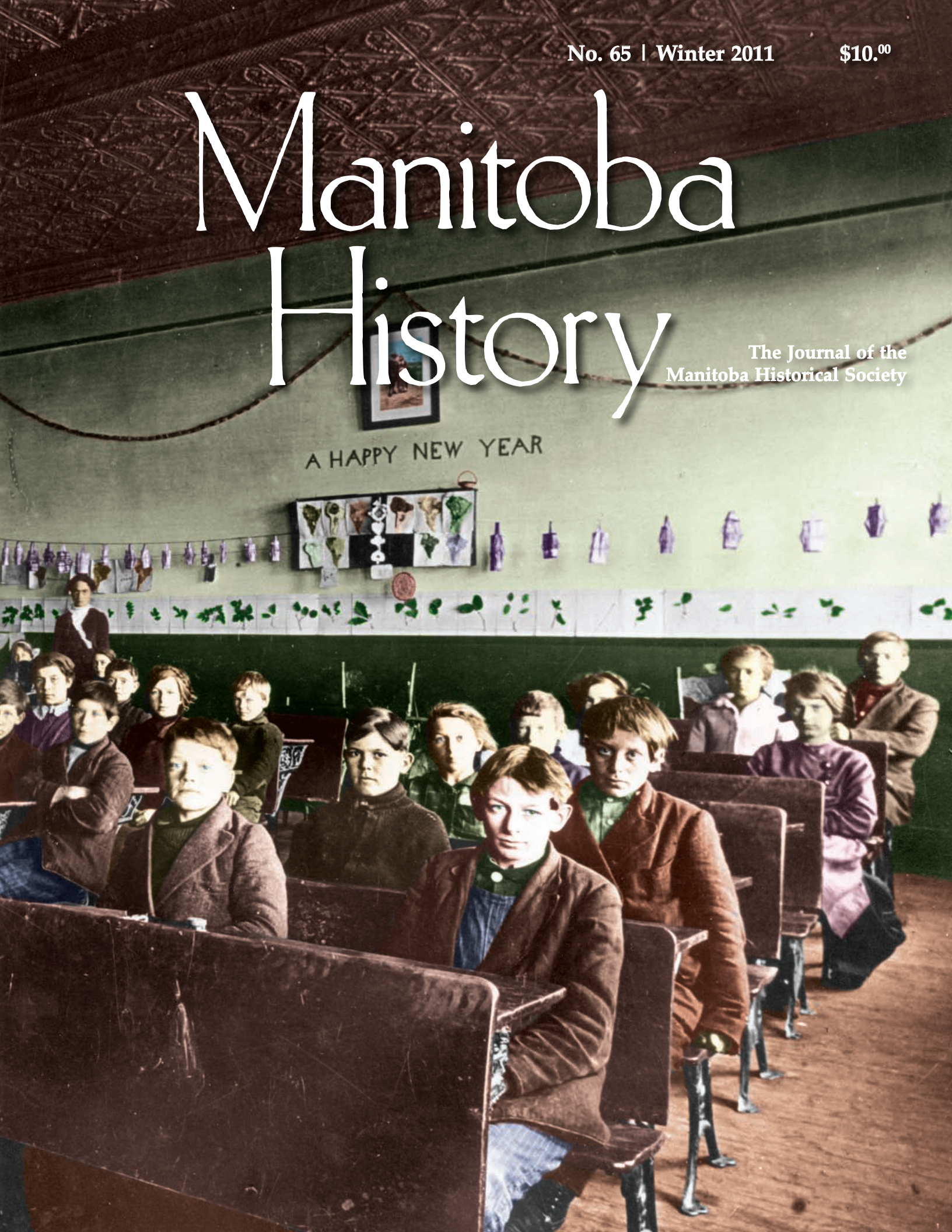


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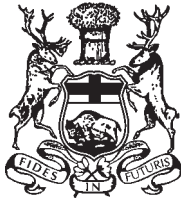
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# Manitoba History

