette will be graduating from the Joint Masters Program in History from the University of Manitoba. He has published an article on La Vérendrye in *Strata*, the University of Ottawa Graduate Student History Review and, in Spring 2013, he received the Martin Kavanagh-Gaultier LaVerendrye Fellowship from St. Paul's College.

The Making of a Manitoban Hero



Planning, Property and Development Department, City of Winnipeg.

In 1938, a large stone monument to Pierre Gaultier De Varennes La Vérendrye (1685–1749) was unveiled along Taché Avenue in St. Boniface. It fulfilled the goal represented by a cornerstone sitting next to it that had been blessed by Archbishop Taché in 1886 for a future monument to La Vérendrye.

of 1938 coincided with the bicentennial anniversary of La Vérendrye's first arrival at the Forks.

By the time of the 1938 bicentennial, the commemoration of La Vérendrye was divided into three distinct categories—piety and religiosity, settlement and industry, and the spirit of co-operation. These categories had developed individually and over the first four decades of the 20th century. These commemorative themes were influenced by events in contemporary societies and cultures of Anglo- and Franco-Manitobans, rather than by the historical events that had shaped La Vérendrye's own experiences in the 18th century. As Geoffrey Cubitt wrote, "commemorations are always as much about the present and the future as about the past."⁷ Similarly, H. V. Nelles has argued that "historians write about the past with the present and future very much in mind."⁸ Therefore, the contextualization of the Great Depression, the interwar period, and the cultural hegemony of Anglo- and Franco-Manitobans is imperative to understanding the reasons for the varying categories of commemoration present at the 1938 La Vérendrye bicentennial.

The version of La Vérendrye commemorated at the celebration had scant resemblance to our knowledge of the historical figure. It was a revisionist construction of the historical material and accumulated knowledge. The construction had been both actively and passively shaped into certain commemorative themes that would be suitable for remembrance by both Anglo- and Franco-Manitobans at the end of the Great Depression.

Geoffrey Cubitt has suggested that "commemorations offer occasions for communities to take stock of, to debate, and perhaps to adjust the meanings they find in their own history and the shapes they give to their collective identity."⁹ Despite the inclusion of both Anglo- and Franco-Manitoban cultures, however, the La Vérendrye bicentennial celebration marginalized both recently arrived European immigrants and the First Nations community. The spirit of co-operation discourse generated by the bicentennial was exclusively oriented towards Anglo- and Franco-Manitobans.

This article focusses on the 1938 bicentennial souvenir programme and the literature surrounding the event.

In my analysis of the development of the categories of commemoration, I examine publications from the *Société historique de Saint-Boniface*. The Jesuits of St. Boniface College were largely responsible for first generating interest in La Vérendrye starting in 1908 with the rediscovery and excavation of the French trading post, Fort St. Charles, on the Lake of the Woods in Minnesota. Moreover, certain Franco-Manitoban authors such as Louis Arthur Prud'Homme were extensively involved in *la Société historique de Saint-Boniface's* writings from the initial involvement in the search for Fort St. Charles to the 1938 bicentennial. Therefore, St. Boniface College and the Franco-Manitoban community initially played a crucial role in the shaping of the commemorative themes surrounding the celebration of La Vérendrye. In framing my argument, I use the conceptual framework developed by other scholars examining the commemoration of the French colonial period in North America, notably Alan Gordon, H. V. Nelles, Colin M. Coates, and Ronald Rudin.

The La Vérendrye bicentennial celebration was very consciously constructed as a *lieu de mémoire* by the event planners, coordinators, and organizers. In Québec, Ronald Rudin has argued that the leaders of commemorative events celebrating Samuel de Champlain and Bishop François de Laval “took their organizational work very seriously. Nothing was left to chance; every decision was carefully considered, from the timing of the various events, to the routes to be followed and the order of marchers, to the design of public monuments and mounting of theatrical events.”¹⁰ These event planners “invested huge amounts of time and energy in these details in order to send contemporary messages to the tens if not hundreds of thousands of participants and spectators.”¹¹ The La Vérendrye bicentennial was also carefully calculated and planned by a number of planners and organizers, and should indeed be examined as a *lieu de mémoire*.

Before analyzing the categories of commemoration surrounding La Vérendrye and the bi-centennial celebration, I will first briefly contextualize him as a historical figure in the French colonial period of the 18th century. Born in Trois-Rivières in 1685, La Vérendrye engaged in several vocations throughout his life—soldier, fur trader, and explorer. Starting in 1731, he searched for a passage to the Western Sea, the fabled body of water supposedly located in Midwestern North America. The Sea would have opened into a small passage which led towards the Pacific Ocean. Since Christopher Columbus' landfall in 1492, European monarchs and explorers had been obsessed with the discovery of a quicker passage to Asia. As a result of his search, La Vérendrye and his sons were some of the first Europeans to visit the regions that would become Manitoba, Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota.¹²

La Vérendrye failed to locate the fabled Western Sea. The slow pace of his explorations and discoveries led many of his contemporaries to accuse him of being greedy and more interested in the “sea of beaver” than in the discovery of “the Western Sea.”¹³ Indeed, many of his contemporaries hated and despised La Vérendrye for his monopoly of the trading posts in the Northwest as well as for his failure to locate the Western Sea. Nor was La Vérendrye's reputation rehabilitated after his death in 1749. Daniel Royot has noted how “La Vérendrye was not recognized as a major discoverer by early historians, who judged him uneducated, erratic, and vena.”¹⁴

However, in 1852 Pierre Margry, a French archivist, discovered a large quantity of La Vérendrye's journals, reports, and letters. Margry wrote a revisionist history wherein La Vérendrye was depicted as continually misunderstood by the French government, a victim of the accusations of his detractors, and as a valiant and dutiful explorer who put the good of the colony ahead of his own and his family's interests. This new interpretation of La Vérendrye continued into the 20th century and he blossomed into one of the major figures in the history

of New France.¹⁵ Many 20th-century historians have also written revisionist interpretations of La Vérendrye. For example, in 1904, Agnes Laut asserted that “every mile westward” of La Vérendrye's travels “was consecrated by [French] heroism.”¹⁶ In 1914, Lawrence J. Burpee praised La Vérendrye as “Canada's bravest son,” who “gave all that he had, including his life, for the glory and welfare of his country.”¹⁷ The major themes emphasized in these early biographies are La Vérendrye's travel narrative, his “heroic” qualities, and his interactions with the “half-naked savages,” to whom are imparted the gifts of civilization and Christianity.¹⁸

As early as 1804, descendants of French *voyageurs* and the First Nations, the Métis, began to settle on the east bank of the Red River. However, the fledgling French community became connected to the rest of Canada after 1818 with the arrival of the first two missionaries, the Reverend Fathers Provencher and Dumoulin, dispatched by the Bishop of Québec.¹⁹ Archbishop Taché of St. Boniface, who was “an admirer of the pioneers of the West, took a deep interest in La Vérendrye.” Taché voiced the idea of a monument in St. Boniface honouring La Vérendrye on June 24 1886, when he “blessed the blocks of granite destined, in his mind, to become the base of the proposed monument.”²⁰ However, the blocks of granite then went into a deep slumber for over fifty years before a monument would finally be established at the site.

Taché's enterprise was revived in the 1910s by a group of Franco-Manitoban Jesuits, scholars, authors, and politicians. The writings of Judge Louis Arthur

The [La Vérendrye] monument depicted three figures. The largest figure is the virile and robust La Vérendrye himself, surveying the northern horizon.... Finally, in the lowest position of the monument is an unnamed Aboriginal guide.

Prud'Homme, the Reverend Denys Lamy, the Reverend S. J. Paquin, and the Reverend T. J. Campbell were particularly influential in the early Franco-Manitoban interest in La Vérendrye, and were often published in English by *la Société historique de Saint-Boniface*. In a 1913 appeal to the public, Prud'Homme wrote that "The Historical Society of St. Boniface was now seeking to revive the enterprise of the La Vérendrye monument", which had been "so ardently desired by the great prelate [Taché]."²¹

Prud'Homme and Lamy's initial appeal for the construction of a La Vérendrye monument called for the support of English-Canadian benefactors. They appealed

The version of La Vérendrye commemorated at the [1938] celebration had scant resemblance to our knowledge of the historical figure.

to the generosity of the "broad-minded English-speaking citizen," who would surely recognize "all the various races now enjoying in this new land [Manitoba] the fruit of La Vérendrye's labours." They proposed that La Vérendrye be honoured alongside the English founding figure of Manitoba, "the noble Lord Selkirk." Prud'Homme and Lamy suggested that "no element of our population will, we trust, be backward in contributing to such an undertaking," which sought to honour "the hero who contributed so much to the development of this country... no one would wish to leave in oblivion that other hero [La Vérendrye] who was the first to tread this Western soil."²²

An argument for equal recognition of La Vérendrye and Lord Selkirk in public memory was the strategy employed by the St. Boniface College and Historical Society to gather English support to fund the monument.²³ In the Québec context, Ronald Rudin has argued that the involvement of Anglo-Canadians in the commemorative activities of New France was due to "the increased concentration of economic power in English-run businesses."²⁴ Rudin noted that, by 1908, the "relatively informal committees" were replaced by hierarchical and bureaucratized organizations that were "staffed by professionals employed for their particular expertise in staging commemorative spectacles." Rudin argued that this "bureaucratization also increased the costs of such affairs, with the result that during celebrations of their own heroes, French-speakers often had to take a backseat to English-speakers, who had the means to foot the bill."²⁵ The cost of a 'proper' commemoration, as well as the concentration of economic power among Anglo-Canadians, forced the Franco-Manitoban committees to court their English-speaking neighbours. Prud'Homme and Lamy urged their Winnipeg neighbours to contribute their financial support: "it is high time that such great and noble merits [of La Vérendrye] be publicly [sic] recognized and in some way repaid. Now that such a prodigious progress

has set in, now that luxury has replaced desolation, the fortunate heirs of this great explorer's toils and labours owe him, we think, the reward of a monument."²⁶

Despite their reliance on Anglo-Canadian funding, the La Vérendrye committee also sought to use their commemoration of La Vérendrye to assert their own identity, language, and culture. Within the Franco-Manitoban community the influence of Catholicism and religiosity in their own commemoration of La Vérendrye seemed to be far more pertinent than the discourse on Selkirk and the British-Canadian co-operation. H. V. Nelles has argued that Franco-Canadian celebrations of the French colonial period sought to "establish a new cultural equilibrium in Edwardian Canada."²⁷ According to Rudin, this commemoration of French Canada's history looked back with nostalgia on the time when "French Catholics were entirely in control," and was "the place where one could see the most reason to hope for the survival of the French-Canadian people under the difficult circumstances of the late 19th and early 20th centuries."²⁸

St. Boniface College and *la Société historique de Saint-Boniface* used a discourse of Catholicism and religiosity in their commemoration of La Vérendrye to assert their own independent cultural and religious identity in contrast to their neighbouring Anglo-Protestant counterparts in Winnipeg. Similarly, and on a much larger scale, Alan Gordon has argued that the French-Canadians in Québec celebrated and commemorated Jacques Cartier, the French captain and explorer from St. Malo, as a passionate and emotional symbol of religious significance. Gordon suggests that Cartier was seen as an "Abraham of America". Just as Abraham had led the Hebrews into Canaan, so, too, had Cartier led the French into the promised land of the New World. The Bishop of Trois-Rivières, L. F. R. Laflèche, said that a national identity could be found in its genealogy, that "French Canadians were blessed... from the divine origins of their founding patriarch: Cartier." Therefore, Cartier was recognized as the divine patriarch of the French nation in Canada, and as an ardent religious symbol for the continued endurance and propagation of the "True Faith" and a French cultural identity into the 20th century.²⁹

The discovery of the remains of Father Aulneau, and the excavation of Fort St. Charles on the Lake of the Woods by an expedition from St. Boniface College in the summer of 1908, sparked a renewed interest in the La Vérendrye expedition. These discoveries were also the catalyst that brought religiosity into the La Vérendrye commemoration.³⁰ Moreover, the Fort St. Charles expedition re-invented the reluctant missionary, Father Jean-Pierre Aulneau, as a major and almost predominant figure in the quest for the Western Sea. Father Aulneau's letters had been rediscovered and reprinted in 1893 as *The Aulneau Collection*.³¹ In the first years of the 20th century, Jesuit scholars at St. Boniface College read this volume, and were inspired to embark on a number of expeditions to discover the old sites of Fort St. Charles and the island of the 1736 massacre. Archbishop Langevin of St. Boniface was instrumental in funding

The Making of a Manitoban Hero

several expeditions in the search for the fort.³² At one time the sites of Fort St. Charles and the island where Aulneau was killed were considered so holy that T. J. Campbell wrote: “even the pagan Indians make the sign of the cross as they approach [the island], and then paddle furiously to hurry by.”³³

The initial expedition in 1902 failed to find the fort. Nevertheless, the Jesuit expedition said a prayer on the island where they believed the Frenchmen had been massacred in 1736. In August 1908, the ruins of Fort St. Charles on the Lake of the Woods were discovered and identified by a Jesuit team from St. Boniface College. Campbell noted that the expedition began “with absolute trust in Divine Providence... they started out on the lake singing the *Ave Maris Stella*.”³⁴ The Jesuits from the College discovered the site of the fort in short time and immediately started excavating. Before two weeks had passed, they turned up nineteen skulls and some skeletons, which validated the account in *La Vérendrye’s Journals and Letters*.

The Jesuits discovered two skeletons side by side in a box. Campbell wrote of the Jesuits’ unique discovery: “at the feet of the other skeleton were the beads of a rosary and a bunch of keys. Between the two bodies was a cutlass. Both were headless. There could be little doubt that the Jesuits of 1908 met their brother Aulneau who had been murdered in 1736.”³⁵ S. J. Paquin wrote that, upon departing from the site of Fort St. Charles, the expedition planted a cross on the north side of the fort and sang “the *Magnificat* in thanksgiving.”³⁶ In both Paquin’s and Campbell’s narratives, the Jesuit expedition was led to Fort St. Charles and the remains of Father Aulneau by divine providence. Paquin concluded that, “we find us justified in believing that we have recovered the relics of the Rev. Father Aulneau, and in giving them the honour they deserve.”³⁷

Following the discovery and excavation of Fort St. Charles, publications from the *Société historique de Saint-Boniface* in the 1910s reveal that the discourse of Catholic religiosity dominated the commemoration of La Vérendrye. Prud’Homme noted that La Vérendrye was “a man of strong faith, sweetly pious, and this helped him to bear the severe hardships of his expeditions.” This ardently pious La Vérendrye undertook his mission “in the service of God and France.”³⁸ Prud’Homme concluded that La Vérendrye had planted the “seed of lasting institutions,” and took care to bring “with him missionaries who at the dawn of the discovery of the West, would establish the faith.” Due to La Vérendrye’s piety and diligence, “Western Canada at the time of its discovery had in its heart the teachings of the true Gospel... the seal of that moral grandeur which makes its present strength and its future hope.”³⁹

Bill Moreau has argued that a scriptural and hagiographic discourse dominates the historiography of the 1736 Lake of the Woods massacre.⁴⁰ The rediscovery of the Aulneau letters and the publications of *la Société historique de Saint-Boniface* led to an increasingly important role for Father Aulneau in the Fort St. Charles and massacre narratives. For example, in a 1927 biography sponsored

by the Québec government, Irene Moore wrote that “the missionary’s body was [found] in such a position that it was thought he was beheaded while on his knees... perhaps pronouncing absolution for his confreres in dying.”⁴¹ Similarly, Ottawa historian and original English translator of the *La Vérendrye Journals and Letters*, Lawrence J. Burpee, stated in his *Pathfinders of the Great Plains* that in the midst of the Sioux attack on the French convoy, “the Jesuit priest walked up and down, deep in his breviary.”⁴² Aulneau’s prominent role had now extended to both English and French historiographies of La Vérendrye. In the discourse of Catholic religiosity, historical writing becomes almost a hagiography, “a discourse... [with] scriptural echoes.”⁴³ Campbell suggested that Aulneau was not decapitated like the rest of the Frenchmen: “it was reported that the Indians were afraid to touch his body.”⁴⁴ Moreau argues that Aulneau becomes “the central, and almost sole figure in the narrative—he approaches heroic status.”⁴⁵

Whereas Champlain and Laval had acted as commemorative counterweights to each other in the 1908 Québec celebrations, so too did raising Aulneau to “heroic status” allow a commemorative balance between the secular and the Catholic in the La Vérendrye commemoration. However, Aulneau and La Vérendrye never competitively



Planning, Property and Development Department, City of Winnipeg.

A monument in the St. Boniface Cathedral Cemetery on Tache Avenue, erected by La Société historique de Saint-Boniface, features sculptures of missionary Jean-Pierre Aulneau and Jean Baptiste Gaultier La Vérendryé, commemorating them and 19 others killed on an island in Lake of the Woods on 6 June 1736.

vied for attention in the commemorative public space in St. Boniface in quite the same way that Champlain and Laval had competed in Québec. In contrast, Bishop François de Laval had at least been a significant religious leader in the French colony in his lifetime; whereas Aulneau's status as a religious figure had been insignificant and was largely constructed by the Jesuit historians of St. Boniface College in the 20th century.

As Moreau has noted, Aulneau was not the central figure of the 1736 massacre. The first accounts of the incident in the summer of 1736 place "Aulneau in a subordinate role; one account speaks only of the group, while the other gives priority to Jean-Baptiste de la Vérendrye." Aulneau was not a martyr, as he was not slain in defence of the Catholic Faith. Rather, the Frenchmen were killed for commercial and political reasons. As Moreau indicates, "the heads [of the Frenchmen] wrapped in beaver pelts speak the symbolic language of commerce rather than Christianity."⁴⁶

Moreover, Aulneau was not a particularly successful or passionate missionary; Aulneau's personal letters to his mother and colleagues indicate that he was greatly discouraged by his missionary work among the Cree, whom he described as "fierce and cruel." He believed that they obeyed and worshipped the devil and that their sole occupations were warfare and hunting. Aulneau never set foot in the vicinity of present-day Winnipeg but he described the region around the Lake of the Woods as a "wretched country" and stated, on multiple occasions, his "natural repugnance" for his missionary work.⁴⁷ Aulneau had also been initially quite reluctant to undertake the mission: "it was not without a pang that I brought myself to obey." Finally, Aulneau was unenthusiastic about having been sent to undertake missionary work alone; he wrote frequently about how the difficulties of the missionary work "would have been more than welcome had it been advisable to give me as a companion another Jesuit."⁴⁸

Conversely, Aulneau's Jesuit friends and colleagues, writing about him after his death, contradicted and negated the hesitations discernible in his writings. In 1738, Father Luc-François Nau wrote to Aulneau's mother that her son was now "invoked here as a powerful intercessor with God, and [that] a great many persons affirm that they have received signal graces through his intercession."⁴⁹ Still problematic was Aulneau's departure from Fort St. Charles to join the French convoy headed to the French trading post at Michilimackinac, on the straits between Lake Huron and Lake Michigan. Aulneau would be headed away from his missionary work after less than a year in the West. Most Jesuit narratives seem to disregard this enigma and simply attach him to the convoy without question. On discussing Aulneau's presence in the convoy, Nellis Crouse ponders

that perhaps "he decided to return to Montreal, though why he did not remain in order to perfect himself in the Indian dialects and carry on his missionary labours among the neighbouring tribes is not clear."⁵⁰ Grace Flandreau more directly asserted that Aulneau had given up his missionary work: "[he] proved unequal to the grim life of his new frontier. He demanded to be returned to Michilimackinac and asked that Verendrye's son should accompany him so that he might make the journey with the greatest speed and safety."⁵¹ In all cases, Aulneau seems to have been determined to return to Michilimackinac with the utmost haste and security.