The Journal of the  
Manitoba Historical Society



A HAPPY NEW YEAR



## Manitoba History

Published by the  
Manitoba Historical Society

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

## Manitoba Historical Society

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Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3C 1N7  
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Jean Burlingame Beatty, 1906

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Source: Gwen Sproule

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# "Something Dead Under the House": Management Conflict in the Hudson's Bay Company in the 1930s

by Elliot Hanowski  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

A study of the present narrative will suggest that the administrative relationship which exists between London and Winnipeg was conceived in hallucination, brought forth in panic and nurtured in chaos. – F. A. Stacpole<sup>1</sup>

**A**fter his retirement in 1959, former Hudson's Bay Company executive Philip Chester began making notes for a biography. He initially intended to write about the career of his late colleague George Allan, who had been the Chair of the Company's Winnipeg-based Canadian Committee. What Chester ended up writing about instead, for the most part, were his own conflicts with

the Company's highest executive authority, the London Board. His ire was especially directed at the Board's Chair, Sir Patrick Ashley Cooper, Governor of the Company. Decades later these clashes still exercised Chester. In his notes for the biography he included a few pages about an incident from 1936 that had particularly angered him. This was "the Simpson's deal," a proposed merger of the retail operations of Simpson's and the Hudson's Bay Company (henceforth the HBC).

In the third volume of his history of the HBC, Peter C. Newman traced the tensions that evolved between the London Board and the Canadian Committee, paying special attention to the frequent clashes between General



Archives of Manitoba, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, 1987/363-C-9/20.

**Canadian rebels.** Member of the Canadian Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company had their photo taken with the visiting HBC Governor, Charles V. Sale, at the Upper Fort Garry Gate, 6 September 1929. Left to right: R. J. Gourley, James A. Richardson, George W. Allan, Sale, James Thomson, Conrad S. Riley.

Manager Chester and Governor Cooper. Newman briefly touched on the Simpson's deal, relying solely on Chester's dramatic version of the story to do so.<sup>2</sup> In what follows I will examine contemporary sources in order to gain an expanded perspective on the incident. I will argue that while Chester's version is somewhat unreliable (not least because it was written more than two decades after the fact), the events surrounding the failed Simpson's deal do fit with Newman's larger narrative of the company's internal struggles and the issues of geography, class and nationality that informed them.

To set the scene, it should be explained that while the Governor and Directors of the London Board had long been the highest executive authority of the HBC, ultimately responsible to the shareholders for the company's performance, the Canadian Committee was a relatively recent invention. In 1910, several directors of the London Board, representing activist shareholders, wished to take advantage of commercial opportunities in Western Canada which the then-current Governor, ensconced in an overly "centralized London bureaucracy," was neglecting.<sup>3</sup> To get the HBC back in touch with Canadian realities a Canadian Advisory Committee based in Winnipeg was formed in 1912. It consisted of three local businessmen who were to serve as the local eyes and ears of the London Board. This arrangement proved especially important as the HBC embarked on a program of building major department stores. While it was always subordinate to the London Board, over the next ten years the Committee slowly took on more executive functions. An "Executive Department" was formed in 1919 and the word "Advisory" was dropped from the Committee's name in 1922.<sup>4</sup>

It was the Great Depression, however, which brought a larger delegation of powers to the Canadians, in an effort to shake up the Company and reverse its losses, which "grew from \$182,000 in 1929 to just over \$2 million in 1931."<sup>5</sup> In 1930 Philip Chester was elevated to the newly created post of General Manager by Canadian Committee head George Allan and the then-Governor of the London Board, Charles Sale. This, it was hoped, would help rationalize and centralize the management of the HBC's various departments. The new Manager was to report directly to the Canadian Committee, which was to have added authority, including power of attorney, to deal with local situations as they arose.<sup>6</sup> Exactly what this authority consisted of and what its limits were would become a much-debated issue between Winnipeg and London. In 1930 the chairman, George Allan, stated that the Canadian Committee understood their enlarged duties were "similar

in character to the duties and responsibilities ordinarily assumed by directors of companies in Canada."<sup>7</sup> In 1942, the Governor's assistant, F. A. Stacpole, cited this as the heart of a misunderstanding that had caused a great deal of trouble over the past decade. He noted dryly that the Committee was determined to "interpret the powers conferred on them in a rather wide sense," but insisted that in the first place the London Board in fact "had no power to confer powers and authority on the Canadian Committee other than those of agents or managers."<sup>8</sup>

This brings us back to the 1930s and the eruption of the tensions between Board and Committee in "the Simpsons' Deal." In the unfinished memoir mentioned above, Philip Chester began his version of the story by explaining that in the summer of 1936 the Canadian Committee had cancelled the Joint London Buying Office that it shared with the Simpson's stores. This joint office had been designed to create efficiencies for both companies

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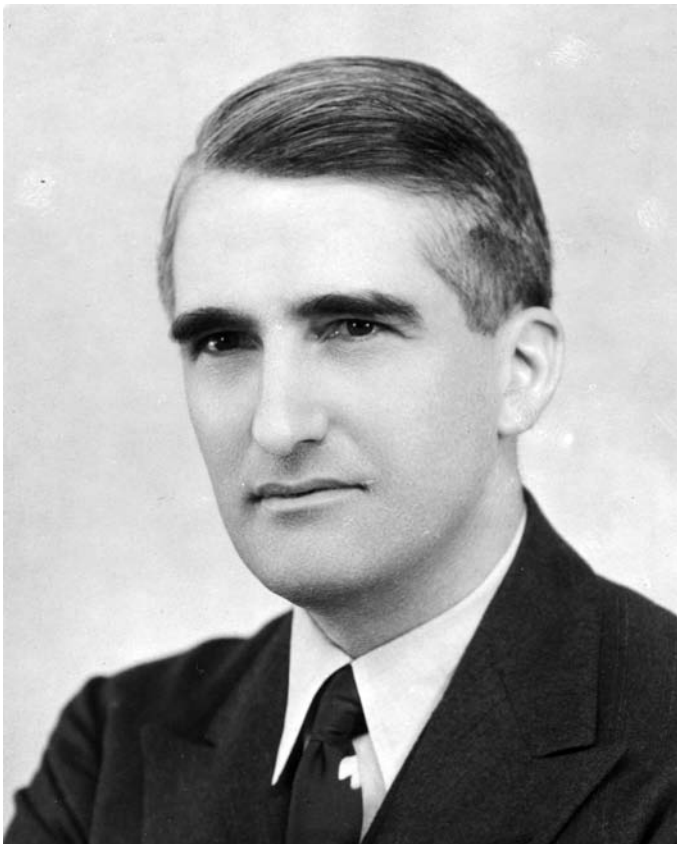
**...while the Governor and Directors of the London Board had long been the highest executive authority of the HBC, ultimately responsible to the shareholders for the company's performance, the Canadian Committee was a relatively recent invention.**

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in purchasing European goods and had been introduced in the first few years of the Depression. Governor Cooper and the London Board were unhappy with the Committee's unilateral decision to end the arrangement, wrote Chester sarcastically, "possibly because the Governor had assumed the Buying Offices came under his direction." Therefore the vice-president of Simpson's, David Gibson, had travelled to London to more officially "arrange the separation" with the Board. Canadian Committee chair George Allan then received a cable summoning him to England, causing him to exclaim suspiciously to Chester, "Phil, there's something dead under the house somewhere!" The two went to London, where on the first day Allan attended a meeting of the Board. Elsewhere, Governor Cooper's assistant, F. A. Stacpole, secretly "spill[ed] the beans" to Chester about the proposed merger. The HBC operated stores in Western Canada, while Simpson's strength was in the East; coming together would allow them to challenge the nation-wide presence of Eaton's. But the arrangement also would have eliminated the existing Canadian Committee, and this, to Chester's mind, was Governor Cooper's hidden agenda. Caught by surprise, Chester was infuriated.