The Jesuit priest had also asked La Vérendrye for his son, Jean-Baptiste, so that "no time was lost on the way, either going or returning."⁵² La Vérendrye wrote that "my eldest son went with them [the convoy to Michilimackinac], as I could not refuse him to the reverend Father, who had asked for him."⁵³ Moreau observes that the "writings [of] the elder La Vérendrye betray some peevishness with the missionary, stating on three occasions that it was at Aulneau's insistence that Jean-Baptiste was sent along with the brigade, stopping just short of accusing the Jesuit of responsibility for the death of his son."⁵⁴ Indeed, Jean-Baptiste

de La Vérendrye was attached to the convoy solely on Aulneau's request, and seems to have had no reason to be part of the convoy himself. Regardless, La Vérendrye had previously sent his eldest son on far more dangerous errands than the relatively short voyage to Michilimackinac.

The commemorative theme of French piety and Catholicism seems to have continued into the period of the bicentennial celebration and the unveiling of the La Vérendrye monument in 1938. Similar to Burpee's writings, other English-Canadian historians began to draw upon the discursive themes of religiosity and piety. Edward Watts has argued that some dissident American writers of this period also used the legacy of the French in North America to challenge American imperialism, exclusion, and ambition.⁵⁵ New France had been perceived as demonstrating "a more horizontal notion of difference, one that tolerated and even championed interculturalism and other forms of cultural plurality," whereas, the "Anglo model was constructed as a vertical stratification of races, regions, and religions."⁵⁶ Similarly, English-Canadian historians drew upon the moralizing themes of the French colonial period, which was recognized as inherently less bloody and deplorable than both England's and Spain's colonial heritage.⁵⁷

In Winnipeg and Ottawa, English authors and academics were drawn into the growing interest in La Vérendrye through the efforts of Prud'Homme and other Franco-Manitoban academics and Jesuits.⁵⁸ The St. Boniface

An argument for equal recognition of La Vérendrye and Lord Selkirk in public memory was the strategy employed by the St. Boniface College and Historical Society to gather English support to fund the monument.

The Making of a Manitoban Hero

College expedition and further writings from *la Société historique de Saint-Boniface* seem to have generated interest and support from the City of Winnipeg. In 1913, the mayor of Winnipeg, Thomas R. Deacon, wrote to Prud'Homme expressing his utmost support:

I have the very greatest pleasure in assuring you of my most hearty cooperation in this matter. I looked upon those great explorers, La Vérendrye, Père Marquette and La Salle, as almost the equal of any explorers of whom we have record anywhere and their names and particularly La Vérendrye's are well worthy of being cherished in the highest respect by the people who have profited so much by their exploration.⁵⁹

In the same year, Prud'Homme and the La Vérendrye Monument committee gathered support from a number of prominent Anglo-Manitobans. Manitoba's Public Utilities Commissioner and a former judge, H. A. Robson, also expressed support. Robson wrote: "I am heartily in favour of the proposal and trust it may at an early date be successfully carried out."⁶⁰ Also expressing his support, Sir William White wrote to Prud'Homme: "I sincerely trust that the efforts of the committee will meet with success and that a monument worthy of the Great Explorer will soon be an accomplished fact... to commemorate the names of those who did so much for the Canadian West, especially in its earlier years."⁶¹ The La Vérendrye monument had gathered a lot of English financial support in 1913 through *la Société historique de Saint-Boniface's* efforts, but was not finally erected until 1938. The massive delays can probably be attributed to two of the monumental events of the 20th century, as the outbreak of the Great War and the Great Depression significantly hindered the progress of the monument's realization.

Nevertheless, Prud'Homme continued to write prolifically in English on La Vérendrye throughout the wartime period, focussing on the theme of co-operation between Anglo- and Franco-Manitobans, properly emphasizing their respective heroes, La Vérendrye and Selkirk. In 1916, Prud'Homme wrote that "the French Canadians have a special claim on La Vérendrye and the English Canadians on Selkirk, but these two great men cannot be held within the compass of only one nationality. They are the glory of the West, and the fathers of that part of Canada." Prud'Homme argued that all Canadians should learn their names and histories, and should strive to "imitate their spirit of sacrifice for the love of their country."⁶²

Prud'Homme's perseverance and continued work on La Vérendrye throughout the war met with some success. Following the war, a La Vérendrye statue was erected in 1920 upon completion of the Manitoba Legislative Building. However, this statue was much smaller than the intended monument in St. Boniface. Nevertheless, the La Vérendrye statue was still a victory for *la Société historique*

de Saint-Boniface and the College. A story in the *Winnipeg Tribune* claimed that "the great Anglo Saxon heroes" should serve as suitable commemorations for the building and grounds. Despite the bias toward exclusively "Anglo Saxon heroes," local groups and interests pressed for commemorative monuments to honour both Lord Selkirk and La Vérendrye.⁶³

Colin M. Coates has observed that it would be inaccurate to argue that *lieux de mémoire* were created by the "simple imposition of the state's will to remember, or even for less direct and hegemonic control by the Dominion or provincial governments." Although government subsidies for monuments and festivities help shape the collective memory of a community, the government contributions are often made "as a reaction to the demands of voluntary organizations or prominent individuals."⁶⁴ Therefore, the provincial government certainly supported the establishment of a La Vérendrye monument on the Legislative grounds, in contrast to the other "great Anglo Saxon heroes." There were both voluntary organizations and prominent individuals in the Franco-Manitoban community who publicly appealed for the commemoration of La Vérendrye in Manitoba.

In the spirit of co-operation, statues of Vérendrye and the Earl of Selkirk stood as companion pieces on the East portico of the Manitoba Legislative Building. Baker has argued that La Vérendrye also was chosen to be honoured as a historic hero, because he "was thought to be a good model for young people to emulate." The duo were honoured and commemorated at the Manitoba Legislative Building for much the same reasons that Prud'Homme had already emphasized: "De la Vérendrye was one of the first to explore the area which was to become the province of Manitoba, Selkirk had believed in the future of the region and had led settlers there."⁶⁵

The aftermath of the Great War had a profound effect on public memory in Winnipeg and St. Boniface. Studying Canadian war social memory, historian Jonathan Vance has argued that the interwar period necessitated an explanation for the unfathomable carnage of the First World War. Many historians in the interwar period, Vance argues, saw the War as "Canada's progress from colony to nation" and the victory at Vimy Ridge as "the one milestone to mark the progress on the road to national maturity." However, Vance argues that the War "did not create a single nationalism, but instead strengthened the two nationalisms of French and English Canada; both societies gained a greater appreciation of their separate identities from the experience of the war."⁶⁶ Both the separation of French and English nationalism, as well as the unifying sense of a national Canadian identity, are evident in Manitoba in the interwar period. The French (La Vérendrye) and the English (Selkirk) are separated but commemorated in unison in a spirit of co-operation. The linking of La Vérendrye and Selkirk in commemoration solidified a Manitoban identity, while also asserting a separate and distinguished Anglo- and Franco-Manitoban culture. At the same time, the predominant role

The Making of a Manitoban Hero

of French and English public memory in Winnipeg and St. Boniface excluded other cultural segments of the contested space for public commemoration in Manitoba. In the 1910s, Winnipeg was unique in Canada for its large population of European immigrants and, as historian Jim Blanchard has noted, the 1916 census indicated that Winnipeg had a population that was only 67 percent British in origin.⁶⁷

The Great Depression and the Great Drought of the 1930s turned the once shining “Buckle of the World’s Wheat Belt” into the “Dust Bowl.” By 1938, however, the economic situation in Manitoba began to improve. Eric Wells has argued that “bountiful harvests in 1938 and 1939, along with improved conditions in the United States, helped restore the upward trend in wheat prices” and as a result, the businesses and factories of Winnipeg and St. Boniface boomed.⁶⁸ The prosperous year of 1938 coincided with the bicentennial anniversary of La Vérendrye’s first arrival at the Forks. The establishment and unveiling of the long-awaited La Vérendrye monument would finally come to realization. The renewed economic prosperity in the province of Manitoba saw the emergence of a third category of commemoration—La Vérendrye’s role in the settlement and industrialization of Manitoba. At the same time, the two other commemorative categories of religiosity and the spirit of co-operation continued to persist in the commemoration of La Vérendrye in the bicentennial celebration.

In 1938, the cities of Winnipeg and St. Boniface held a nine-day event to honour and pay tribute to La Vérendrye. The event was designed as a bicentennial celebration that commemorated the arrival of La Vérendrye at the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine rivers on 24 September 1738. The celebration from 3-11 September consisted of a pageant, a parade, a canoe procession at the Forks, and finally—the climax of the festivities—the ceremonial unveiling and dedication of the La Vérendrye monument and park in St. Boniface. The program guide proposed to celebrate “the discovery of the West by La Vérendrye,” who two hundred years before had ventured into territories that were “entirely unknown to the white race.”⁶⁹

The bicentennial program stated that La Vérendrye saw “with his prophetic vision the potentialities of the great western plains... his vision—his sacrifice.”⁷⁰ La Vérendrye was recognized as the forerunner of industry and commerce of Manitoba and was said to have recognized the “potentialities” of the province of Manitoba as he experienced the “millions of acres of forests,” the vast expanse of fertile western plain, the “inexhaustible store of fish and game,” and even the hints of copper and other precious ore deposits. La Vérendrye did not develop

Manitoba in his own right, but “he pointed the way and his illustrious successors have carried the torch to us—the people of Manitoba—who today honour his memory.” With much exaggeration the bicentennial program also stated that La Vérendrye “gave birth to the City of Winnipeg... [through] perseverance and fortitude.”⁷¹

Twenty-nine different advertisements were scattered throughout the twenty-four page bicentennial program. An advertisement by the “City of Winnipeg Hydro” gave praise to La Vérendrye for having built Fort Maurepas on the Winnipeg River in 1734. The advertisement stated that “the Winnipeg River is steeped in Romance... Times have changed, but the romance of the river has not dimmed.” The canoes used on the “highway” by the “countless voyageurs, traders, trappers and prospectors” have been replaced by “City Hydro’s huge power plants.”⁷² In this sense, the Winnipeg River itself has become a site of

commemoration by celebrating its “discovery” by La Vérendrye and the foundation of Fort Maurepas.⁷³

Other companies and corporations also commemorated La Vérendrye and used the bicentennial events to advertise their products and services. The Toupin Lumber & Fuel Company wrote that “La Vérendrye was unquestionably one of the greatest patriots

of our Canadian Land. Let us prove our faith in him by permanently establishing ourselves on the soil he loved so much.” The Toupin Lumber & Fuel Company reinforced the La Vérendrye prophetic foundation legend by suggesting he loved the Manitoban soil and had somehow imagined settlement and industry in Manitoba. The advertisement concludes, that the best way to acknowledge and pay tribute to La Vérendrye is by “building for yourself a real good home. One which will take care of your families for many years to come.”⁷⁴ Similarly, the Great-West Life Assurance Company wrote that “Two Hundred Years Ago, when Pierre Gaultier de la Vérendrye surmounted untold hardships to reach this gateway to the West, he must have divined the great wealth and future that lay in store.” Great-West Life connected past heroism and adventure with current industry and development: “where his paddle dipped and where his moccasins left their imprints, there have risen great power developments... [and] massive buildings of industry and public service.”⁷⁵ Starting in 1938, the economic upturn following the Great Depression saw a renewed growth and confidence in local businesses and factories. Therefore, the third category of commemoration emerged in the post-Depression period, the celebration of La Vérendrye for his role in the settlement and industry of Manitoba.

As mentioned, the 1938 bicentennial celebration also saw the resurgence of two other commemorative themes—

The aftermath of the Great War had a profound effect on public memory in Winnipeg and St. Boniface. Studying Canadian war social memory, historian Jonathan Vance has argued that the interwar period necessitated an explanation for the unfathomable carnage of the First World War.

The Making of a Manitoban Hero

religiosity and the spirit of co-operation. For example, the bicentennial celebration was intended to commemorate not only the French *voyageurs* and La Vérendrye, but also the Earl of Selkirk and the Selkirk Settlers who settled in the Red River valley in 1812. The program noted that settlers of all nationalities arrived in Manitoba and worked together, “shoulder to shoulder,” to realize their dreams and to “build a common heritage to hand down to their children... sacrifices had to be made, and with the SPIRIT OF CO-OPERATION they laid well the foundations upon which the generations to come are to build.”⁷⁶ The recent economic turbulence of the 1930s was certainly now more present in the undertones of the spirit of co-operation discourse than it had been in the 1910s.

The joint commemoration of Selkirk and La Vérendrye allowed both Anglo- and Franco-Manitobans to take pride in a shared heritage and history. The “honorary patrons” present at the bicentennial celebration in 1938 comprised a fairly mixed group: eleven English dignitaries including the Lieutenant-Governor and the Premier of Manitoba, as well as seven French dignitaries including the Premier of Québec and a French diplomat. Of the executive committee there were six English members and seven French members.⁷⁷ As a result, the program and the bicentennial celebrations seem to have been almost completely bilingual. About half the events were in Winnipeg and half in St. Boniface.

Ethnic minorities were also incorporated into the bicentennial celebrations as part of the Winnipeg elite’s conscious desire to integrate the “outsider” ethnic groups into the Manitoban community. The bicentennial program stated that “We are fortunate in having as citizens people representing many nationalities. Each evening several of the following groups present their offerings.”⁷⁸ Royden Loewen and Gerald Friesen have written that it was in the 1920s when “Winnipeg’s elites first recognized that cultural diversity was one of the city’s distinctive features... Public acknowledgement of pluralism was then extended to the promotion of citizenship.”⁷⁹ The program listed nine ethnic minorities and a description of their song, music, or dance to be performed as part of the bicentennial celebrations. People of Czechoslovakian, German, Dutch, Hungarian, Italian, Jewish, Polish, Swedish, and Ukrainian ethnic backgrounds took part as performers. Even within the context of “representing [the] many nationalities” of Canada, the organizers of the program sought to enforce their vision of the Canadian nation and the Canadian citizen. The program praised the “Polish-Canadians of this City,” who were “glad to participate in this celebration as much as they are happy to know that many pioneers of their nationality have contributed to the making of the history of Canada.” Despite their contributions to the making of the Canadian nation and history, the program noted that the Polish-Canadians contributions were “on a smaller scale than La Vérendrye and his co-nationals.” On the other hand, the bicentennial program represented the Dutch minority as comprising the “ideal” Canadian immigrants: “People from the Netherlands came to Canada and rather



G. Goldsborough

A statue of Pierre Gaultier De Varennes La Vérendrye guards the east entrance to the Manitoba Legislative Building.

than form separate communities proudly became absorbed in Canadian life.” The high praise for Dutch assimilation into “Canadian life” marginalized the other ethnic groups, who presumably had formed “separate communities,” and had retained their own language and culture, and did not become wholly absorbed into “Canadian life.”⁸⁰

First Nations were also represented; however, their role was also severely marginalized by the Anglo- and Franco-Manitoban organizers. English-born Philip H. Godsell was in charge of the “Indian Scenes and Dances” portions of the celebrations.⁸¹ Godsell had been an HBC employee until 1929 during which time he worked in the Keewatin, Lake Superior, Mackenzie River and Western Arctic districts. At the time, he was living and working full-time as a writer and journalist in Winnipeg. On the third day of the celebrations, there was an “Old-Time Fair”, a “Buffalo Barbecue” and an “Indian Pow Wow on barges” at Whittier Park in St. Boniface.⁸²

Colin Coates argues that the “colonial contexts” of commemoration have meant “Aboriginal peoples’ histories and memories have been both appropriated and forgotten.” This was particularly pertinent in the period from the 1890s to the 1920s, wherein “both English- and French-Canadians participated in vociferous debates over the

meanings of nationalism and imperialism." In the debate over the meaning of nationalism, Aboriginal peoples were critically important to the writing of Canadian history. However, in the process, Coates states, "First Nations were denied their own history, being relegated to the realm of memory, fantasy, and desire."⁸³ First Nations history was appropriated by the La Vérendrye bicentennial celebrations; the "Indian Pow Wow" was not meant to commemorate an Aboriginal traditional dance, but rather was appropriated to assert and validate notions of French and English nationalism.

The commemorative themes of religiosity and piety were also part of the celebrations. The program concluded with the 1738 founding of Fort Rouge at the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine rivers. According to the program, the "party is met by two Chiefs and La Vérendrye smokes the ceremonial pipe of peace. For the first time, the solemn strains of the *Te Deum* are heard in the wilderness as the priest gives his blessing."⁸⁴ The First Nations Chiefs who smoke the ceremonial pipe of peace with La Vérendrye are unnamed and remain anonymous. Their identity is unimportant and their symbolic gesture of peace and compliance justifies Franco-Manitoban imperial claims to the province. The program also failed to mention which priest gave the blessing at the peace ceremony, perhaps completely failing to take into account that the slain Father Aulneau had not yet been replaced by another missionary. Nevertheless, the inclusion of references to the *Te Deum* hymn and the priest's blessings reinforces the continued importance of the commemorative theme of piety and religiosity in the commemoration of La Vérendrye.

In conclusion, the commemoration of La Vérendrye in Manitoba began in 1886 when Archbishop Taché blessed and oversaw the placement of the first granite blocks in St. Boniface, the future site of the monument. In 1908, researchers from St. Boniface College discovered and excavated the site of Fort St. Charles on the Lake of the Woods, and at the same time the recovery of Father Aulneau's remains and the discovery of the island where he was killed renewed a sense of religious fervour in St. Boniface. La Vérendrye's relatively secular commercial and exploratory expedition was transformed by Franco-Manitoban historians and Jesuits into a zealous mission of conversion. In 1920, Prud'Homme was particularly influential in building Anglo-Canadian support through his construction of a bicultural discourse and spirit of co-operation. The commemorative theme of co-operation was evident in the post-war establishment of the statues of La Vérendrye and Selkirk as companion pieces on the East portico of the Manitoba Legislative Building. Finally, the end of the Great Depression and the beginning of the economic upturn in 1938 saw the commemorative theme of La Vérendrye as a settler and industrial prophet emerge. The three categories of commemoration were shaped through time and by varying social changes during the first four decades of the 20th century. As Geoffrey Cubitt has

suggested, "commemorations are always as much about the present and the future as about the past."⁸⁵

The 1938 La Vérendrye bicentennial celebration was the apogee of La Vérendrye commemoration in Manitoba, the culmination of efforts by Judge Prud'Homme, the St. Boniface Historical Society, and St. Boniface College in the course of the early 20th century. Following the celebration, La Vérendrye faded from public memory with the advent of the Second World War. However, there was a resurgence of interest in La Vérendrye in the 1970s. In 1973, at the unveiling of a La Vérendrye plaque in Bonnycastle Park in Winnipeg, the President of the Manitoba Historical Society, Dr. E. C. Shaw, described the character of La Vérendrye: "Belief in God, Integrity of action, Fearlessness in the face of the unknown, Gentleness of spirit."⁸⁶ The 1970s also saw the inauguration and growth of the Festival du Voyageur, a Winnipeg winter festival that annually celebrates the culture and lifestyle of the French *voyageur*. The commemorative themes surrounding La Vérendrye have changed and the focus has shifted from the man to the commemoration of the culture and lives of his soldiers and *voyageurs*. 2013 marked the 275th anniversary of the foundation of Fort Rouge under La Vérendrye's supervision at the Forks of the Assiniboine and Red rivers. Today, the memory of La Vérendrye continues to remain accessible to public memory as the monuments, plaques, and statues erected in his honour still mark the landscape of Winnipeg as sites of commemoration or *lieux de mémoire*. 🍷

Notes

1. "Programme of the bi-centennial celebration of the arrival of Pierre Gaultier de La Vérendrye at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, Winnipeg and St. Boniface, September 3rd to 11th, 1938," La Vérendrye Bi-Centenary Committee, Winnipeg, <http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/bibliography/6240.html>.
2. Alain Roy and Gratiën Allaire, "À propos de l' Inventaire des lieux de mémoire de la Nouvelle-France: La Vérendrye et ses traces dans le paysage canadien," in *Entre lieux et mémoire: L'inscription de la francophonie canadienne dans la durée*, ed. Anne Gilbert et al., Ottawa: Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 2009, pp. 117–118.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
4. Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (1989): 12.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
6. Eric Wells, *Winnipeg: Where the New West Begins*, Burlington: Windsor Publications Ltd, 1982, p. 154.
7. Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007, p. 221.
8. H. V. Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec's Tercentenary*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999, p. 17.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Ronald Rudin, *Founding Fathers: The Celebration of Champlain and Laval in the Streets of Quebec, 1878–1908*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003, pp. 9–10.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
12. Nellis M. Crouse, *La Verendrye: Fur Trader and Explorer*, Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1956, pp. 3–5.
13. Jean-Pierre Aulneau, *The Aulneau Collection*, Montreal: Archives of St. Mary's College, 1893, pp. 66–67.

The Making of a Manitoban Hero

14. Daniel Royot, *Divided Loyalties in a Doomed Empire: The French in the West from New France to the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, Cranbury: Rosemont Publishing & Printing Corp, 2007, p. 229.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Agnes Laut, *Pathfinders of the West*, Ayer Co Pub, 1904, p. 197.
17. Lawrence J. Burpee, *Pathfinders of the Great Plains*, Toronto: Brook & Company, 1914, p. 1.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 59.
19. Wells, *Winnipeg: Where the New West Begins*, p. 182.
20. Louis Arthur Prud'Homme, "A Monument to La Vérendrye The Discoverer of the West Appeal to the Public" in *A Monument to La Vérendrye, the Discoverer of the West*, ed. Committee of La Vérendrye Monument, St. Boniface: Le Manitoba Printing Co., 1913, p. 5.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
24. Ronald Rudin, *Founding Fathers*, p. 8.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Prud'Homme, *A Monument to La Vérendrye*, p. 6.
27. Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building*, p. 16.
28. Rudin, *Founding Fathers*, p. 9.
29. Alan Gordon, *The Hero and the Historians: Historiography and the Uses of Jacques Cartier*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010, pp. 83–84.
30. La Vérendrye established Fort St. Charles in 1731 on a peninsula in the Lake of the Woods in the modern day Northwest Angle, Minnesota. Fort St. Charles served as his principal headquarters until 1738 when Fort La Reine, Portage La Prairie, was established. Burpee, *Journals and Letters*, p. 95.
31. Jean-Pierre Aulneau, *The Aulneau Collection*, Montreal: Archives of St. Mary's College, 1893.
32. Prud'Homme, *Pierre Gaultier de Varennes Sieur De La Vérendrye*, p. 38.
33. T. J. Campbell, "Out of the Grave: The Discovery of Fort St. Charles in 1908," *Bulletin of the Historical Society of St. Boniface* 5 (1915): 3.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
36. S. J. Paquin, "The Discovery of the Relics of the Reverend Jean Pierre Aulneau," *La Société Historique de Saint-Boniface* 1 (1911): 75.
37. *Ibid.*
38. Louis Arthur Prud'Homme, "Pierre Gaultier de Varennes Sieur De La Vérendrye," *Bulletin of the Historical Society of St. Boniface* 5 (1916): 6-8.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.
40. Bill Moreau, "The Death of Père Aulneau, 1736: The Development of Myth in the Northwest," *Historical Studies* 69 (2003): 61.
41. Irene Moore, *Valiant La Vérendrye*, Quebec: L.S.A, Proulx, 1927, p. 227.
42. Burpee, *Pathfinders of the Great Plains*, p. 40.
43. Moreau, *The Death of Père Aulneau*, p. 61.
44. Campbell, *Out of the Grave*, p. 16.
45. Moreau, *The Death of Père Aulneau*, p. 61.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
47. Aulneau, *The Aulneau Collection*, pp. 76–77.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
49. Luc-François Nau to Madame Aulneau, 10 October 1738, Aulneau Collection. Quoted in Moreau, *The Death of Père Aulneau*, p. 60.
50. Crouse, *La Vérendrye*, p. 104.
51. Grace Flandreau, "The Verendrye Expeditions in Quest of the Pacific," *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 26 (1925): 74.
52. Burpee, *Journals and Letters*, p. 215.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 217.
54. Moreau, *The Death of Père Aulneau*, p. 60.
55. Edward Watts, *In This Remote Country: French Colonial Culture in the Anglo-American Imagination, 1780–1860*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006, p. 224.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
57. See, for example, Francis Parkman, *The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century*, Boston, 1867.
58. Prud'Homme, *A Monument to La Vérendrye*, p. 7.
59. Thomas R. Deacon, "Mr. T. R. Deacon, Mayor of Winnipeg, Mayor's Office, Winnipeg, April 10th, 1913. [to] His Honour Judge Prud'Homme, St. Boniface, Man." In *A Monument to La Vérendrye, the Discoverer of the West*, ed. Committee of La Vérendrye Monument, St. Boniface: Le Manitoba Printing Co., 1913, p. 9.
60. H. A. Robson, "Honorable Judge Robson. Public Utilities Commissioner, Public Utilities Commission. Winnipeg 19 Apl. 1913. [to] Noel Bernier, Esq. Winnipeg," in *A Monument to La Vérendrye, the Discoverer of the West*, ed. Committee of La Vérendrye Monument, St. Boniface: Le Manitoba Printing Co., 1913, p. 10.
61. Sir William White, "Sir William White, K. B. Winnipeg, April 11th, 1913. [to] Judge Prud'homme," in *A Monument to La Vérendrye, the Discoverer of the West*, ed. Committee of La Vérendrye Monument, St. Boniface: Le Manitoba Printing Co., 1913, p. 12.
62. Louis Arthur Prud'Homme, "Pierre Gaultier de Varennes Sieur De La Vérendrye," *Bulletin of the Historical Society of St. Boniface* 5 (1916): 1-2.
63. Baker, *Symbol in Stone*, p. 118.
64. Colin M. Coates, *Heroines and History: Representations of Madeline de Verchères and Laura Secord*, University of Toronto Press, 2002, p. 8.
65. Baker, *Symbol in Stone*, pp. 112, 133.
66. Jonathan Vance, *Death so Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997, p. 10.
67. Jim Blanchard, *Winnipeg's Great War: A City Comes of Age*, Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010, p. 8.
68. Wells, *Winnipeg: Where the New West Begins*, p. 154.
69. La Vérendrye Bi-Centenary Committee, *Programme of the bi-centennial celebration*, p. 17.
70. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
72. *Ibid.*
73. Fort Maurepas, however, was originally established on the Red River in 1734, and it was not until 1739–1740 that a second Fort Maurepas was built on the Winnipeg River. The Winnipeg Hydro company requested that the location of the original Fort Maurepas be on the Winnipeg River where their power plants operated in order to connect themselves to the heroisms and discoveries of La Vérendrye. Champagne, *Nouvelles Études*, p. 9.
74. La Vérendrye Bi-Centenary Committee, *Programme of the bi-centennial celebration*, p. 9.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
76. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
79. Royden Loewen and Gerald Friesen, *Immigrants In Prairie Cities: Ethnic Diversity in Twentieth-Century Canada*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009, p. 146.
80. *Ibid.*
81. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
82. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
83. Coates, *Heroines and History*, pp. 7, 10.
84. La Vérendrye Bi-Centenary Committee, *Programme of the bi-centennial celebration*, p. 7.
85. Cubitt, *History and Memory*, p. 221.
86. Edward C. Shaw, "La Verendrye" *Manitoba Pageant* 19 (1973). <http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/pageant/19/laverendrye.shtml>

The Early History of Brewing in Winnipeg, 1668–1902: From Hudson’s Bay to Patrick Shea

by Graham Stinnett

Thomas J. Dodd Research Centre, University of Connecticut

In April of 1880, last call was made at the Lower Fort Garry brew house.¹ The unmistakably sweet smells of caramel and roasted grain ebbed from the causeway, the woody character of aged oak casks on racks and earthy hop odours of grass and pine hung in the rafters. The aromas embedded in the brew house represented a storied craft, perfected over the Hudson’s Bay Company’s (HBC) two hundred years in Rupert’s Land. That spring, demolition men set upon the structure with hammers, tearing down the smokestack, unearthing the plastered wood lath walls of the cellar and hauling the boil kettles and malt kiln out by horse cart. The decline of the HBC’s dominance in the beer economy was passing and one can only speculate what these men would have drunk after this historic day of labour: a bottle of Whiskey Thomas’ strong ale maybe, or an Assiniboine Brewery lager, or perhaps their own home recipe. What is certain, however, is that beer was no longer coming from the landmark “Stone Fort” brewery, once a pinnacle of the craft during the fur trade and an icon of settlement life in Red River.

Beer had arrived on Winnipeg’s business scene ripe for investment like the frontier viewed through the eyes of the speculator. By 1874, a year after incorporation as a city, Winnipeg and its surrounding area was home to seven licensed craft-production breweries that catered to a population of 1,869.² Fifty years earlier, the Red River settlement had only two sources of beer, the HBC brewery and home-brewing. The demolition of the brew house at the old Stone Fort represented the victory of a third way, one fuelled by the growth of industrial capitalism in the west. The old monopolistic beer production by fort craft-brewers in small manufactories had become outmoded in a financiers’ boom era and resulted in a stifling of individual settler initiatives. The home brewer was viewed negatively

by the newly formed state, which sought to codify ways of producing and consuming beer, ultimately building a racial and evangelistic temperance framework that exists to the present day.³ Winnipeg’s early brewing history is the story of home-brewing, small-scale commercial craft-brewing, and large-scale commercial brewing, along with their negotiations in all things beer.

History, much like the brewing of beer, is the measurement and observation of change over time. Winnipeg’s early beer brewing becomes knowable by recognizing its historical descendants and the craft-brewing renaissance that occurred on its doorstep. From the days of the early European fur trade, to cottage-economy home-brewing and expansion through industrial breweries, the history of Winnipeg brewing is the history of control. Today, this control continues to permeate the supply chain as macro-breweries abroad attempt to capture local consumer allegiance. What follows is a recounting of the early history of brewing in Winnipeg and its antecedents, from the first “small-beer” made by the crew of the *Nonsuch* on the shore of James Bay, to the hundreds of home batches crafted by countless woman brewers of the Red River Settlement, and the beginnings of Shea’s Select on Colony Creek.

Does Winnipeg have a unique brewing history? With the increasing popularity of craft beer and home brewing today, what are the local traditions regarding brewers, beer styles and brewing techniques? This article will investigate the legacy of brewing in what is now Manitoba from 1668 to 1902, its role in the colonial fur trade, and the beginnings of the commercial brewers who began the mass production of the beer with which we are familiar. The politics of beer as a manufactured commodity has been wrapped up in issues of class, gender, the state, and ethnic group relations, and these issues have affected our understanding of a seemingly untroubled Canadian pastime.⁴

This history also portrays the public’s relationship with brewing and their eventual alienation from it. The landscape of Winnipeg brewing has changed through the 19th and 20th centuries in a circuitous way, making this story relevant to our present role as consumers and craft brewers in a globalized market. It portrays this industry as it changed from the home, to the factory, to the periphery and back again. A socio-economic history such as this



While living in Winnipeg for ten years, Graham Stinnett received BA and MA degrees in History from the University of Manitoba. Presently the Curator of Human Rights and Alternative Press Collections, his academic interests include US-Latin America Cold War relations, antebellum settler colonialism in the Kansas and Indian territories, and LGBTTQ archives.

Early Brewing in Winnipeg



Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg - Buildings - Drewrys Brewery I, N16511.

Early brew. An 1882 view of the Red River looking south featured the brewery opened in 1877 by businessman, city councillor, and MLA Edward L. Drewry (1851–1940). A brewery would remain at the site until well into the 20th century.

starts with the introduction of western European spirits, as the northern plains were a unique region of North America where crops were not grown for the production of fermented beverages as they were in regions like Sumeria, Eastern Africa and the Andes.⁵

The story of the imperialist expansion into the “New World” by the British Empire and its mercantile spearhead, the HBC, can be told in conjunction with the introduction of beer to Rupert’s Land in 1668.⁶ Beer is the term popularly used today to describe an undistilled malt beverage of relatively low alcohol-by-volume that has fermented through the introduction of yeast.⁷ Historians, archaeologists and anthropologists have debated for decades the true beginnings of beer; whether it was the driving force behind sedentary agriculture or if it began as an accident in the baking process.⁸ Regardless of its genesis, for the past 5000 years humans have been making beer out of any starch that produces sugars. A standard was imposed on the craft in 1516, in Bavaria, called the *Reinheitsgebot* (German Purity Law), which required that all beer of that region be made of three ingredients: water, barley and hops.⁹ This successful regulation worked on

two levels: it made essential the use of hops (a rarely used ingredient in beer outside Bavaria) which could then be taxed by the state, and it also standardized the profession of brewing which set the craftspeople of the commercial enterprise apart from the home brewers.¹⁰ If it were not for the requirement to use this new ingredient, beer would not hold the historical place it does in European colonial expansion.¹¹ For French and English seafarers, small-beer was more reliable on the long voyage than water due to the boiling of the wort (the liquid extracted from mashing during the brewing process) and the natural preservative quality of hops that could keep during long trips. Beer brewing then was a vital craft that helped sustain these expeditions.

Brewing historian Richard Unger describes the development of the beer industry in six distinct stages as they occurred throughout the European Middle Ages and Renaissance.¹² These six stages, which serve as indicators of economic and social change in the industry, can be applied to the history of brewing in Winnipeg to form a different analysis of how we view beer today. Winnipeg’s brewing history skips Unger’s first four stages, which establish the

origins and formation of European brewing in the home by women for domestic consumption. The male-dominated realm of the fur-trade post little resembles a home and more the compartmentalized manufactory where the primary goal is to facilitate the “artisanal extraction of resources.” Unger’s fifth stage, already established in 17th-century Europe, best describes the first beer economy in Rupert’s Land where brewing occurred under the direction of a male artisan who specialized in this task.¹³ Therefore, from the outset, beer had an atypical beginning in Rupert’s Land.

Captain Zachariah Gillam of the Hudson’s Bay Company ship *Nonsuch* introduced beer to the first HBC post at Rupert House on 29 September 1668.¹⁴ His crew made a strong beer for the long voyage home the following year and proceeded to bury the kegs underground to protect them from freezing. Spirits such as whisky, rum, and brandy, as well as wine, which all have a greater alcohol-by-volume content than beer (or any indigenous alcoholic beverage made from spruce needles¹⁵), were transported to Rupert’s Land as gifts to smooth trade relations with First Nations and as commodities in the fur trade.¹⁶ Beer, however, was shipped to, and brewed, at all HBC posts in Rupert’s Land

for consumption by employees. Wine and brandy held greater currency than beer as trade goods, a fact understood by French fur traders who competed with the HBC for the furs of interior First Nations. Due to the unpasteurized nature of beer at the time and the not-yet-established role of hops as a preservative, beer’s shelf life was much shorter for hot, transatlantic voyages than that of malted grain. Records of recipes for post brewing are scant. However, in 1685 forty gallons of malted barley were sent out from England to each post for this purpose.¹⁷ The cost of shipping vast quantities of raw ingredients for beer production to the North American interior, which could then be traded, was far less effective than importing shiploads of rum from the West Indies. As the HBC expanded its operations in Rupert’s Land in the 1700s and solidified its holdings through trade, beer production remained a mandated provision at post breweries but rarely a traded commodity.

It is worth placing beer within the context of the global market of alcohol in the 17th and 18th centuries to demonstrate the role it played in the transatlantic economy. Western European empires required land to assert global dominance, followed closely by the trade in humans. The slave economy out of western Africa represented a profitable commodity “exchange” for privileged individuals seeking wealth and future security. After capturing slaves in west Africa,¹⁸ British voyages would operate the triangular Atlantic course to the Caribbean, unloading their human cargo and reloading with sugar and rum for the European market.¹⁹ Over sixty percent of all slaves captured in Africa during the 18th century were brought to the tiny British West

Indies to plant, then work, the cane fields.²⁰ To contrast the relative value of sugar and rum production with the fur trade, journalist Adam Hochschild notes that in 1773 British imports from the small island of Grenada were worth eight times those from all of Canada.²¹ In addition, the British Empire depended on the strongest naval fleet in the world, and the British navy depended on the strongest alcohol on the seas. With a daily ration equivalent to six double whiskeys²² a day, British sailors making the voyage to Canada came with a thirst and expected strong drink, but beer could not satisfy their need.²³ Beer, in the hierarchy of desired alcohol, was at the bottom of the ladder.

The establishment of posts at the mouth of the Nelson River by the HBC and rival French and American firms led to a greater frequency of shipments of malted barley for the brewing of beer. The HBC’s York Factory was the most prominent of these posts and in the late 17th century

mentioned a brewmaster named William Clarke. In 1694, Clarke was tasked with producing beer for employee consumption.²⁴ Fort Albany, Rupert House, Moose Factory, Nelson House and Fort Severn all had active post breweries producing beer prior to 1694 in Hudson Bay. Whisky production, however,

took precedence as the more desired craft by both traders and drinkers alike, leaving little record of beer. The HBC continually sought a proper location and technique for the distillation of grains to increase competitiveness with their trade rival’s monopoly on brandy, as very little that could be produced on-site was considered suitable for the fur trade. Distillers, such as Joseph Colon in 1791, were sent by the HBC to Rupert’s Land on contract in order to produce a spirit similar to brandy, but these attempts were often unsuccessful and Colon was recalled from York Factory four years later.²⁵

Whisky and beer have a similar relationship in that they both require malted cereal ingredients and storage over time to produce. However, whisky remained the fortunate son of the empire as it had already been established as the preferred beverage of Rupert’s Land.²⁶ Whisky could be made in small batches and hauled great distances by York boat or decanted into flasks or bottles for travel.²⁷ The prevalence of watering down whisky for trade was also a relatively undetectable practice compared with that of beer, making the small amount go that much further.²⁸ One famous whisky recipe from the early 1800s demonstrates the desire to produce rather than to consume:

1 qt. alcohol, 1 lb. black chewing tobacco, 1 handful red peppers, 1 bottle Jamaica ginger, 1 qt. black molasses; add water, mix well, and boil. 1 gal. of alcohol per 3 gal. of river water, plus one bottle of red ink for colour.²⁹

By 1874, a year after incorporation as a city, Winnipeg and its surrounding area was home to seven licensed craft-production breweries that catered to a population of 1,869.

Regardless of these concoctions, drinkers neither sought beer nor did they exist in large enough numbers to merit its growth as a desired product beyond post- or home-brewing. HBC posts lacked the major ingredients required for mass production of both substances. They were not like colonies where surplus barley could be harvested and where malting houses could prepare the grains. Beer production in the fur trade would never reach a scale large enough to become a mainstay commodity in comparison to shipments of whisky.

Beer did, however, produce a moderate allowance on behalf of the company, consolidating bonds throughout the fur trade. In many instances, whisky would be granted to post employees on holidays; however, beer was a daily ration that was deemed moderately inebriating to the point of contentedness. In addition, the consumption of alcohol was a major player in helping to define masculinity in the fur trade's male-dominated, rugged-individualist culture. Drinking was a mutually bonding affair. As historian Craig Heron states, "these practices involved more than a fondness for the taste of spirits or desire for the alcoholic buzz, and had little or nothing to do with a desire to escape misery or despair."³⁰ Many instances of severe drunkenness, like that of a Christmas celebration at Moose Factory in 1735 where the entire post was set ablaze, were regarded as incidents to be endured by post superiors rather than regulated.³¹ As will be demonstrated, the colour of one's skin and the station of his employment would make all the difference.