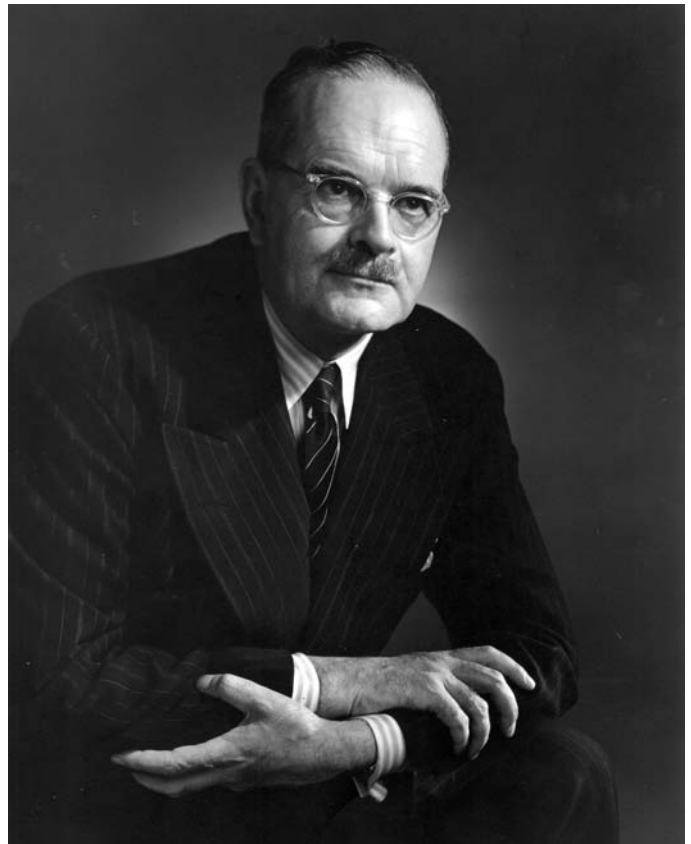
On the second day both Chester and Allan attended a Board meeting where Chester railed vehemently against the Simpson's plan for forty minutes. After Allan also had his say, the meeting ended, and London Board member Edward Peacock quietly reassured Chester, telling him not to worry. Not long after, "Cooper told George Allan they

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HBCA, 1987/363-C-27/30A.

**Philip Alfred Chester** (1896–1976), General Manager of the Hudson’s Bay Company.



HBCA, 1981/28-1002 by Karsh, Ottawa.

**Sir Patrick Ashley Cooper** (1887–1961), 30<sup>th</sup> Governor of the Hudson’s Bay Company.

had decided not to go through with the deal.”<sup>9</sup> Unaware of these manoeuvres, “a few days later” the representatives of Simpson’s came to call upon Governor Cooper. After seeing him for only a few minutes and learning that the deal was off, they hastily left, in “a state of fury and consternation.” According to Chester, Simpson’s president Charles L. Burton was so enraged with Governor Cooper that he explained the whole failed plan, previously secret, to Chester and Allan. Cooper, he claimed, had seized upon the idea of a merger (originally suggested by David Gibson) as a means of getting rid of the current Canadian Committee. Burton even let the pair look through his files to see the details for themselves. Upon their return to Winnipeg, Allan and Chester revealed the truth to the rest of the Canadian Committee, who were outraged. A mass resignation was for a time considered, but eventually decided against. Chester’s account identified Cooper as the scheming mastermind behind this plan. Decades later, his notes for the memoir still seethed over the “faithless disloyalty” and “machinations” of the Governor, “whose measure was such that it was unthinkable he would retain the Governorship too long.”<sup>10</sup> Clearly Chester’s

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**Canadian Committee chair George Allan then received a cable summoning him to England, causing him to exclaim suspiciously to Chester, “Phil, there’s something dead under the house somewhere!”**

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memories were strongly tinged by the emotions of his long-term relationship with Cooper, who he saw as his nemesis. This is all very dramatic, but what really happened? Other contemporary documents describing the events and the larger context of the failed Simpson’s deal depict a more complex reality.