Post life provides us with an important sketch of brewing and beer consumption during the period of the colonialist fur trade. However, at the same time that company men were drinking small-beer at York Factory, beer was also becoming a part of the culture of New France. Jean Talon, the first Intendant of the colony, was appointed in 1665 to maintain order and respectability throughout Quebec and the surrounding territory.³² Talon's growing concern for the population's disposition toward drunkenness, due to the accessibility of spirits imported from the West Indies, led to his promotion of beer to be brewed locally and funded by Louis XIV.³³ Talon's preference for beer, because it was both lower in alcohol and an economical solution to surplus grain, sprang largely from a misinformed conception that cold beer, "not having vapors that deprived men of judgment," would make beer drinking the preferred sociability.³⁴ From New France to The Forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers, the proliferation of spirits worked as a foil for beer's subtle rise to dominance through to the end of the fur trade.

The history of settler home-brewing in Winnipeg begins with the arrival of the Selkirk settlers and the establishment of their agricultural colony adjacent to Fort Douglas in 1812.³⁵ Arguably, an earlier Métis population

may have produced a rudimentary beer from small-plot agriculture outside Fort Rouge since the French and Scottish had long traditions of brewing prior to Fort Douglas. It is more likely, though, that the Métis position in the fur trade, as producers of pemmican, guides and boat operators, allowed for greater access to brandy and whisky.³⁶

Unger's development model of brewing asserts that the household economy was the basis of early beer production; yet the post brewery was well advanced by the time European domestic settlement took root on the banks of the Red River. At the time of the 1821 merger of the Hudson's Bay and North West companies, when former post employees began migrating to the Red River Settlement,

an English pamphleteer and radical journalist named William Cobbett was putting quill pen to paper on how the home brewing of beer was a radical act of independence.³⁷ Cobbett, a general agitator on most topics, but particularly

those relating to the British Parliament, was an early opponent of large-scale manufacturing. In his treatise entitled *Cottage Economy*, Cobbett sought to combat the rise of a state-economy that taxed farmers' produce beyond their means through the use of paper currency.³⁸ A massive taxation on malt and hops by the British Parliament following the American independence movement of 1776 led to a decrease in the home production of beer in England:

These [regulations] have quite changed the customs of the English people as to their drink. They still drink beer, but it is of the brewing of common beers, and in public-houses, of which the common brewers have become the owners, and have thus, by the aid of paper-money, obtained a monopoly in the supplying of the great body of the people with one of those things which, to the hard-working man, is almost a necessary of life.³⁹

Cobbett's commentary and foresight into the economic forces, which would shape the brewing industry over the next one hundred and fifty years, served as a cautionary tale for the settlers of Red River and later the early inhabitants of Winnipeg.

Instructional guides, such as *Cottage Economy* (which today would be considered a do-it-yourself publication), served to challenge law and governance in the formation of the state. As the archival record demonstrates, laws imposed by the HBC and the Council of Assiniboia in the colony sought to regulate the production of beer within Red River.⁴⁰ Despite the ability to be self-sufficient, colonists continued to rely on the products sold at the fur-trade posts and general stores, including beer. From the earliest years of the Red River colony, a series of disasters prevented any real farming progress. Lack of food in winter, especially pemmican, drought, plagues of grasshoppers, and the

History, much like the brewing of beer, is the measurement and observation of change over time.

Early Brewing in Winnipeg

great flood of 1826 combined to reduce agricultural sustainability.⁴¹ However, agricultural production slowly improved and by 1833 Red River governor Donald MacKenzie, wrote to Hudson's Bay House in London that "settlement was going most thrivingly forward" and portrayed with enthusiasm "the large and flourishing harvests."⁴² Agricultural success, despite two decades of hardship, helped to pave the way for the growth of cottage brewing in the settlement.

Beginning in 1831, George Simpson, the HBC Overseas Governor, pursued whisky production in Rupert's Land.⁴³ With the official mandate by the British Parliament to cease the trade in liquors with indigenous peoples following the merger of 1821, Simpson promoted the cost efficiency of locally produced spirits "for consumption by the company's servants."⁴⁴ The HBC wavered in its decision to underwrite a distillery; their position was renegotiated several times, being initially offered by the Council of Assiniboia, then rejected, and again later agreed to and granted as

a sole privilege to the company at the expense of "other entrepreneurs who might be so inclined."⁴⁵ Confronting issues of public image, economic viability, access to barley, and a fickle local government, the Company's whisky production remained an underground enterprise. However, by 1843, after some settlers urged that a distillery be built in order to increase the amount of liquor available in the colony, the HBC decided to hire "respectable" contractors to produce "Native Malt Spirits" under the Company's management, yet keeping their liability at a minimum.

Construction of a whisky still began at Lower Fort Garry in June 1845 following the Council's request for the HBC to begin distillation.⁴⁶ In addition, an expanded brewery was built and a malting house erected which would service both production lines. The Lower Fort was chosen because the higher ground helped protect it from flooding, as well as "being less exposed to the view and visits of settlers and Indians."⁴⁷ Completion of the distillery at the fort was due in part to the arrival of the British



Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg - Buildings - Drewrys Brewery 3, N16513.

Hoofing it for deliveries. Wagons drawn by heavy work horses, such as this 1915 example at the Drewry Brewery, were the means by which beer was delivered to thirsty Winnipeg patrons well into the 20th century. Patrick Shea assembled a team that became an award-winner at horse shows. In the 1930s, the Shea Brewery sold eight of its show horses to US brewer Anheuser-Busch, whose brand Budweiser is still synonymous with the image of Clydesdales pulling a delivery wagon.

John Woodley & Co.,
ALE ~~AND~~ PORTER
BREWERS.
BRITISH BREWERY,
St. Paul and Winnipeg.
Brewers of High Class
English Burton Pale Ale,
London Porter and
Dublin Stout.

The Commercial (Winnipeg), No. 26, 27 March 1883.

"Brewers of high class." An advertisement in *The Commercial*, an early Winnipeg trade newspaper, for local brewer John Woodley.

Sixth Regiment of Foot, the Royal Warwickshires, in 1846. Simpson had requested from the company that troops be stationed at the Lower Fort in an effort to bolster British dominance in the settlement in the event a US invasion were to follow the Oregon boundary dispute of 1846.⁴⁸ For the HBC, the creation of a distillery at Lower Fort Garry would help police whisky "smugglers" through the threat of military intervention. It would also serve to corner the whisky market from "clandestine manufacture" by selling the company product cheaply.⁴⁹ Economic growth would be encouraged by providing a suitable outlet for settler wheat and barley. Simpson's plan, however, was hindered by a barley shortage in the settlement and the slow construction of the distillery, leading to an increase in beer sales by the HBC brewery and by home brewers.⁵⁰

The arrival of the Sixth Regiment created an opportunity for brewers to produce beer on a scale yet unseen in Rupert's Land. Although the HBC and the Council of Assiniboia frowned on the home sale of beer—largely because it meant the loss of taxation and was a threat to the company's control of the brewing monopoly—the risk of an unsatisfied military detachment loomed larger. However, the barley shortage played a significant role in

preventing beer production from reaching its potential as a dominant commodity in the colony. As indicated in a letter from Simpson to Chief Factor Christie when it was realized that the still would not be ready during the occupation of the troops, two thousand bushels of barley were to be converted into beer "for the use of the troops, not stronger than 8 gns. Beer to the Bushel."⁵¹ The inability of the Lower Fort brewery to provide for the regiment led to rationing beer in the canteens "in the proportion of about one pint per man."⁵² Christie noted that "all we can do is insufficient to meet the demand for drinkables both for officers and men."⁵³ Despite the sixteen thousand gallons (516 barrels) brewed, this shortage produced a draw on the company's stores for imported wines and spirits as well as an increase in home brewing in the colony.⁵⁴ The economic return for a cask of beer was far greater than that of a bushel of barley and continued to be so, making home brewing a more profitable enterprise. In 1847, when brewing at Lower Fort Garry was again threatened by a scarcity of barley, Simpson implemented a price increase on the grain to "3/[shillings] or 4/[shillings] charging a corresponding increase in the price of beer."⁵⁵ In an attempt to control the existing homegrown barley in the colony, Simpson's Lower Fort Garry brewery was now in direct competition with colonists who continued to produce their own beer and serve the needs of the local troops.

Very little historical record exists of home brewers in the Red River colony. Indeed, as Manitoba brewing historians Norm Gorman and William Douglas have pointed out, the few records that do exist are the result of individual brewers being caught! Until home brewing became a codified act, its existence in the colony was accepted as a regular practice as prevalent as baking and other "women's work."⁵⁶ Due to the lack of value placed on women's voices during this time, little is known about the day-to-day domestic activities of female home-brewers, also known as brewsters.⁵⁷ However, the cook book, a distinctly gendered product of women's domestic labour, predicated on oral traditions in the home during colonial times and earlier, can be used for a general understanding of the brewing of beer. For example, *The Home Cook Book (Tried! Tested! Proven!)* compiled in 1877 provides us with Mrs. Dickenson's Hop Beer recipe:

One handful of hops, boil an hour, strain, and add one pint of molasses, and enough water to make two gallons. When milk warm, add one cup or cake of yeast : let it stand overnight ; skim and pour it off from the yeast carefully ; add one tablespoon of wintergreens, and bottle for use.⁵⁸

This task of brewing was managed by women in the home as a food preparation activity varying in seasoning and technique. It was woman home-brewers who undermined the company's brewing monopoly.

In addition to the silence of brewsters, the perspectives of indigenous brewers and beer drinkers are conspicuous

by their absence in the archives. The Red River Settlement's first laws regarding the brewing and sale of beer were recorded in the minutes of the Council of Assiniboia on 13 June 1836 and read: "It being found that the public tranquility of the settlement is greatly endangered by the sale and traffic of beer to the Indians, *RESOLVED* that such sales or traffic be prohibited...and that anyone who may sell or traffic beer with the Indians, be liable in a penalty of twenty shillings."⁵⁹ These laws established the ongoing legal regulation of beer production and consumption in Winnipeg. A legal framework imposed temperance moralities on those who drank, on how they drank, what they drank, and where they drank, and exemplified a colonial power over Indigenous peoples. The enforcement of racialized drinking laws by the government was critical in building settler hegemony. As Heron writes, "When they turned Native people into the equivalent of children under the law and closed off indigenous peoples' legal access to alcohol, they were constructing rigid racial hierarchies."⁶⁰ To be a Métis brewer and drinker would be a subversive position indeed.⁶¹

The introduction of spirits, particularly brandy and rum, to Indigenous peoples in the Canadian northwest was a key component of European colonial conquest dating as far back as the 16th century. However, personal rebellions existed wherever law and religious doctrine attempted to regulate livelihood. Alex Grisdale, a prolific storyteller from the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation, recorded his family's employment and interactions with the HBC:

This is maybe 1843. My grandfather was young man freighting with York boats for Hudson's Bay Company. He worked with boats for twenty-four summers. It was very hard work. Each man had so much to carry over portages where boats cannot go. He also have one barrel of whiskey — thirty gallons in one barrel — to carry. He have very small wages and start from Fort Garry first day of June and get back home end of October... Sometimes when near home the Indian would drop a barrel of whiskey on a big rock shaped like a frying pan and drink from this and fill his clay bottle. Of course the Indian would make some lie — the barrel fell overboard or was all smashed. Sometimes they would throw a barrel over board when near home and it would float to the land and Indians would find it later.⁶²

For white European men working the HBC trade routes, drinking was not only a performative rite but also an act of sociability that relied on personal liberties around how money and leisure time were spent.⁶³ In the case of an indigenous man working the trade routes for the HBC,

the racial and cultural juxtaposition of hauling on one's back a barrel of whisky that cannot be legally consumed by the worker reduces labour relations beyond a classical political economy to a prohibitive regulation imposed by the colonial regime.

Small rebellions such as these against the HBC were seen as marginal losses to the project of colonization. The use of racialized beer regulations became further elaborated thirty years after the initial law went into effect when in 1862 the Council of Assiniboia passed the following mandate: "If any person, without distinction of race, supply or sell to any person popularly known as an Indian, or any member of an Indian nation the means of intoxication, he shall, on being convicted before a Petty Court, on oath of one or more witnesses, be fined for each offense." The law encouraged a conspiring culture to watch neighbours closely and offered all fines paid to be awarded to the informant. The legislation also operated as a catalyst similar to that of the *Reinheitsgebot* in that it began to regulate and stratify beer production.

But it was piety that served as a greater driving force than legislation in the policing of alcohol in the settlement, especially among Indigenous peoples. In their sermons, the prominent ministers Reverend John Black of Kildonan and Archdeacon William Cochran of St. Andrew's railed against

the sins of intoxication in their attempts to keep liquor out of the settlement.⁶⁴ A remarkably telling editorial was published on 25 May 1860 in *The Nor'Wester*. The editors drew attention to views expressed about the cottage-economy network that transgressed these racial boundaries of beer production:

Gentlemen, not long ago, the people of this Settlement were remarkable for sobriety; but alas! this characteristic is fast disappearing. Drunkenness is on the increase...and the same degenerate feeling which prompts settlers to insobriety makes them free to give as much as they can to the Indians. If they would confine their drinking practices to themselves, it would be so much; but the poor Indian is dragged down too... I have authority for stating that in this parish some of the farmers furnish barley, hops and everything else required for brewing, to the Indians. This very week an Indian asked me for hops, expecting to get them as a matter of course. I felt very like making the fellow *hop* about his business for daring to make such a request... - M. Lowman⁶⁵

The liberty of Indigenous peoples to gain the means of production for home brew was greatly curtailed several decades after the passing of the initial laws regulating

consumption, and brewing without consuming required a legal remedy.

Restrictions imposed on indigenous brewing were founded on the kind of racialized paternalism demonstrated in the above editorial. However, white settlers themselves could continue home brewing only if they followed the moral codes and invested in the proper business channels. Only men, similar to those handpicked by the Council and HBC decades earlier for whisky production, would be issued brewing licences if they were “upstanding members of morals, sober, and property owners.”⁶⁶ Home-brewed beer for family use could not exceed eight gallons and could not be made available for barter or sale. In addition, those who received licences and wished to sell the allotted amount could do so only on the premises of its origin, never on the Sabbath, nor between ten at night and six in the morning or to an “uncivilized or unsettled Indian.”⁶⁷ The desire for temperance became a public spectacle as petitions were drawn up weekly for the Council, requesting regular increases to licensing fees and penalties for drunkenness. Those applying for licences to operate a public house or brewery had to post their applications on the front doors of the local church for all to see and decide by vote on its approval. Although the opportunity to brew was given to the individual, it was heavily mediated through the legal framework and influenced by the authority of the church. Due to the aggressive petitioning of the Lord Bishop of St. Boniface in 1861, a Special Police Officer named Nicolas Mousard was appointed to work the liquor beat.⁶⁸ The stringent regulations set to limit home brewing were balanced out with exemptions made for wholesalers and distributors. Those producing more than eight gallons of beer while holding the proper licences and fitting the racial, class and social guidelines prescribed by the moral authority of the day, thus controlled much of the beer production in the settlement.

A handful of the earliest farmhouse home-brewers managed to walk the line between legality and social stigma, for a time at least. Brewers and general bootleggers such as Henri Joachim, aka Whiskey Jack, and Celestin “Whiskey” Thomas set the model for brewing in their homes at a quantity not yet reached by individuals.⁶⁹ Thomas, born in Frémonville, France, began brewing in 1859 at his log cabin in St. Paul settlement.⁷⁰ However, his business began to grow once he bought a small river plot in the Middlechurch settlement three years later where he opened what was recognized as the “first brewery in the West.”⁷¹ A popular trail running from St. Paul to the east side of Stony Mountain was widely known as the Whiskey Thomas trail for his frequent deliveries of beer and liquor to the northern settlements.⁷² Surprisingly, abundant information from multiple sources exists to help construct Thomas as the most notable beer baron in Winnipeg’s early history. Records indicate that he brewed for the HBC in 1866 (either by contract or at Lower Fort Garry), being celebrated locally as an agitator against the company and the Council’s liquor laws. Thomas agreed to

multiple deals whereby investors leased his brewery and paid him to operate it only to go out of business and sell the company back to him at a fraction of the cost.⁷³ Eventually Thomas established The Winnipeg Brewery in 1873, the same year that Winnipeg became a city. This brewery (and its future incarnations for the next 90 years) was located at Dingman’s Crossing, at the southeast corner of Broadway Avenue and Colony Street. Colony Creek, a small stream that once flowed into the Assiniboine River, was the main water and ice source for “lagering”, but its remnants are now noticeable only as a slight depression on the east side of the intersection.

The beer industry began to thrive commercially with small shop operations in Winnipeg setting the standard for output and reducing the need for imports. This moment in brewing history mirrors the transition toward an investment capital model, whereby the brewers no longer owned the means of production. Rich men, with the ability to purchase larger production lines and to compete through advertisements and horse-trailer deliveries, put their faces on the brand. Their perspectives on the beer industry are revealed in Winnipeg’s earliest business newspaper, *The Commercial*. Described in several articles, although particularly in one entitled “The Hop Industry,” the production of beer represented a profitable industry:

That the soil of Manitoba is especially adapted to hop culture is abundantly proven by the profusion with which wild varieties of this useful plant grow in various parts of the province. Boys and women form the army of hop-pickers generally, as it is necessary on the ground of cheapness. Male labor would be altogether too costly in this country to be used with profit. There is plenty of the class of labor wanted in our towns, and in the Indian reserves which could be made available. The demand at home is increasing every year, and a considerable local supply could be easily disposed of. – 13 March 1883⁷⁴

This excerpt also indicates the transition from the cottage economy of earlier times when individuals produced their own beer to the wage labour that characterized the growth of the brewing industry.

After its fourth change of ownership by 1886, The Winnipeg Brewery was no longer a simple farmhouse plot operation. According to the lease to Cosgrove and Blackwood by Thomas, the brewery contained the following: 1200-gallon mash tun with two iron false bottoms, four “bad order” tuns, stone cellar and five fermenting tubs.⁷⁵ This setup was greatly improved by June of 1886, allowing for a daily production of 5000 gallons with a 150,000 gallon storage tank and requiring some twenty workers.⁷⁶ One year later, Cosgrove & Co. relinquished ownership and posted the brewery for sale by sheriff at \$8,550; but would receive only \$5,000. By September 1887, Thomas had made his final profit from the brewery by transferring the land deed to a pioneer banker named Duncan MacArthur while

Early Brewing in Winnipeg

two Irish speculators, Patrick Shea and John McDonagh, then owners of the successful Waverley Hotel, purchased the brewery. By then a city of 21,257 people, Winnipeg had both the population to ensure a profitable return on beer and several breweries backed by financial capital to lock down the local market. Whiskey Thomas relocated across the border in Pembina, North Dakota and opened what was then called the Pembina Brewing Company. He operated as brewmaster and owner for eight years before the state enforced prohibition.⁷⁷

Prohibition was a deeply contentious issue, making the brewing industry in Winnipeg a precarious enterprise. In 1892, Manitoba became the first province to hold a referendum on prohibition. Those able to vote did so in favour of a ban on alcohol; however, legislation would not come into effect until passage of the Manitoba Temperance Act of 1916. By 1902, McDonagh and Shea's Winnipeg Brewery dug its own private well, no longer relying on the Colony Creek water supply and maximizing its output to 36,000 barrels a year.⁷⁸ McDonagh and Shea's operation of the brewery produced one of the city's largest icons of industry throughout the first half of the 20th century with its successful Shea's Select lager delivered by Clydesdale-drawn beer trucks.⁷⁹ However, the iconography and advertising of Winnipeg breweries, beginning with this transition to large-scale production, became their primary distinction in an increasingly competitive market.

The history of beer in Manitoba, beginning with a London-based fur-trading company, and continuing into the 19th century with multiple, large-scale Winnipeg breweries whose stocks were eventually traded on the Toronto Stock Exchange, presents a certain historical continuity. Brewing in Winnipeg had its background in an imposed morality and a monopolized economy. But as demonstrated, there were brewers who challenged the monolithic HBC and paternalistic Council of Assiniboia to form an unregulated home-brewing cottage-economy in Red River and later in Winnipeg. The transition period between the fur-trade era and the rise of industrial capitalism were the glory days of Winnipeg's brewing history. And it is between the lines of codified brewing that we must look for the true traditions in the history of beer in Winnipeg. ☞

Notes

1. Hudson's Bay Company Archives, "Canadian Historic Sites: Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History," No. 4, Department of Indian Affairs & Northern Development. Ottawa: 1970, p. 69. HBCA FC 16.C3L no. 4.
2. Labatt's Manitoba Brewery Limited, "Truly it was a time of Beginnings," Winnipeg, 1973.
3. The argument made here regarding indigenous peoples and women home brewers is not to portray beer and alcohol, often considered enslavers of the less privileged, as liberation. It does not deny the havoc that alcohol reaps on homes, women and the colonial subjects of Canada. It does, however, address the utilization of a commodity that was transformed various times throughout the colonial expansion of England and France into Cree land and introduced through homesteaders who had a very different use for it.
4. Heron, Craig, *Booze: A Distilled History*. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2003, p. 14.
5. Coutts, Ian, *Brew North: How Canadians Made Beer and How Beer Made Canada*. Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2010, p. 7.
6. Gorman, Norm, *A List of Manitoba Breweries & Their Locations*, 1980, p. 1.
7. Unger, Richard W., *Beer in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004, p. 4. Historically beer has also been used as a term to indicate a lager: a bottom-fermenting beverage as opposed to top-fermenting ales.
8. Smith, Gregg, *Beer: A History of Suds and Civilization from Mesopotamia to Microbreweries*. New York: Avon Books, 1995, p. 7.
9. Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, p. 24. Though integral to the development of fermentation, yeast was not identified scientifically as a living organism until Louis Pasteur's work with microorganisms in fermentation in 1857. See also *One Hundred Years of Brewing*, New York: Arno Press, 1974, pp. 109-112 (reprint of original 1903 edition in *The Western Brewer* [Durham, NC], under different title; refer to www.amazon.com).
10. *Ibid.*, p. 110. Sam Calagione, brewmaster of the Dogfish Head Brewery in Milton, Delaware, USA, lambastes this law as an artificial imposition to which modern macro-breweries point for their adherence to "tradition" in brewing history. Calagione argues that the "concept of tradition and traditional brewing is one that is manufactured by big breweries for the consumer. When people talk about traditional brewing [they refer to] the *Reinheitsgebot* of 1516. The Bavarian government said it was illegal to make beer with anything other than water, hops and barley. Breweries around the world reflexively recognized that as tradition." When, in the eyes of the craft brewers, this was a limiting, state-driven market imposition on the industry. The Authors@Google lecture with Sam Calagione, New York City, 26 March 2009, accessed 14 March 2012.
11. India Pale Ale (IPA) is the most prevalent style reflecting this imperialism. Twice as much hops is used in the recipe, making the beer twice as likely to hold its shelf life on the voyage to the subcontinent at the behest of the East India Company in the late 18th century.
12. Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, p. 11. Unger adopts D. P. S. Peacock's eight stages of production devised to analyze the pottery industry in Medieval Europe and describe the hierarchical changes in the workplace.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
14. Gorman, *A List of Manitoba Breweries*, p. 1.
15. Pashley, Nick, *Cheers! An Intemperate History of Beer in Canada*. Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd., 2009, p. 9. See also Eberts, Derek, "To Brew or Not to Brew: A Brief History of Beer in Canada," *Manitoba History*, no. 54, February 2007.
16. Heron, *Booze*, p. 43. In addition, spirits were also used in non-commodity exchanges as described by early Kildonan settler Mrs. W. R. Black, regarding Louis Riel, père, "On his way back the Nor'Westers were on the lookout for him and had offered the Indians two kegs of rum, a cash reward of twenty pounds, and a lot of tobacco, for his capture." See also Healy, W. J., *The Women of Red River*. 3rd ed., Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1977, pp. 58-59.
17. Gorman, *A List of Manitoba Breweries*, p. 2.
18. Marx, Karl, *Capital*. vol. 1, London: Penguin Classics, 1976, p. 915.
19. Hochschild, Adam, *Bury the Chains: Prophets, Slaves, and Rebels in the First Human Rights Crusade*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin, 2005, p. 54.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
21. *Ibid.*
22. The accepted spelling of the Scottish and Canadian product is "whisky" (Canadian Oxford Dictionary); the "Whiskey" spelling is reserved here for verbatim quotations and for personal monikers.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
24. Gorman, *A List of Manitoba Breweries*, p. 2. Derived from the Hudson's Bay Record Society publication, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870, Vol.1: 1670-1773*. E. E. Rich, ed. London, 1958.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
26. Heron, *Booze*, p. 18.
27. Alex Grisdale, "This Is My Story," transcribed by Nan Shipley, 1971, *Nan Shipley Fonds*, MSS 21, Box 9, Fld 1, University of Manitoba: Archives & Special Collections.
28. Hannon, Leslie F., *Forts of Canada: The Conflicts, Sieges and Battles that Forged a Great Nation*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969, p. 200.
29. *Ibid.*
30. Heron, *Booze*, p. 40.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
32. Douglas, William, *The House of Shea: The Story of a Pioneer Industry*. Winnipeg: Bulman Bros. Ltd, 1947, p.5.
33. "One Hundred Years of Brewing," *op. cit.*, p. 620 (see note 9).
34. *Ibid.*, p. 5. As the historian Francis Parkman mentions, "the brewery was accordingly built, to the great satisfaction of the poorer colonists." Shortly after Talon's term as Intendant ended in 1672, Frontenac arrived and converted the brewery into a prison, most likely not to the great satisfaction of the poorer colonists.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 227.
36. Caribou is a Québécois alcoholic beverage usually mixed with red wine or port, whisky or brandy and maple syrup.
37. Cobbett, William, *Cottage Economy*. 17th ed., New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 3. "The laws, the economy, or management, of a state may be such as to render it impossible for the labourer, however skilful and industrious, to maintain his family in health and decency; and such has, for many years past, been the management of the affairs of this once truly great and happy land. A system of paper money, the effect of which was to take from the labourer the half of his earnings, was what no industry and care could make head against."
39. *Ibid.*, p. 12. Despite Cobbett's clairvoyant insights into brewing, he did fall quite short in many aspects in this treatise, particularly his patriarchal and hetero-normative perceptions of the "pernicious practice of drinking tea" as an effeminate degradation of manhood carried out by 'old hens' at the gossip table, among others.
40. Heron, *Booze*, p. 12. Legal implementation beginning in the 1830s set about constructing a "moral dominion" for the middle classes to self-regulate.
41. Healy, W. J., *Women of the Red River: Being a Book Written from the Recollections of Women Surviving from the Red River Area*. 3rd ed.. Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1977, p. 12.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
43. The Lower Fort Garry, also known as the Stone Fort, was built that same year after the devastating flood of 1926 displayed the susceptibility of the Upper Fort. See Hannon, Leslie F., *Forts of Canada*, p. 183.
44. Hudson's Bay Company Archives, "Canadian Historic Sites: Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History," No.4, Department of Indian Affairs & Northern Development. Ottawa: 1970, p. 69. HBCA FC 16.C3L no.4.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
48. "Sketches by Lieutenant George E. Finlay, 6th Regiment, 1846-48," in *Manitoba Pageant*, Spring 1969, vol. 12, No. 1, 18 July 2009, www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/pageant/12/finlaysketches.shtml, accessed 26 April 2012.
49. Hudson's Bay Company Archives, "Canadian Historic Sites: Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History," No.4, Department of Indian Affairs & Northern Development. Ottawa: 1970, p. 74. HBCA FC 16.C3L no.4.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
51. Hudson's Bay Company Archives, "Canadian Historic Sites: Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History," No.4, Department of Indian Affairs & Northern Development. Ottawa: 1970, p. 76. HBCA FC 16.C3L no.4. This amount equals 1600 gallons of beer. Simpson indicates here the process of brewing and alcohol content in a nutshell: the more barley mashed per gallon of water, the higher the sugar content thus the higher level of alcohol. However, the higher the alcohol, the less water, meaning the barley would not go as far if weaker beers were being made.
52. *Ibid.*
53. *Ibid.*
54. Compare this amount to Half Pints Brewing Company whose annual capacity is 211,337 gallons (6,817 barrels). Geoff Kirbyson, "Half Pints Brewery tanks up," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 7 October 2010, p. B4.
55. Hudson's Bay Company Archives, "Canadian Historic Sites: Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History" No.4, Department of Indian Affairs & Northern Development. Ottawa: 1970, p. 76. HBCA FC 16.C3L no.4.
56. Smith, *Beer*, p. 32
57. Hoverson, *Land of Amber Waters*, p. 21.
58. Mrs. Dickenson, "Hop Beer" in *The Home Cook Book*. 7th ed. Toronto: Rose Publishing Co., 1889, p. 352. This cookbook was compiled largely from an earlier edition compiled by a Chicago women's group which promoted to English speaking women the duties of a housewife.
59. Douglas, *The House of Shea*, p. 90.
60. Heron, *Booze*, p. 11.
61. See Renisa Mawani's *Colonial Proximities: Crossracial Encounters and Juridical Truths in British Columbia, 1871-1921*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009.
62. Journals of Alex Grisdale, 1971., transcribed by Nan Shipley, Nan Shipley Collection fonds, MSS 21, Box 9, Fld 1, University of Manitoba, Archives and Special Collections.
63. Heron. *Booze*, p. 11.
64. Healy, W. J., *The Women of Red River*, p. 34.
65. M. Lowman, "Selling Liquor to Indians," *The Nor'Wester*, 25 May 1860.
66. Douglas, *The House of Shea*, p. 97.
67. Governor and Council of Assiniboia, *Laws of Assiniboia*, 11 April 1862, p. 7.
68. Douglas, *The House of Shea*, p. 98.
69. Gorman, *A list of Manitoba Breweries*, p. 10.
70. Douglas, *The House of Shea*, p. 7. Thomas, according to his great-granddaughter, Corine Tellier, came to Louisiana from France working on the Mississippi river and for a time in St. Louis, possibly applying his trade as brewer. He then moved to St. Paul, Minnesota and married. His son was born on the Red River trail amongst their caravan north to Winnipeg.
71. "remember; Colony Creek," [Labatt's Brewery advertisement in] Centennial Edition, *Winnipeg Free Press*, 30 November 1972, p. 51. Thomas's brewery was most likely the first in the area now known as Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. British Columbia had a strong history due to US proximity, higher populations earlier and coastal shipping.
72. Gorman, *A list of Manitoba Breweries*, p. 5.
73. Thomas' The Winnipeg Brewery operated under the following owners: M. E. Roy & Peter Poulin (1881-1882), Roy & Co. (1883), O. Allaire & Thomas (1885), John Cosgrove & William Blackwood (1886), Shea & McDonagh (1887).
74. "The Hop Industry," *The Commercial*, 13 March 1883, p. 468.
75. Douglas, *The House of Shea*, p. 35.
76. *Ibid.*
77. Gorman, *A List of Manitoba Breweries*, p. 8.
78. Douglas, *The House of Shea*, p. 54.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 72. Eight of these horses, all accomplished in the fair circuit, were sold to Anheuser-Busch of St. Louis in 1933.

The Uno Railway Disaster

by Leslie S. Kozma
Edmonton, Alberta

On the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway (GTPR) main line between Winnipeg and Melville, Saskatchewan, there were once four major timber bridges. This was unusual because most of the larger bridges on the line were built of concrete and steel; the GTPR believed in constructing its line to the highest standards right from the beginning, rather than building cheaply to meet initial traffic demands and then making improvements later.

Situated between the Miniota and Uno stations in western Manitoba, the bridge over Minnewashta Creek became known as the Uno Bridge. Comprised of a 107-bent pile and frame trestle, it measured 1,573 feet long and 115 feet at its highest. The bridge was constructed in 1907 at a cost of \$56,947.

At two o'clock in the morning of 2 September 1915, a tornado knocked down most of the timber trestle. By 2:30 AM, the storm was still intense and there was heavy rain as an eastbound freight train approached the bridge. There was no warning of the impending disaster. As the *Manitoba Free Press* reported the following day, engineer J. C. Files saw the bridge ahead had disappeared but stayed in the engine in hopes of stopping the train. He went over the edge with his engine, tender, and one car. The couplers broke so the rest of the train remained on the track. Fireman Hugh McKay waited until the last minute and jumped just before the engine went over the brink. Files perished; McKay survived with only minor injuries.

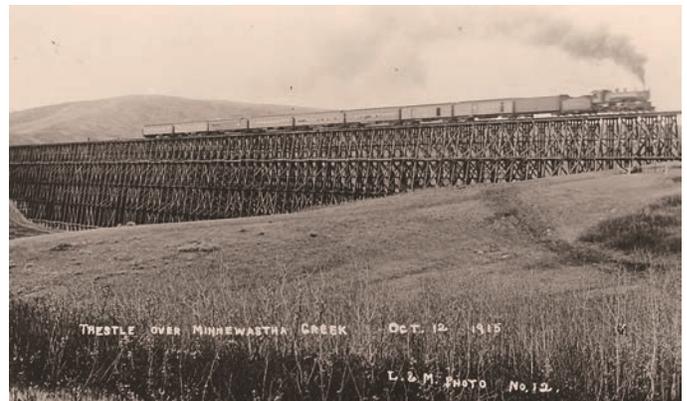
This was the GTPR main line so it was essential that train service be restored as soon as possible. The timing was bad as the fall grain rush was coming into full swing. In a magnanimous gesture by its rival, the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), GTPR passenger and freight trains were permitted to detour over CPR lines. GTPR trains travelled from Melville up the GTPR's Canora Branch to Yorkton, where they transferred to CPR trackage, running to Portage la Prairie, where they reverted back to GTPR tracks on the run into Winnipeg.

Restoring the bridge, the next priority, was organized by GTPR Engineer H. A. Woods. Gangs of men were



Lecia Bourne

View of the former Uno Bridge taken shortly after its destruction, with the derailed locomotive tender in the foreground.



Lawrence & Meers, Birtle, Les Kozma Collection

Railway service was restored over the Uno Bridge within three weeks of its destruction by a tornado. Here a GTPR passenger train crossed the reconstructed bridge on 12 October 1915.

assembled and brought to the site from Winnipeg, Melville, and Edmonton. An emergency supply of timber—lots of it—was stored at Rivers, 42.5 miles to the southeast.

The trestle was rebuilt in kind, using the existing piles and the emergency supply of timber. Train service over the new trestle was restored on 27 September, slightly over three weeks later. However, engineers were instructed to travel slowly across the new bridge until full use was restored on 12 October. Considering how thoroughly the original bridge was destroyed, reconstruction in such a short period of time was considered an engineering miracle.

Eventually, the GTPR failed to meet its financial obligations and, in 1923, it was absorbed into the Canadian National Railways. The rebuilt Uno Bridge over Minnewashta Creek stood until 1929, when it was replaced by a steel viaduct, still in use today. 🐉



Les Kozma, a Project Director with Ledor Construction Limited, has had an avid interest in western Canadian railways for over 45 years, focusing on their construction and operations. Railway architecture is his speciality. He has authored or co-authored numerous formal reports, books, and articles about these subjects.



Manitoba's Historic One-Room Schoolhouses

by Gordon Goldsborough
Winnipeg, Manitoba

The MHS is compiling an inventory of historic sites around Manitoba as an encouragement to tourism and management. Some sites in that inventory are featured in issues of Manitoba History. Eds.

Chances are, if you are over 60 years of age and grew up in rural Manitoba, you attended a one-room schoolhouse for at least part of your primary education. At one time, such schools were ubiquitous throughout the province. Records kept by the Manitoba Department of Education—which was responsible for ensuring that educational standards were met—indicate that over 2,500 schools existed at one time or another in rural Manitoba.

These schools were not merely the site of educational enlightenment. They were typically also the social centres of their communities. Many of them hosted church services, Sunday Schools, dances, picnics, concerts, parties, public meetings, and election polling stations. When rural folk were asked where they lived, many would respond with the name of their school district because it was the only geographic label with which they were familiar.

Starting as early as 1905, and gaining momentum through the 1950s and 1960s, rural school consolidation was the death-knell for one-room schoolhouses. When approved by local ratepayers of a school district, the local school would close and its students would be bused to a larger school in an urban centre. Consolidation was made possible by improvements to the provincial road network that made bus transportation of students feasible over much larger distances than had been the case before. Parents worried about their children attending school farther away from home were reassured that consolidation would provide better educational opportunities. Who could say “no” to that? The net result was that the vast majority of the one-room schoolhouses closed during the 1960s. A few continued on in areas where it was not practical to transport students. One of Manitoba’s last one-room schoolhouses—Mason School No. 2149 in the Rural Municipality of Stanley south of Morden—closed in 2002.

Some of the now-closed schoolhouses continued as the social centres of their communities. Many were sold to a

local citizen and turned into a private residence, church, barn, or granary. Some became museums, preserving the past for their former students who, with age, would become increasingly nostalgic about the “good old days in the little red schoolhouse.” (Those former students probably forgot that many of those old days were not so good as they recalled, and the vast majority of the schoolhouses were not red, if they were painted at all.)

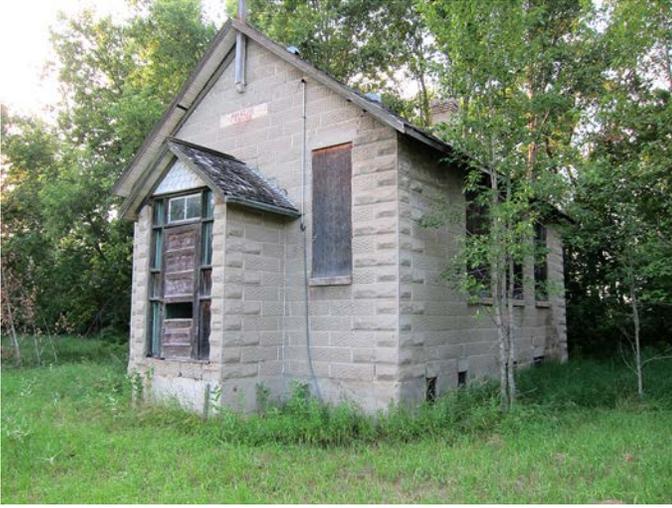
A few of the schoolhouses were picked up and moved away from their original sites to a new location, usually nearby but sometimes at great distance. Some were demolished because they were too badly deteriorated or their parts were coveted for new buildings. Most sadly, some former schools were simply abandoned where they stood and slowly fell into ruin. Schoolbooks and papers littered their floors, unplayed pianos went increasingly out of tune, swings and baseball diamonds grew over with vegetation, and windows gave way to the ravages of weather, vandals, and wildlife. When the buildings became so badly degraded that they were perceived as a public hazard, they would finally be torn down or burned, sometimes to be replaced by a monument to remind passersby of their presence, but often to become a forgotten place marked only by a remnant foundation or a few random stones, bricks, or boards.

My parents both began teaching careers at one-room schoolhouses so, although I did not attend one myself, I do appreciate their significance in the lives of many Manitobans. Over the past four years, we have tracked down over 1,300 former one-room schoolhouses while mapping historic sites around the province. On the following pages are a few of my personal favourites. ☞



Gordon Goldsborough is an Aquatic Ecologist in the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Manitoba. He is also the Webmaster and a former President of the Manitoba Historical Society, and an Editor of Manitoba History. Since 2010, he has been leading an MHS project to map historic sites around the province. To date, over 4,600 sites have been mapped.

Manitoba's Historic One-Room Schoolhouses



G. Goldsborough

Ayr School in the RM of Lansdowne was built in 1908 of locally-manufactured concrete blocks.