To begin with some background about the personalities involved, it should be noted that Cooper and Chester had some things in common. Both were promoted to their positions during the early Depression. Both men were born in the United Kingdom, came from backgrounds in accounting, and, as experts in their fields, were part of the transition to a new style of professionalized management which was becoming prominent throughout the Anglo-American world.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless their social rank and prospects were far apart. Cooper, a Scot, came from “middle circumstances” in Aberdeen but went to Cambridge, married a wealthy heiress, and ended up living in an opulent mansion. Much of this success was due to judicious use of his managerial and financial skills in the service of the Bank of England and overseas British companies.<sup>12</sup> His skill at salvaging ailing British



HBCA, 1981/28-1002 by Karsh, Ottawa.

**George W. Allan** (1860–1940), Chairman of the HBC Canadian Committee.



HBCA, 1987/363-E-700-S/221.

**F. A. Stacpole** (?–1960), Assistant to the HBC Governor.

concerns was what resulted in his appointment to the HBC's Governorship in 1931. In 1932 he was appointed a full director of the Bank of England, and he would go on to serve on the boards of eight other companies.<sup>13</sup> Deeply embedded in the multinational corporate elite, Cooper moved in powerful circles and was the epitome of the "gentlemanly capitalist." His diaries are full of lunching and shooting dates with British luminaries, long vacations (often working) to exotic locales around the world, and his "leisure" time spent running the affairs of his local Anglican church and exclusive private club.<sup>14</sup>

Chester, on the other hand, came from a dissenting (that is, non-Anglican) working-class background in industrial Derbyshire. After serving in the First World War, he put himself through accounting school. Joining the HBC at the London office, he was assigned to Winnipeg in the position of Chief Accountant in 1925. He took pains to rid his accent of any features that might identify his class origins. He lived to work, driving himself very hard and expecting all those who reported to him to follow his example. In his limited spare time he associated with other Winnipeggers, albeit prominent ones like *Manitoba Free Press* editor, John W. Dafoe.<sup>15</sup>

The conflict cannot, however, be reduced solely to a clash between two individuals, whatever their differences. Right from the beginning of the 1930s there is evidence of the London Board's discomfort with both the expanded

powers of the Canadian Committee and Chester's aggressive management style. London directors Vivian Smith and Sir Frederick Richmond wrote to Committee chair George Allan on 13 March 1931 to complain, almost apologetically, that they had not been consulted about certain matters, though they were "probably quite trivial ones."<sup>16</sup> In fact, Smith seemed more intent on stressing that "the only thing I want Chester to be very particular about is not to alter questions of principle without referring to London."<sup>17</sup> In a letter to Allan, Chester responded that he was:

...not surprised to learn that London had misconstrued our vigorous efforts to get things right as quickly as we could...but I was naturally very much distressed to learn that this had developed into a personal attack upon my motives and intentions.<sup>18</sup>

This back-and-forth would turn out to be a pattern continuing for the rest of the decade, and it could at times become quite personal, on both sides.

Closer to the Simpson's deal, in 1935 we find Cooper fulminating in his diary against the "intransigent [sic] attitude of the Canadian Committee."<sup>19</sup> Around this time he had a long discussion on the matter with James Henry Thomas of the British Government's Dominions Office.



HBCA, 1987/363-P-P/1 N8469.

**Sir Edward Robert Peacock** (1871–1962), a Canadian on the London HBC Board.



HBCA, 1984/40-339 by Karsh, Ottawa.

**Charles Luther Burton** (1876–1961), President of Simpson's.

Thomas knew Philip Chester, and to Cooper's evident delight,

...described him as a young man who had come too far too fast, who had no experience other than Hudson's Bay, and needed above everything else experience in other organizations and to have his nose rubbed in it ("and rubbed damned hard!") He gives him 100 percent marks for his ability, but thinks he is far too puffed up. He also said he was far more "Canadian" than the Canadians, with all their attendant weaknesses.