G. Goldsborough

Cameron School north of Minnedosa is a rare, surviving example of a two-classroom schoolhouse, dating from 1917.



G. Goldsborough

The interior of Eunola School in the RM of Edward, built in 1937, has been restored as it looked when in operation.



G. Goldsborough

The Ewart School building still stands in the RM of Pipestone but the road that once ran past it is now a farm field.



G. Goldsborough

Grainfields School in the RM of Shell River is so encroached by caragana bushes that it is invisible from a nearby highway.



G. Goldsborough

The red bricks of Morraville School, in the RM of Grandview, distinguished it from other schools built on the same plan.

Manitoba's Historic One-Room Schoolhouses



C. Goldsborough

The metal-clad **Duck Mountain School** in the RM of Grandview had two classrooms, indoor washrooms, and a forced-air furnace.



G. Goldsborough

The restored **Marconi School** in the RM of Rossburn has an attached teacherage and separate outhouses for girls and boys.



G. Goldsborough

Star Mound School, a museum in the RM of Louise, stands atop Nebogwawin Butte from which one gets a panoramic view of the surrounding prairie. Once an important Aboriginal village site, it was abandoned by the time of a 1738 visit by La Vérendrye.



City of Winnipeg

Corona School in the RM of East St. Paul became a studio for noted sculptor Leo Mol. It now stands in Winnipeg's Assiniboine Park.

Historic Sites of Manitoba

The MHS website features an interactive map of over 4,600 historic sites. Magnify a particular part of the province and see markers denoting local museums, historic buildings, monuments, cemeteries, and others. Select a specific marker to see more information about that site.

www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/sites

Behind the Bamboo Curtain: A Nineteenth-Century Canadian Adventurer in Japan

by David N. Cooper
Brampton, Ontario

In recent years there has been renewed interest in a nineteenth-century man named Ranald MacDonald, a Scottish-Chinook mixed-blood adventurer born in the Columbia District of present-day Oregon. The interest has come about in part due to the republication of his autobiography in 1990 by the Oregon Historical Society.¹ The book details his journey to, and sojourn in, Japan where at the time a strict edict of isolationism prohibited contact with all foreigners but the Dutch—upon pain of death. Fascinated with the mystery of this forbidden island nation, Ranald came up with a plan to enter the country, passing himself off as an educated castaway, and appealing hopefully to the humanity of the Japanese not to kill him. The plan, whether madcap or naive, combined his knowledge as a sailor with the education he received while attending school at the settlement of Red River, District of Assiniboia (Manitoba).

Ranald was born in 1824 at Fort George, near Astoria (Oregon), and raised among the Hudson's Bay Company posts that dotted the Columbia District before much of the area was ceded to the United States in 1846. He was the first-born son of HBC officer Archibald McDonald and his wife, Princess Raven, daughter of Chief Comcomly of the Chinook Nation. Sadly, Princess Raven died shortly after childbirth and Archibald remarried a year later with Jane Klyne; a Métis woman who raised Ranald as her own. Ranald began attending school at John Ball's school at Fort Vancouver. However, wanting more for their children,

Archibald and Jane decided to send Ranald and two of his siblings to study at the Academy at Red River—then the only high school in western Canada. Archibald knew the Red River very well. He played an important founding role in the colony, personally leading a tattered party of Selkirk settlers to the area in 1814. He also served as deputy governor of the colony under Miles Macdonell before signing on with the Hudson's Bay Company in 1820.

Ranald left on the York Factory express for Red River on 20 April 1834 and it was likely around this time that he heard news that would have a lasting impact on him. When Chief Factor John McLoughlin, a family friend of the McDonalds, received word of a mysterious shipwreck near Cape Flattery, at the tip of the Olympic Peninsula in future Washington state, he sent a couple of search parties to find survivors. One of the search teams, dispatched on 23 March 1834, was led by Ranald's uncle Thomas McKay. The survivors—three destitute Japanese fisherman—were located, having been made slaves to the Makah tribe, and brought to Fort Vancouver to learn English at Ranald's former school



Friends of MacDonald, <http://friendsofmacdonald.com>

Ranald MacDonald (1824–1894) was the first native Anglophone to teach the English language in Japan. His formative years were spent at the Red River Settlement in Manitoba.

only months after his departure. Describing his reaction to such news, Ranald wrote, "What, of such people?—What of their manner of life?... These and such like questions and considerations ever recurring; the subject, oft, of talk amongst my elders...[entered] deeply into my young and naturally receptive mind...[and] dominated me, as a soul possessed."²

Ranald would spend the next five years at the Red River settlement, his first year at Pritchard's Elm School (1834–1835) and the remaining four at the Red River Academy (1835–1839). The Elm School was located not far from where the Battle of Seven Oaks took place—an area of marshy land referred to in French as "La grenouillère" or "Frog Plain". In fact, not only was schoolmaster John Pritchard a witness to the battle on 19 June 1816 but he was also taken prisoner briefly by the armed Métis forces under Cuthbert Grant. In 1835, the school body comprised



David Cooper is currently a teacher of History and Language. As a student, he studied in France and worked as an historic interpreter in Canada and abroad. He spent six years in Japan working as teacher and copy-editor and has written articles for Tokyo Noticeboard and the Japan Times. He has recently proposed federal historic designation for Ranald MacDonald.



Archives of Manitoba

Reading, writing, Red River, 1852. Ranald MacDonald was among the first pupils of the Red River Academy. Founded in 1832, the Academy provided education for the children of Hudson's Bay Company employees and assisted in the training of a native Anglican ministry. The building was located on the church mission grounds near the present-day St. John's Park in Winnipeg's north end.

"33 European children, almost entirely Highland Scotch extraction" and "12 private borders [sic], all half-breeds."³ Presumably one of the boarders was Ranald.

It was at the Red River Academy, however, that Ranald would truly acquire an advanced education. The school was first proposed by Reverend David Thomas Jones in 1832 and construction was completed the following summer. A tutor, John Macallum, and a governess, Mrs. Mary Lowman, arrived in the fall of 1833. According to recorder Alexander Ross, the school was provided for the children of Governors and Chief Factors, "...the great nabobs of the fur trade."⁴ And in an interview later in life, Ranald described his learning experience as "'a No. 1' education" claiming that "the church school knocked the spots out of the Catholics with their doctrines."⁵ The Academy had an ambitious curriculum. In their 1835 report to the Church Missionary Society, Reverend Jones and Reverend William Cockran detailed the young gentlemen's program as including studies in reading, writing, bookkeeping, arithmetic, algebra, mathematics, Latin and Greek, while newcomers studied grammar, history, the New Testament

and various Catechisms. Today, the historical significance of the school runs deep in Winnipeg, as it was the precursor of two other well-renowned schools: St. John's College School and the amalgamated St. John's-Ravenscourt School.

Back at Fort Colville (near Kettle Falls, now in Washington), Archibald was proud of the reports he received about Ranald's progress but worried that some untrained "Indian" part of the teenager might begin to assert itself. In a letter dated 25 January 1837, Archibald confided to his friend Edward Ermatinger, "I heard very favorable accounts of him this fall from Mr. Jones, & who knows but he may turn out a rare exception to the race."⁶ Archibald's concerns were not unfounded. Though the Mixed-blood progeny of HBC officers attending the school were social elites in an exclusive company hierarchy, they were often not unsympathetic to racial issues that affected the larger Métis/Mixed-blood community and ultimately impacted their own sense of identity. In 1836, when Factor John McLoughlin's son, John Jr., and several other sons of the HBC were seduced into joining James Dickson, general of the so-called "Indian Liberating Army", it undoubtedly

confirmed some of Archibald's worst fears. As Archibald would later write: "It will go very hard for me if I let any of them loose in this vile country, tho' that nevertheless seems to be the lot of the entire rising generation."⁷⁷

Upon graduation at Red River in 1839, Ranald was shipped off to St. Thomas, Ontario to work as a bank clerk under Archibald's old friend, Edward Ermatinger. While Archibald sought a position for his son in the Hudson's Bay Company, Ranald boarded (initially at least) in the home of the Ermatingers. The experience would instruct the youth on how to live like a gentleman in a European home. For Ranald, however, the cracks had finally started to appear as they had with John McLoughlin, Jr., and the stress of having to conform to foreign ideals of European conduct made Ranald long for release: "In spite of all my training for civilized life...I felt, ever, and uncontrollably in my blood, the wild strain for wandering freedom...of my Highland father...and possibly more so (though unconsciously) of my Indian mother."⁷⁸ While living in St. Thomas, Ranald became obsessed with the idea of travel and in particular visiting Japan, though it was still very much a closed and forbidden land. In time, he began to devise an ambitious plan to escape from St. Thomas and, ultimately, the clutch of his father's influence in the hopes of becoming a sailor: "To carry out this design while sitting ... on my high stool in the Bank of Elgin...I had resolved on it; that was enough. For means to carry it out, I simply with grip sack in hand, walked forth into the darkness of an unsympathetic world; alone, telling no one; with barely a scrip for the hour."⁷⁹

Ranald made his way to Sag Harbor, New York in 1842 and was apparently at sea in the *Tuskany* by 1843. In his time, Ranald visited more places than most people will ever see today, including Calcutta, Hawaii, Bombay, Java, Madras, Australia, Africa, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, Korea and Singapore among others. But it was undoubtedly his trip to Japan that was the most memorable. To position himself for the adventure, Ranald signed on as a crew member of an American whaler, the *Plymouth*, en route to the whaling grounds off the coast of Japan. Ranald, now 24 years old and an experienced sailor, made a deal with captain Lawrence B. Edwards that once he had fulfilled his contract, the captain would set him adrift in a small boat near the northern coast of Japan. Ranald hoped that in this less fortified area, he might find a way to enter the country without being detected. The captain reticently agreed. Patient in his planning, Ranald had been slowly amassing a small fortune in books and teaching supplies as part of a brash scheme to pass himself off as an educated castaway: "The mysterious veil of mystery which then hung...over that strange realm, unaccountably attracted my roving mind... Having heard that which I thought might induce them to engage me as an instructor on history, geography, commerce, and modern art, and the Bible: this I did in expectation of being engaged by them as a teacher."¹⁰

Though Captain Edwards claimed it was "a wild and fool-hardy expedition", he kept his promise. He lowered a small boat for Ranald near Hokkaido, on 27 June 1848.

"Against the strong remonstrances of the Captain and crew, I stepped into my boat, taking with me my box of books and stationary... My comrades refused to unloose the knot which bound me to them... Myself, with averted face, had to cut the rope by which I hung to all of them."¹¹ Ranald would sail first to Yagishiri Island, then head 45 miles north to the island of Rishiri. In the early hours of 2 July, MacDonald spotted smoke and in accordance with his plan, overturned his boat, turning out the reef of his sail to make it look like he was a sailor in distress. He watched as he was approached by a skiff. But as it turned out, he was being approached not by Japanese, but by another race of people indigenous to the area, the Ainu. Unlike the Japanese, Ainu tend to have rounded eyes, larger bones and generally more body and facial hair. Traditionally, they wore clothing with abstract or geometrical patterns, were often tattooed and subsisted on hunting, gathering and fishing. In demeanour, Ranald described the Ainu as "simple, kindly people", a "subject race"¹² under the control of the Japanese. Once ashore, Ranald was led to the village of Notsuka and the Japanese authorities were promptly notified.

Nearly a week into his stay, he was visited by half a dozen Japanese officers and interrogated. All the belongings in his chest were carefully examined and inventoried: "They took a minute inventory of everything brought ashore. Everything seemed to excite their curiosity—especially my books and letters."¹³ According to official Japanese records, the effects included 23 books with covers, fifteen books without covers, a map of the world, a telescope and a "varnished board" (a slate for writing)—implements that Ranald felt would be useful for teaching. Informed he was to be taken to Nagasaki to be deported, the ensuing journey south would involve travel by junk, on foot, and by palanquin. At all times Ranald's chest was sealed and guarded and a record kept of what was taken out or returned to it. Even his small whaling boat was brought along.

While the Japanese made detailed reports of Ranald's incarceration, Ranald was also paying attention to his captors, as his autobiography reveals a number of insightful observations concerning the customs, spirituality and social organization of the Japanese in the era. Fashioning a pen out of a crow feather, he recorded these impressions along with a list of Japanese vocabulary he learned during his stay. Sadly, Ranald later lost many of these documents in a shipwreck near Madras, India—a disaster where "for [his] dear life" he was forced to swim ashore, a small bundle containing "only a few of [his] notes" on top of his head.¹⁴ Today, a portion of Ranald's vocabulary list still survives in the British Columbia Archives.

Great pains were taken to prevent Ranald from seeing the Japanese countryside. When he was travelling across land, large ceremonial curtains were erected—presumably to block his view. Likewise, a palanquin reserved for him was "boxed up...without even a peephole."¹⁵ Conversely, wherever Ranald went, he attracted the intense curiosity of Japanese citizens who wanted to catch a glimpse

of the foreign stranger. In Matsumae, Ranald recalled encountering a large crowd waiting for him by lantern light. "They gazed at me as if I were a wild beast, I could not stand it. I made good my retreat into the palanquin, which I made to answer a double purpose—for what the Japanese provided in order that I should not see the country I made use of that I should not be stared at."¹⁶ Perhaps sensing his irritation, Ranald's chaperons would later relax their adherence to procedure, leaving his palanquin open when they later arrived in Nagasaki, affording Ranald a view full of wonder. This tendency of the Japanese to extend small acts of kindness toward Ranald in exchange for his cooperation is a recurrent theme in his narrative. Several comments are made about receiving gifts of food, clothing and western cutlery and, at one point, a welcome card. In his own words, he was "well fed, kindly attended, and amply supplied with all conveniences, with the luxuries of tea and tobacco ad libitum..."¹⁷

At Nagasaki again, though initially treated coolly, he found that with time his captors began to warm to him. In particular, he made fast friends with a number of so-called "Dutch" interpreters who "being a people of literature and books", appeared to be fascinated with Ranald: "[S]eeing me ever reading, a man of books, they drew to me: the books magnetized them: and they (books and Japanese) made me their teacher."¹⁸ How exactly Ranald came to instruct these government interpreters is unclear, but according to historian Frederik L. Schodt, officials had gained information from Matsumae that MacDonald was different from the other foreign prisoners. They knew that he was intelligent, good-natured and that he was well educated. They also understood that during 200 years of Japanese seclusion, the world outside had greatly changed. With the whaling boom of the mid-19th century, the Japanese government was overwhelmed by the multitude of foreign vessels that now plied the Japan Sea. Lacking the naval force to repel them, there was a growing sense that Japan's seclusion laws increasingly put the country at risk. What they needed was to begin a dialogue with the West, particularly in countries of global influence like America and Great Britain. In that sense, Ranald's timing couldn't have been better.

Ranald was well provided for, with all the supplies, materials and space he required as an English teacher. He taught a group of 14 interpreters and he kept a list of their names on a scrap of paper that still exists in the Archives of British Columbia. All official interpreters were required to speak Dutch, as Holland was the only country Japan maintained contact with—and it was through this partnership that Japan gathered essential international intelligence. The "Dutch interpreters", as they were called, belonged to a hereditary caste of professionals from notable families and Ranald perceived them to be "very quick and receptive", and that they "were all well up in grammar, etc."¹⁹ As Ranald describes in his Narrative, "[T]heir habit was to read English to me; one at a time. My duty was to



Narrative of an Expedition of an American Squadron to the Chinese Seas and Japan, M. C. Perry, 1856.

Parry's Japanese voice. These two men, Moriyama and Tokojiro, both former students of Ranald MacDonald, served as interpreters for American Navy Commodore Matthew C. Parry on his 1852 arrival in Japan.

correct their pronunciation, and as best I could in Japanese explain meaning, construction, etc."²⁰

What Ranald didn't know, however, was that he wasn't the only western prisoner in Japan and that an S.O.S. had been sent out by Factor Joseph Levyssohn, guardian of the Dutch monopoly in Japan, to rescue another group of sailors who were also being detained in Nagasaki. According to Japanese records, the original group of 15 crewmen from another whaling vessel, the *Lagoda*, arrived north of Matsumae in three boats around 7 June 1848, only 20 days before Ranald. Unlike MacDonald, however, they received miserable treatment from their captors. In 1849, the *New York Courier and Enquirer* reported that they were "treated with the utmost inhumanity and cruelty...beaten upon the slightest pretext, shut up in cages like wild beasts, excluded from light, air and exercise, and fed just enough to prevent starvation."²¹ In reality the crew members were

deserters with a tendency toward violence, bickering and frequent escape attempts who had turned a bad situation into something deplorable. Taking pity on the crewmen and their worsening plight, Levyssohn sent a communiqué to the US consul in Batavia. The consul was quick to react in making a plan to send a warship, the USS *Preble* on a rescue mission from Hong Kong under James Glynn.

Ranald was holding an English class with his Dutch interpreters on 17 April 1849 when Glynn entered Nagasaki harbour. Interrupted by the report of six cannon shots, Ranald was informed that a foreign ship had arrived, but he had to wait another week before he was told anything about it. Finally, on 25 April, Ranald was summoned to Town Hall and saw, for the first time, the 13 remaining members of the *Lagoda's* crew, looking "very pale and thin." MacDonald wrote, "They had their ordinary sailor dress. I had my best Japanese dress, plain and respectable... They made me kneel apart from the rest... The Governor, through interpreter, then told us of the arrival of the ship; and that they had, after consultation, decided on allowing us to depart by her."²²

With Ranald's departure on the *Preble* on 27 April, so ended his teaching career, but not his influence. Ranald MacDonald is remembered in Japan today as the country's first English teacher. But as Frederick Schodt points out, "[H]e actually did far more than that. He imparted information about the outside world, all of which was filtered through the interpreters."²³ Over and over again he was asked about world geography, the whaling industry and the armies, navies and governments of Europe. MacDonald, for his part, was more than willing to tell them "all that [he] knew" endeavouring to "impress upon them among other things...the advancement made by Western nations."²⁴ Moreover, Ranald's pupils would greatly assist Japan's opening to international trade and diplomacy. They served as interpreters during Commodore Perry's American expedition to Japan (1853–1854) and played instrumental roles in creating the first treaties between Japan and the US and later with Britain, France and Spain. One of Ranald's pupils, Gohachiro Namura would take part in Japan's first embassy to the United States on 22 May 1860, while another, Einosuke Moriyama, would serve in his home country as a liaison between Japan and US ambassador Townsend Harris. In the end, this historical shift in Japan's relationship with the world spelled not only the end of seclusion, but also Japan's rebirth as an industrialized nation.

If, like John McLoughin, Jr., Ranald MacDonald belonged to that lost generation of Mixed-blood offspring who failed to make a mark in the Hudson's Bay Company hierarchy, Ranald certainly used his education gained at Red River for a purpose no less honourable. Like young Archibald McDonald before him, who arrived in the foreign, often hostile country of the Red River with

a tattered party of Highlanders, Ranald also sought adventure and meaningful social change. Perhaps, in that way, Ranald resembled his father more than Archibald would have liked to admit. ❧

Notes

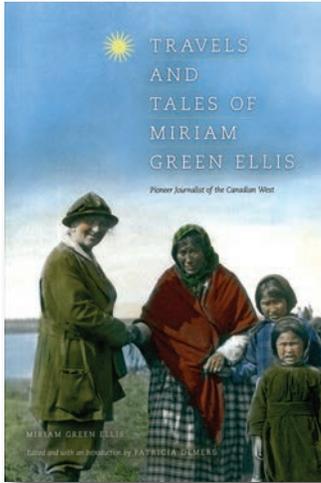
1. Ranald MacDonald, et al., *Ranald MacDonald: The Narrative of His Early Life on the Columbia Under the Hudson's Bay Company's Regime; of his Experiences in the Pacific Whale Fishery; and of his Great Adventure to Japan; With a Sketch of His Later Life on the Western Frontier, 1824–1894*. Portland, Oregon: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1990, p. 131.
2. Archives of Manitoba, CMS, Class "C," C.1, North West American Mission (Rupert's Land) (John West), C.1/M, Mission Books (Incoming Letters) 1822-1862, reel A-77, "Report of the State of Religion and Morality and Education of the Red River Settlement and Grand Rapids, by the Rev. Messrs. Jones and Cockran (5 June 1835), p. 62-71.
3. Alexander Ross, *The Red River Settlement: Its Rise, Progress and Present State*, Elder and Co., 1856. p. 243-44
4. Elizabeth B. Custer, "An Out-of-the-Way Outing," *Harper's Weekly*, 18 July 1891.
5. Oregon Historical Society (OHS), MSS 1012, file 5, Archibald McDonald to E. Ermatinger, 25 January 1837.
6. OHS, file 7, McDonald to E. Ermatinger, 1 February 1839.
7. MacDonald, p. 118
8. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
9. British Columbia Archives (BCA), MS-1249, Box 9. Folder 1, "'Adventure in Japan during 11 months' by Ranald MacDonald."
10. MacDonald, pp. 150–151.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 199.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 193.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, p. 173.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 227.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 226.
20. *New York Courier and Enquirer*, Fall 1849.
21. MacDonald, pp. 246–247.
22. Frederick Schodt, *Native American in the Land of the Shogun: Ranald MacDonald and the Opening of Japan*, Berkeley, California: Stone Bridge Press. p. 296.
23. BCA, MS-1249, box 9, folder 5, Malcolm McCleod, "R. McDonald, Part of journal," p. 35; *ibid.*, folder 13, MacDonald to McCleod, 24 May 1889.



Manitoba History is a benefit of membership in the Manitoba Historical Society. If you are not an MHS member, join us and enjoy **Manitoba History** three times a year. See page 2 of this issue for details.

Reviews

Miriam Green Ellis, *Travels and Tales of Miriam Green Ellis, Pioneer Journalist of the Canadian West*. Patricia Demers, ed., Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2013, 215 pages. ISBN 978-0-88864-626-2, \$34.95 (paperback)



Journalist, traveller, and suffragist Miriam Green Ellis (1879–1964) comes alive again in the pages of Patricia Demers’s reconstruction of Ellis’s life through her papers and photographs housed at the Bruce Peel Special Collections Library of the University of Alberta. The book has five sections, with Ellis’s writings, both non-fiction and fiction, forming the major part. It begins with Demers’s brief bibliographic analysis of

the woman, her times and her writing. The body of the book contains three chapters of Ellis’s published and unpublished works and photographs grouped into key threads of her work: travel and storytelling, the agricultural beat, and her advocacy on behalf of women and the West. The back matter contains the endnotes, bibliography and index.

Demers adumbrates the major events of Ellis’s life as glimpsed through the archival record. Born in Richville, New York, Green and her Canadian parents moved to a farm in Athens, Ontario. Later she attended Bishop Strachan School in Toronto and graduated from the Toronto Conservatory of Music. In 1904, the family moved to Edmonton, and in the following year Green married George Edward Ellis, who was appointed the provincial Inspector of Schools in 1906. Three years afterwards, he resigned this position to undertake graduate studies in Chicago, where Miriam Green Ellis likely accompanied her husband. The next indication we have of her is in 1912, coaching a hockey team in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, where she also probably wrote without byline for the *Prince Albert Daily Herald*. In 1916, she and her husband separated, but a record of divorce does not exist.

By 1913 Ellis was a member of the Canadian Women’s Press Club (CWPC), becoming the president of the Edmonton Branch in 1919, organizing the first conference in Edmonton in 1920, and over the years holding many positions, including several terms as regional vice-president. Her 1922 trip down the Mackenzie River to Aklavik, Northwest Territories, north of the Arctic Circle, was a major accomplishment in which her keen observations of people, places, and the natural environment shine, as does her intrepid spirit of adventure. Underscoring the importance of this trip to her and to women in journalism

is the fact that she was obliged to take a two-month leave from her job in order to undertake it, as her boss, editor Frank Oliver of the *Edmonton Bulletin*, was unwilling to authorize it. She “made her own way when the industry was unwilling to create this kind of space for a woman.” Stemming from this trip is *Down North*, the daily account of her perspicacious observations on northern life, with especial reference to the northern women she encountered; as well as two previously unpublished short stories, included in the book, which explore themes of racism and solitude.

Evident in Ellis’s participant approach to her duties as agricultural editor of the *Family Herald and Weekly Star* is her strong sympathy for prairie farm women and her intense and authentic interest in delving into the realities of the people and the time. She toured farms, reported on the rituals of cattle and grain shows and on the Hobbema Sun Dance, and shed light on the back-to-the-land movement precipitated by the Depression.

A sense of humour always stands one in good stead, and Ellis’s brand of understated humour is well referenced in the final section of her writings in an article describing the vicissitudes of driving in 1920: “... without bothering to take off the broken bumper, I started for the garage, going down a back street, as the loose ends of the bumper scraping and rattling along the ground made an infernal row. I saw a man rush out from the walk and throw up his hands, so I stopped. He told me my bumper was broken. I went on, and every man I met tried to tell me the same thing. I felt like mentioning I had suspected as much” (p. 156).

Ellis’s contemporaries and colleagues include feminist and politician Nellie McClung, agricultural journalist E. Cora Hind, and jurist and activist Emily Murphy. Ellis retired in 1953 at the age of 73 as western editor for Montreal’s *Family Herald and Weekly Star*, having held this position for 25 years. Demers has done a great service to historical journalism and the involvement of prairie women in the feminist movement of the early 20th century by re-awakening knowledge and interest in the life of Miriam Green Ellis, a “fantastic woman” (p. x), an “incredible Canadian” (p. xxii), and a foremost agricultural journalist in the West.

More information can be found at <http://omeka.library.ualberta.ca/MGE>, which includes a seven-minute clip of the author reading from Ellis’s *Down North*, illustrated with original manuscript and diary pages, as well as Ellis’s colour slides.

Margaret Bertulli
Winnipeg

Review Essay:

Histories of Sickness, Health and Healing in Canada

Magda Fahrni and ESYLLT W. JONES, eds., *Epidemic Encounters: Influenza, Society, and Culture in Canada, 1918-20*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012, 290 pages.

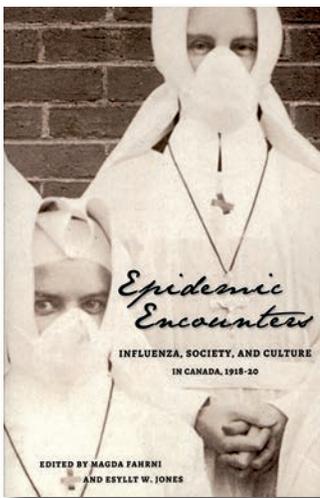
ISBN 978-0-7748-2213-8, \$34.95 (paperback)

Gregory P. Marchildon, ed., *Making Medicare: New Perspectives on the History of Medicare in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012, 336 pages.

ISBN 978-1-4426-1345-4, \$39.95 (paperback)

Laurie Meijer Dress, *Healing Histories: Stories from Canada's Indian Hospitals*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2013, 244 pages.

ISBN 978-0-88864-650-7, \$29.95 (paperback)



All three of these new volumes contribute to our understanding of the history of health care in Canada, particularly the way that social, political and economic factors impact the health of Canadians. Magda Fahrni and ESYLLT W. Jones's collection, *Epidemic Encounters: Influenza, Society, and Culture in Canada, 1918-20* provides a nuanced and multi-faceted exploration of a long neglected topic in Canadian historiography.

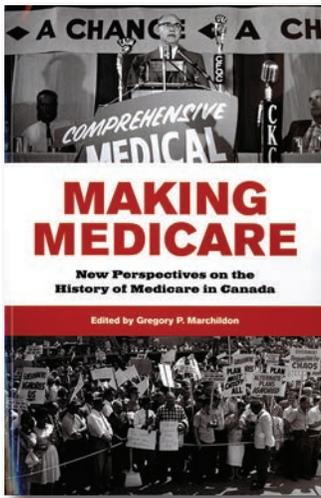
Like many historians, I

came to an interest in this pandemic through the porthole of the First World War. In researching the commemoration of some sixty military nurse/war casualties, at least a third of whom had died from the flu, I sought in vain for any definitive treatment of the topic in Canada. Why had this pandemic, one of the worst in modern history, been so long draped in obscurity? The most obvious answer is the war itself. Happening at the end of a horrific conflict that killed over 60,000 Canadians, the flu seemed to add yet another tragic footnote to that sad story. The postwar rush to commemorate the soldiers, who in the nationalist language of the day had made "the supreme sacrifice," perhaps sapped Canadians of their will to mourn the flu's victims. Soon the Great War was being portrayed as a turning point in Canadian nation building, making flu deaths somewhat ordinary and unheroic. In a field long dominated by the anecdotes of popular history, this volume on the Spanish flu pandemic in Canada goes a long way toward filling a major gap in the literature.

It seems appropriate that the collection should begin with Mark Humphries' article detailing the role that the

military played in hastening the spread of the disease across Canada. With a disregard for the health of civilians normally seen only in national emergencies, military authorities sent a special force destined for Siberia by train, from east to west. Filled with sick soldiers, it left the disease behind in the communities it passed through. As this and other articles in the collection note, the military continued to enforce conscription at the height of the pandemic, despite public protests. Humphries also looks at the public health legacy of the pandemic. While influenza was not initially a reportable disease, it soon became one, and other new public health measures were put in place in its aftermath. With a similar focus, Heather MacDougall compares the Spanish flu pandemic with the 2003 SARS epidemic, noting that the Spanish flu served as a catalyst for the establishment of the Federal Department of Health in 1919, and the SARS epidemic led to the creation of the Public Health Agency of Canada in 2004.

This collection breathes much-needed fresh air into the stale notion that the Spanish flu was no respecter of socio-economic class, place of residence, or ethnicity. Indeed its history reveals the opposite. For example, Francis Dubois, Jean-Pierre Thouez and Denis Goulet demonstrate differentials in mortality and morbidity according to class, region and ethnicity in Quebec. Similarly, D. Ann Herring and Ellen Korol analyze flu deaths during the autumn of 1918 in two areas of Hamilton, Ontario, showing that those living in the industrial, working class wards in the northern part of the city were more likely to die from influenza than those who lived in the more affluent wards in the south. Not surprisingly, Aboriginal populations were the hardest hit, as Karen Slonin shows in her analysis of two Manitoba communities: Norway House and Fisher River. She finds that Cree inhabitants of Norway House had a mortality of 18%, and Fisher House 13%, compared with a death rate of only 0.6% among non-Aboriginal Canadians. Disruption of marginal subsistence activities and lack of basic care—someone to keep the fire burning and provide food



and water — aggravated the impact of the disease.

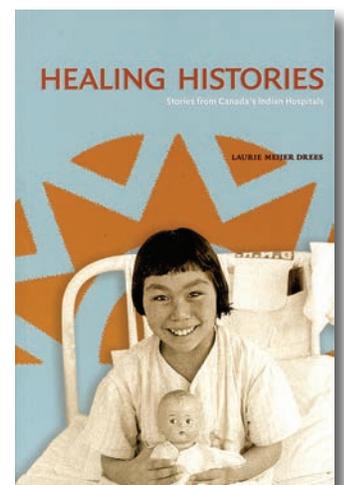
Serious academic study of the Spanish flu has also been limited by the relative lack of available medical options — there were no heroic discoveries, and no great men or women of science who appeared with a magic pill or vaccine to defeat it. Indeed, ordinary nursing care, which as Linda Quiney points out was often provided by untrained nurses, was arguably the most effective

remedy. As individuals fell ill with the flu, which hit otherwise healthy young people the hardest, pneumonia and/or other complications often ensued and led to death, sometimes in days. But first, patients exhibited frightening, un-flu-like symptoms, such as cyanosis (bluish discoloration due to lack of oxygen in the blood) and bleeding from nose, ear, and eyes. Long-term rest following the initial onset of the flu was critical to recovery. While difficult for the poor and economically marginal, rest was nearly impossible for nurses and doctors who often worked to the point of exhaustion caring for the sick. As well, they were continually exposed to the disease, thus suffering a higher mortality rate than that of other Canadians. Several authors also tackle the social meanings of the disease, adding a richness and complexity to the collection. Magda Fahrni examines letters from members of the Montreal public in which they express everyday concerns such as keeping businesses open in order to make a living. Others expressed their opposition to the continued recruitment of troops during the pandemic. Utilizing the concept of modernity, Mary-Ellen Kelm analyzes the “flu stories” of her own family, and of other, particularly Aboriginal, British Columbians. Elyllt Jones explores one family’s renewed interest in spiritualism as they coped with the loss of a child, attempting to speak to her through séances.

The Spanish flu was one of a number of events that convinced many Canadians of the need for improved access to basic medical care. A collection of essays, edited by Gregory P. Marchildon, contributes to a better understanding of the history Canadian health care by exploring the political achievement of Medicare. This book adds to the historiography of a topic long dominated by Malcolm Taylor’s 1987 work, *Health Insurance and Canadian Public Policy: The Seven Decisions that Created the Canadian Health Insurance System*. It also takes its place among recent explorations of social programs such as old age pensions, mothers’ pensions, and unemployment insurance, which were also shaped by the quintessentially Canadian wrangling between federal and provincial governments.

The collection’s greatest strength may be in detailing the many lesser-known precursors of national health insurance in provinces other than Saskatchewan — and in demonstrating that there was indeed nothing inevitable about the form that Medicare ultimately took. It is with some reason that most Canadians associate the history of Medicare with Saskatchewan where economic depression, drought, and a small, geographically dispersed population accented the need for public funding in support of medical care. Aleck Ostry traces Medicare’s history from Saskatchewan’s early 20th-century Municipal Doctors’ scheme and early programs of hospital financing, to the first provincial hospital insurance plan created at the end of the Second World War. Following the inauguration of similar programs in other provinces, a national hospital insurance program was created in 1957, followed by an insurance plan covering medical services in 1966. Through the story of the Swift Current Health Region, C. Stuart Houston and Merle Masse link the development of Medicare to the “famous co-operative spirit of the people of Saskatchewan” (p. 145). Still in Saskatchewan, Gordon Lawson examines the “myth” that doctors’ protests, culminating in the 1962 doctors’ strike, led the Saskatchewan CCF to capitulate to their demands, thereby entrenching fee-for-service payment in Canada. The authors take a step back in time, arguing that as early as 1945 the Saskatchewan CCF ignored recommendations from its own Health Services Planning Commission. They did so in the interests of political expediency, and as the authors argue, were never committed to placing doctors on salary, although their counterparts nationally, and in Ontario, were.

Focussing on the political and policy aspects of the Medicare story, Penny Bryden examines the inner workings of Lester B. Pearson’s Liberal Party who developed Medicare as a campaign platform while in opposition. They later implemented the measure as a single-payer plan rather than permitting the participation of private insurance carriers. In doing so, they incurred the wrath of Ernest Manning in Alberta and W. A. C. Bennett in British Columbia. As Robert Lampard notes, Alberta’s Hoadley Commission (1932-1934) established by the United Farmers of Alberta, called for a plan with local control and provincial subsidies, and contributory/voluntary as opposed to universal/compulsory coverage. Although influential, the Commission’s recommendations were never implemented by Manning’s incoming Social Credit government, due to the need to comply with federal cost-sharing conditions. In British Columbia, as Marchildon and Nicole O’Byrne note,



the health insurance system evolved under the Bennett government: from a voluntary system with private, non-profit insurers to the federal universal, single-payer system.

This collection also provides a nuanced and detailed account of other precursors to Medicare, that is, the models not implemented. These stories serve as a needed counterweight to the iconic status of Saskatchewan as the “birthplace” of Medicare. At the national level, Heather MacDougall chronicles an early attempt at establishing health insurance by J. J. Heagerty of the federal Department of Health, who sought to combine funding for public health (preventive medicine) with diagnostic and treatment services. However, in working too closely with the Canadian Medical Association and neglecting the voice of workers, farmers and other supporters of health insurance, the scheme was unable to overcome the inevitable federal-provincial hurdles. Most of Medicare’s younger siblings grew up amid the harsh realities of local, geographically isolated communities. For example, as Gordon Lawson and Andrew F. Noseworthy note, Newfoundland established its own cottage hospital system in the 1930s, staffing hospitals with salaried physicians, and housing nurses in these buildings. This system in turn had roots in earlier efforts by the Grenfell Mission and Newfoundland Outport Nursing and Industrial Association (NONIA) to provide medical and nursing care to residents of the outport communities thinly stretched along Newfoundland’s extensive coastline. In a somewhat later period, in Quebec, Aline Charles and Françoise Guérard look at small, private, for-profit hospitals which were allowed to function in a contractual arrangement with the government through the 1960s and 1970s, after the introduction of hospital insurance.

Adding colour to the debate on Medicare, Felicity Pope analyzes political cartoons on the topic from the end of the Second World War until the introduction of the Canada Health Act in the 1980s. The collection concludes with fascinating personal accounts by political leaders, campaigners, a physician, and a researcher who fought to bring Medicare into being. Their testimonials speak to the acrimony surrounding Medicare in general and the 1962 doctors’ strike in particular.

Laurie Meijer Dress, in *Healing Histories: Stories from Canada’s Indian Hospitals*, examines the “healing histories” from Indian Hospitals run by the federal Department of Indian Affairs from 1945 to the 1970s. This social history, relating primarily to long-term tuberculosis patients, tells the story of the hospitals through the voices of nurses, the institutions, patients (many of them children) and their families. Their stories give expression to the fear, alienation, and familial and community disruption that Aboriginal patients often experienced due to the long-term hospitalization that was deemed appropriate for the treatment of tuberculosis prior to the implementation of antibiotics. Dress and her interviewees make the point that the hospitals, in separating children from their families, communities, and culture, effectively served the same purpose as residential schools in trying to assimilate

Aboriginal children into the dominant white Euro-Canadian culture. Dress and some of her interviewees point a finger at the federal government for using hospitals to this end. While the book shows us that many patients, long separated from families and communities, never returned, there is no overarching portrayal of victimization. For example, the stories include several patients who did return to their communities and found improved health through traditional Aboriginal medicine. Other patients grew up and took work in local communities, and/or in the hospitals themselves, a few even managing to obtain health-care training.

The patients’ voices constitute the strength of the book; however, the author could have featured them more prominently and distinguished them more clearly from those of nurses and other hospital personnel, which are scattered throughout the book. Indeed it is not before the second half that one finds an actual account by a patient. Nurses’ voices, primarily those of Aboriginal nurses, are certainly of interest, but their perspective is quite different from that of the patients. A thematic approach organized around the content of the stories might have provided greater insight into their respective experiences. Instead, the author has organized the interviews, which she has supplemented with introductory notes, into six sections in accord with the institutional relationship of the interviewees. As well, the author’s voice is often mixed in with those of the interviewees, whose stories are presented through a diverse array of formats including first-person testimonials, question-and-answer format, poetry, and even a play. Sometimes it is unclear who was speaking. Despite these quibbles, this reader found some gems in this collection, which deals with an important subject.

In their own way, all three of these books add to our understanding of the social, political, and economic underpinnings of good health for all Canadians. They constitute an essential read for students of health care, nursing, medicine, social welfare policy, political history, Aboriginal history, and perhaps many other fields besides.

Dianne Dodd
Parks Canada, Gatineau

Future History

In the next issue of *Manitoba History* ...