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**Chester came from a working-class background in industrial Derbyshire.... Joining the HBC at the London office, he was assigned to Winnipeg in the position of Chief Accountant in 1925. He took pains to rid his accent of any features that might identify his class origins.**

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This diagnosis sums up not just Thomas' opinion but the general attitude of Cooper and the Board. Chester was seen as competent, but also arrogant and over-reaching. There is, however, more to his intransigence than arrogance: Chester, a Briton, had apparently "gone native" and become "far more 'Canadian' than the Canadians." This was probably not so much a question of nationalism *per se* as a comment on the desire of the Canadians to exert local control over the HBC, despite their provincial position

as Winnipeg-focused businessmen. Cooper asked Thomas for help and advice in dealing with what he called "the malicious campaign of Chester against the Board."<sup>20</sup>

This tension was never simply a personal matter between Cooper and Chester. The Governor's diary indicates discussions on the subject of Chester with his colleagues on the Board, who he claimed generally agreed with him. Further, a letter from London Board member Sir Edward Peacock to Canadian Committee member James Richardson, dated 9 January 1935, expressed great concern over Chester's assertions of independence but hastened to add:

As a Canadian, I am well aware of the unhappy history of the attempts of English boards to manage a number of important companies in Canada, the Grand Trunk Railway being, perhaps, the outstanding example. I am not likely therefore, to err on the side of trying to keep in the hands of the Hudson's Bay Board more power than is necessary.<sup>21</sup>





HBCA, 1987/363-N-6/1.

**Ian Patrick Robert Napier** (1895–1977), a member of the London HBC Board.

Peacock is an interesting figure who helps illustrate the multinational or at least trans-Atlantic character of the business elite to which Cooper belonged. Peacock was indeed a Canadian, from a middle-class background who, like Cooper, had used his managerial skills to rise to the heights of British society. He, too, became a director of the Bank of England and eventually oversaw the finances of the Royal Family. It was for this service that he was knighted in 1934.<sup>22</sup> Peacock's letter states that Cooper had granted the Canadian Committee expanded powers, but goes on to agree with the Governor that:

...the ultimate responsibility rested with the Board. When Mr. Chester was over here two years ago he expressed views as to his relationship to the Board which indicated that he was not prepared to accept the situation and felt that the Board really had no right to dictate policy or question his actions, that being the sole prerogative of the Canadian Committee. I was surprised and disappointed at the crudeness of his attitude on this subject and was glad to learn that after a talk with the Governor he had modified the attitude he had taken up over some matter then under discussion. It has been clear, however, that he has not really changed his mind.<sup>23</sup>

It is interesting to remember that, in Chester's account of the failed merger, Peacock would go on to side with him against Governor Cooper.

A letter from London Board member Ian Napier to Cooper, dated 7 January 1935, expressed concerns similar to Peacock's. The letter was self-consciously marked "Strictly Private." Napier conceded that the Canadian Committee was exercising "powers that were granted to them in October 1930," but argued that since Cooper and the other members of the British Board were the ones who were responsible to Company's shareholders they should have the upper hand. He told Cooper that

...your suggestion that the Head Office be moved to say Toronto, is, I think, a good one as it should enable the Company to have a more intelligent and businesslike Canadian Committee, especially as there are many more business people to draw from in Eastern Canada than in Winnipeg.

Napier went on to encourage Cooper in putting the Canadian Committee in its place, since in his opinion its attitude was "unbearable." He thought it unlikely that Allan and his Committee would resign, but even if this were to happen, he asked suggestively, "would this be so serious a matter as it at first seems?"<sup>24</sup>

This supports Peter Newman's claim that Cooper had already been thinking about a shift to Toronto.<sup>25</sup> What is particularly interesting is that this may have been intended in part to get rid of the members of the current Canadian Committee, and that the Governor had the support of at least some of the Board for this line of thought. At the end of Napier's letter, however, immediately after his remark about mass resignation, he writes: "I would not like to see Chester go at this juncture, as he is a very capable man and I think that he could be brought to his senses." Despite their discomfort with his assertions of autonomy, the members of the London Board do seem to have admired Chester's ability to get results.