- Early Jewish migration in Winnipeg
- Mennonite midwives in the late 19th century
- The Shoal Lake Aqueduct and the Greater Winnipeg Water District
- Victoria Beach and the cottage experience
- book reviews & more

**Dora Dueck, *What You Get at Home*. Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 2012, 179 pages.
ISBN 978-0-88801-404-7, \$19.00 (paperback)**



What You Get At Home is Dora Dueck's first collection of short fiction, which follows her two well acclaimed novels, *Under the Still Standing Sun* (1989) and *This Hidden Thing* (2010). In this latest work, most of the stories are set in the "triangle" of Winnipeg, the Russian steppes, and the Paraguayan Chaco. They explore themes of migration and sympathetically convey feelings of loss, displacement, nostalgia, and confusion over the

meanings of home. This adds insight not only into the experience of many Mennonites in Canada, but illuminates the transnational immigrant experience in general. The stories will be especially relatable for Winnipeggers, as the characters navigate such familiar places as the apartment blocks on Edison Avenue, the sands of Patricia Beach, and the stretch of Highway 75 to the border crossing at Emerson. The reader is challenged to consider whether life in the heart of Canada—with its stifling summer heat, long dark winters, and immigrant labour jobs—is necessarily an uncomplicated fulfillment of the immigrant dream.

The stories are overwhelmingly of serious subject matter and, one could say, rather heavy in atmosphere. Yet, even when its theme is sadness, regret, betrayal, longing, or disappointment, a story well written is a thing of beauty, and there is indeed much of beauty here. Dueck clearly knows these people, perhaps *is* some of these people. In confident, deft strokes she captures the essences of her characters and their relationships to one another, using layers of perspective to lure us to a place of empathy and new understanding.

Dora Dueck is an historian, and in these succinctly constructed stories she reminds us that personal memory and narrative are the building blocks of history. In many of the stand-alone chapters of the book, people compose their stories, correct their stories, learn their parents' stories, and search for the truth about their stories. In "My Name is Magdalena" an elderly woman attends a writing class to learn how to record her memoirs. In "Postponement" Shelley journals and practises how she will accomplish the difficult task of revealing bad news to her husband. The story "In the Village of Women" features a grandmother struggles to convey a long-hidden chapter of her story to her granddaughter, and how she maintained her dignity in a humiliating, socially unacceptable situation.

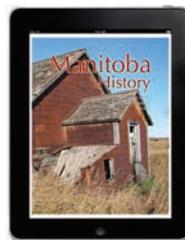
Dueck is hinting throughout at something essential about the nature of history itself—that there are spaces in our histories, and that people's stories, as experienced and remembered, fill these spaces. Often Dueck juxtaposes a character's personal story with words more officially recorded, in order to demonstrate the idea that the story, as told by the ordinary people who lived it, can indeed be more powerful and "true" than the dry bones of the obituary, the archival document or the history book, which often do not come close to conveying what actually matters most. The power of story, on the other hand, is clear. It can make you laugh and cry, feel empathy and better understand. In the story "Helping Isaac" a man who is haunted by the repressed memories of what happened to him and his family in Siberia hires a researcher. The researcher finds the cryptic document that can perhaps answer the man's questions, but it is her creative, gentle storytelling that puts his mind at ease.

In the title story, "What You Get At Home" Lise is forlornly homesick and finds inspiration, relief, and joy in an Anne Taylor novel which she hunts down because it has the word "homesick" in the title. She devours the book in one sitting through the night, and in the process it hauls up startling memories that she hadn't considered in years. She uses poignant words to describe this joy of literary discovery, and remarks on "the good work a book can do" (p. 159). In similar ways, Dueck's book does the good work of helping readers to understand and to relate.

Frieda Esau Klippenstein
Winnipeg

Thanks ...

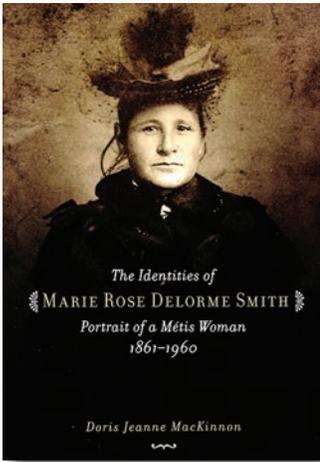
The Editors thank the following people who assisted in the preparation of this issue of *Manitoba History*: Lecia Bourne (Calgary), Giles Bugailiskis (Winnipeg), Mike Forster (Brandon), Murray Peterson (City of Winnipeg), and Shelley Sweeney (University of Manitoba).



Manitoba History is now available in a version for iOS and Android tablets, as well as for desktop and notebook computers. This text-searchable and coloured version is available to MHS members at no charge.

www.mhs.mb.ca/members

Doris Jeanne MacKinnon, *The Identities of Marie Rose Delorme Smith: Portrait of a Métis Woman, 1861–1960*. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina, 2012, 208 pages. ISBN 9780889772366, \$34.95 (paperback)



Marie Rose Delorme Smith lived a long and productive life. A strong, enterprising and resilient woman, she appears to have privately cherished her Métis heritage, in particular her childhood in Red River, Manitoba and her youth on hunting and trading expeditions in the western plains. For most of her life, however, circumstances led her to identify herself at least outwardly with the dominant Anglo-Canadian

majority, as Mary or Mrs. Charlie Smith. The innocent, convent-educated, fifteen-year-old “quarter-breed” (a term she used to describe other “Métis” women of her status) was reportedly “forced” by her mother to marry the much older, rich and “hard living” whisky trader, Charlie Smith.¹ Marie Rose had seventeen children between 1878 and 1904, served “the boss” (her husband), and did woman’s work and more. She essentially ran the Jughandle Ranch, as she had the business acumen and the wandering Charlie was often “absent.” After his death in 1914, she took a second homestead (as the widow of an original homesteader, as women could not obtain a homestead under the Dominion Lands Act) and also ran a boarding house to re-establish the family’s reduced finances and raise her large family.

Freed from domestic responsibilities by the 1930s, the energetic and intelligent Marie Rose reflected upon her past and felt she had a story to tell about her “pioneer life” in the west. She wrote mainly about “safe” topics such as the ranching culture, frontier life, and respected Aboriginal (“Indian”) traditions. Related to her history she discussed some controversial events such as the “Rebellion”² of 1885, Louis Riel, and the execution of Thomas Scott, but she largely conformed to the official view of the “poor ignorant Halfbreeds” and misguided Riel. She did not acknowledge the active involvement of her Delorme uncles or the views of her sisters, Elisa Ness and Madeleine Gareau, who lived at Batoche during the Resistance. Rather she presented the views of her “loyalist” brother-in-law, George Ness, who opposed the “rebels” and testified against Riel at his trial. It is as if Marie Rose needed to “rehabilitate” her compatriots in the eyes of her Euro-Canadian readers and conform to the official or accepted version of events. One area where she was resolute, however, was in her devotion to the Roman Catholic faith and the support of her mentor, Father Lacombe.

Marie Rose was strong-minded and assertive in her personal life, but selective if not fearful of revealing her Métis origins and cultural traditions to outsiders. Considering the enduring racism and intolerance of the early 20th century, it is not surprising that she distanced herself from her Métis heritage. The Métis of Western Canada were effectively silenced, crushed, and humiliated in 1885. Southern Alberta ranching society was particularly anti-French and critical of Aboriginal lifestyles in the decades that followed. Like many Métis of her generation, Marie Rose wanted to be accepted and ensure the integration of her children into mainstream society. She spoke of her decorative beadwork, storytelling, and healing practices, but she did not transmit her Michif French language or sensitive cultural traditions to her children and descendants. Most of her children married into the Anglo-Canadian or immigrant community, and her grandchildren hid or denied their Métis heritage until its resurgence in the late 20th century.

In this way, Marie Rose’s life and behaviour parallel that of other Métis women of her time who did not live in a predominantly Michif French community such as St. Laurent (Manitoba), Batoche (Saskatchewan) or Fort Providence (Northwest Territories). Even in those communities, fear and humiliation forced many women to keep their heads down or assume the identity of their non-Métis family. Despite her “divided loyalties,” one cannot help but admire and respect Marie Rose. She could not reveal her “*pensées profondes*” (inner thoughts) or Métis world during her lifetime. Unlike now, she lived at a time when it was not popular to be Métis. It was better to be Mary Smith than Marie Rose Delorme.

Doris Jeanne MacKinnon, who was born in St. Paul des Métis (Alberta), may also have a Métis or French-Canadian connection. She is definitely very close to her subject, but careful in offering various interpretations of Marie Rose’s identity and ethnic affiliations. The author skilfully dissects Marie Rose’s memoirs, unpublished manuscripts, and a series of edited articles published in the 1940s.³ She also met and interviewed family members who provided important “living” context, reminiscences, and photographs. Because of the “stream of consciousness” style of Marie Rose’s writing, the author was faced with the challenging task of interpreting disconnected, incomplete, and at times contradictory narratives. Her use of “informed speculation” based on specific and comparative evidence is a very effective methodology to address these issues. In her analysis MacKinnon also integrated comparative literature on the Métis and biographies of other women. The family tree in the appendix is a key reference to identify Marie

Rose's family connections and provides further insight into her life and legacy.

This book is based on exhaustive and meticulous research and is an important contribution to Métis history. It provides a critical supplement to the romanticized biography written by Marie Rose's granddaughter, Jock Carpenter, in 1977.⁴ There are few life histories written by "ordinary" Métis women, and in this absence their lives must be pieced together primarily through indirect evidence, oral history, and material culture. The book would have benefitted from higher resolution images of Marie Rose's family and artwork. There are numerous other photographs of Marie Rose's family and her community of Pincher Creek in archival collections. Additional illustrations and a map of her homeland in the western prairies would also have helped the reader further appreciate her cultural landscape.

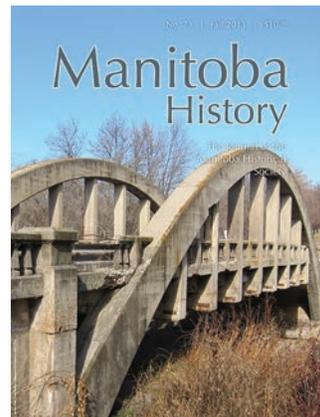
Diane P. Payment,
Winnipeg

Notes

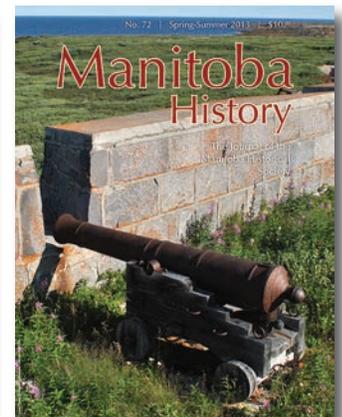
1. Marie Rose wrote in her memoirs that she was forced to marry, and the author states that she was sold for \$50. Another possible interpretation is that her widowed (but recently remarried) mother wanted to marry off her daughter to an older, well established man. Arranged marriages, especially for young daughters, were common in 19th-century Métis society. It is also possible that Marie Rose, who experienced marriage difficulties, reflected negatively about the circumstances later in life.

2. This is the term used by the author and in Western colonial tradition, but Resistance is the official term used by the Métis today to signify an armed resistance against the Canadian government to defend their rights and homeland. The term used in 1885 was "guerre nationale" or war in defence of the New Nation of the Northwest.
3. See Marie Rose Smith fonds at the Glenbow Institute Archives and the archives of the Kootenai Brown Pioneer Village. A series of articles entitled "Eighty Years on the Plains," based on her memoirs, but edited by Grant MacEwan, were published in *Canadian Cattleman* in 1948-1949. A contemporary and neighbour of Marie Rose, Emma Lynch-Staunton, also published an article based on her memoirs in the *Lethbridge Herald* in 1941. Marie Rose's "own voice" or unedited manuscripts were never published.
4. Jock Carpenter, *Fifty Dollar Bride* (Sidney, BC: Gray's Publishing, 1977). Ethel (Jock) Carpenter, born in 1933, is the daughter of Marie Hélène Smith Parfitt. She acknowledges her grandmother's Métis heritage but focusses on her life as a "prairie girl." It is a more personal piece.

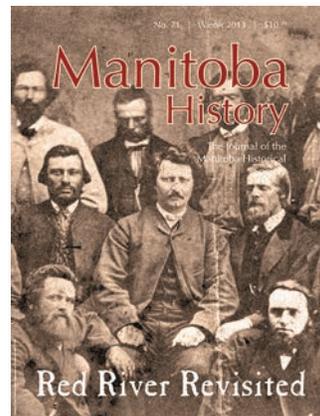
More
Manitoba History



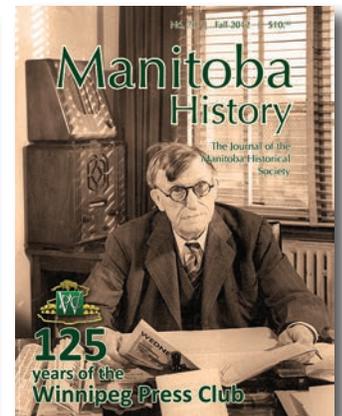
No. 73



No. 72



No. 71



No. 70

Greenfield Books Ltd.

We buy and sell books, photographs, maps and ephemera on Winnipeg and Manitoba history

Appraisals and search service available

View our books online at
www.greenfieldbooks.com

217 Academy Road, Winnipeg, MB R3M 0E3
204-488-2023
mail@greenfieldbooks.com

Member: Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of Canada

To purchase copies of these and other back issues of *Manitoba History*, contact us at:

Manitoba Historical Society
61 Carlton Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3C 1N7
(204) 947-0559 info@mhs.mb.ca

Cool Things in the Collection: Hall & Lowe Cabinet Cards

by Katherine Pettipas
Volunteer Researcher, University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections

In its ongoing commitment to enhance public access to First Nations and Métis historical documents, the University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections has acquired five late 19th-century cabinet cards¹ from Greenfield Books of Winnipeg. The images are studio portraits of First Nations and Métis individuals and were the only remaining photographs that were once housed in a *carte de visite* album.² The acquisition of this unique collection of images and the album was facilitated by Connie Macmillan, a member of the family that owned the album. The cabinet cards date from circa 1882-1886 and were produced by “Hall & Lowe Artists and Photographers” located at 499 Main Street opposite Winnipeg’s City Hall. The images can be accessed through the Archive’s website:

<http://digitalcollections.lib.umanitoba.ca/islandora/object/uofm%3Ahalllowe>

When considered in its entirety, the collection provides unexpected insights into the ways in which owners repurposed their *carte de visite* albums to store and display new formats of commercial images. By the 1880s, the popularity of the larger-sized cabinet card over the smaller *carte de visite* format forced album owners to either purchase larger albums or accommodate the new image format to their *carte de visite* version. In this case, the owners adjusted the size of the cabinet cards to fit their album by cropping along the bottom where the name and street address of the studio would have been printed. Before they were cropped, the albumen prints (14 x 10 cm) were likely mounted on large studio cards to produce cabinet cards. The backs of the cards have been printed with the



UMA, A11-86, SC-PC284.

Hall & Lowe cabinet photo (front and back) of an unidentified man with braided hair and shell earring.

studio’s name and address that are bordered with either an elaborate floral or geometric design.

The album cover itself is worthy of note as an example of Victorian decorative parlour art. Ranging from simple velvet-covered styles to elaborately decorated leather-bound versions, albums became forms of decorative art and, along with their contents, valued as heirlooms. In spite of its well-worn and faded cover, the Macmillan album was once a highly attractive item.

Portraits of Indigenous men, women, and children living in foreign lands such as India, Japan, South America and the North American West were popular in Victorian society where there was a fascination with the exotic or “the unfamiliar other.” One can easily imagine



UMA, Connie Macmillan Fonds, A12-139, Box 1/1.

The album in which this collection of cabinet card photographs was displayed.

Dr. Katherine Pettipas is a retired Curator from The Manitoba Museum where she was responsible for the research, interpretation and display of artefacts associated with the Native Ethnology and the Hudson’s Bay Company Museum collections. Her interest is in the fields of ethnohistory and material culture studies with particular reference to historical interactions between Indigenous cultures and Western societies.

family members and visitors sitting in household parlours and leafing through the pages of albums containing such images with great curiosity. Photography studios capitalized on this interest by offering subject matter that transported unique landscapes and Indigenous peoples into Euro-Western homes. One of these studios was operated by partners James Deakin Hall (1854–1936), an immigrant of Irish descent, and Skene Lowe (1856–1920), a 26-year-old Englishman. Hall worked out of Winnipeg from 1881 to 1886 and went into partnership with Lowe in 1882. They also hired a photographer who was posted along the CPR line to take photographs of scenes, largely during winter. Following the closure of their Winnipeg studio in 1886, a new one was opened in Vancouver in 1887. Ironically, no photographs of the partners have been found to date.³

What is striking about these images is that all but one feature individuals in their everyday garb as you might have met them in passing in the 1880s. The exception is that of a young man posed in profile wearing a European-style sweater, a striped blanket around his shoulder and a shell earring through his pierced ear. He wears his braided hair in a traditional style associated with western Plains cultures. This particular image reminds me of the stereotyped paintings and photographic images of the “classic Plains Warrior” in profile as represented forty years earlier by artist Paul Kane, and later by the American photographer Edward S. Curtis (1900 into the 1930s) and artist/photographer Edmund Morris (1907–1910). And while props may have been used in the Hall & Lowe images, none of the other individuals have been formally posed to this degree in order to emphasize their “Indianness.”

In one image, a seated Indigenous woman is holding a child in a cradle board. She is dressed in European-style clothing, including shawls and a head covering. The construction of the cradle board, along with the elaborate



UMA, A11-86-SC, PC284.

Hall & Lowe cabinet photo (front and back) with handwritten caption “Half Breed Woman & Papoose in Beaded Moss Bag.”

University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections

The University Archives collects a lot more than University records, including small but significant holdings on the Red River era of Manitoba history.

Come and explore!

<http://digitalcollections.lib.umanitoba.ca>

style of bead embroidery, are reminiscent of Anishnaabe-Ojibwe work, perhaps providing a clue as to her Native ancestry. Fortunately, the woman was identified on the reverse side of the card as a “Half-Breed Woman & Papoose in Beaded Moss Bag.” Yet another card depicts an elderly Native man smoking a pipe and garbed in a well-worn European-style hat and a woollen hooded, buttoned-down coat or *capote* which would have been typical of everyday wear. The words “Half-Breed” were written on the back of the card.

There is one other portrait of a man wearing a combination of blankets/shawls over his shoulders, a European shirt, and a Catholic rosary around his neck. His toque-like hat has patches of white fur and ribbons and a rolled brim decorated with fur. Finally, a young boy, dressed in a European-style jacket, sat for the fifth portrait. His unkempt long hair is worn loose with a fringe of bangs. One wonders if a future photograph would have presented quite a different persona—that of a residential school student dressed in a school uniform whose hair would have been cropped short—barely recognizable as the same individual.

These images speak volumes about their producers, clients, and subjects within a number of contexts, and will be of interest to a variety of users. The acquisition of these cabinet cards and their safekeeping by the University of Manitoba Archives will ensure their accessibility for generations to come. With more research, who knows what stories the images may reveal? ☺

Notes

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Shelley Sweeney, the Head of the University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, for introducing me to the collection and for her valuable input. The assistance of other staff members was greatly appreciated.

1. A cabinet card is a style of photograph produced mainly from an albumen print that was mounted on a card approximately 108 x 165 mm (4½ inches x 6½ inches). It was a popular form of portraiture after 1870. They were called cabinet cards because they could easily be propped up and displayed for viewing in a parlor cabinet.
2. A carte de visite is a small albumen print (54 x 89 mm or 2.1 x 3.5 inches) mounted on a card (64 x 100 mm or 2½ x 4 inches). They were relatively inexpensive and easy to pass along to relatives and friends.
3. Information on Hall & Lowe has been provided by an article on the website of the Manitoba Historical Society titled “Manitoba Photographers Index: Hall & Lowe.” For more information on these photographers, see the Manitoba Historical Society’s website at www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/photographers/halllowe.shtml.