It should also be noted that Chester was not alone in pushing for Canadian autonomy, but that he worked in tandem with Canadian Committee chair George Allan. On 2 March 1934, Cooper wrote a letter to Allan to complain that the salary of the General Manager (Chester) and others was reduced without the London Board being consulted. One would think that the Governor would approve of lower salaries (he himself had offered to take a pay cut in 1931) but the real issue was Allan's disturbance of the status quo.<sup>26</sup> The members of the Board, he insisted, "know of nothing that has transpired to the detriment of the Company as a result of the existing arrangements and they strongly deprecate any attempt to strain the interpretation of these arrangements." He specifically reminded Allan of his personal record: "They [the Board] see no reason why the mutual understanding and friendly co-operation that you have helped so much to build up should not continue to develop to the great advantage of the Company and of all

concerned.” Almost two months later the same dispute was still going on, with Cooper reiterating: “One authority only can control finance, and that must be the London Board.”<sup>27</sup>

Another example comes from May 1936, when Cooper wrote about a meeting between George Allan and Sir Alexander Murray, his Deputy Governor:

...Murray had a dust-up with Allan, who tried to say that the Committee could override the Board. Murray broke off negotiations and insisted on the matter being put before the full Board, when Allan climbed down and paid magnificent lip service.<sup>28</sup>

This seems to have been a tactic used regularly by the Canadians: to push for more control, and if they were rebuked, to back down; but only for the time being. London Board member Peacock, of course, had previously alluded to similar behaviour on the part of Chester. Besides this bluffing, the Canadians seem to have used purposeful incompetence, deliberate misunderstandings, and inaction to frustrate their British supervisors. On a Canadian visit in 1937, Cooper wrote in his diary about a *ten-hour* discussion with Allan that was meant to put him in his place but seemed to lead nowhere. Cooper complained, “It is difficult to judge whether he has his tongue in cheek or is failing to grasp the situation.” On that same visit, he grumbled of Allan, “It is terrible how long he takes to deal with the simplest thing.”<sup>29</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the Simpson’s affair in 1936 there were more of these complaints: “A talk with Allan in the afternoon, when we exchanged views frankly, and he was completely reasonable. But, Peacock put it afterwards he was speaking without his ‘master.’”<sup>30</sup> The

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**[T]he Canadians seem to have used purposeful incompetence, deliberate misunderstandings, and inaction to frustrate their British supervisors. On a Canadian visit in 1937, HBC Governor Cooper wrote in his diary about a ten-hour discussion with [Canadian Chairman] Allan that was meant to put him in his place but seemed to lead nowhere.**

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next day Cooper attempted to remonstrate with this master: “A long talk with Chester. If the English language means anything, he was entirely reasonable and satisfactory, but I fancy it was all eyewash.”<sup>31</sup>

The principle that “it is easier to apologize than to ask permission” also guided the Canadians. They would at times go ahead and do what they wanted to, on their own, choosing to deal with London’s reaction after the fact, with the defence that they had sincerely thought they were only exercising the responsibilities given them in 1930. This seems to have been what happened when the Canadian

Committee discontinued the Joint Buying Office the HBC shared with Simpson’s. Exasperated, Cooper wrote to Allan on 10 August 1936 and informed him that the Board felt it was “regrettable” that no one on the Canadian Committee had bothered to “give the Board an outline of what was evidently in mind, nor write to us in sufficient time to advise us of your proposals.” Cooper insisted that “no further action” be taken by the Canadian Committee until David Gibson of Simpson’s went to London. This way the London Board could exert its authority and deal with Simpson’s directly.<sup>32</sup>

Gibson’s visit to London does indeed seem to have been the catalyst for talk of a merger. The most direct statement on this topic in Cooper’s diary states, “Discussions going on between ourselves and Robert Simpson & Co. for a possible amalgamation between us in Canada. I have been on the telephone to Toronto a couple of times.” This brief note was found between entries marked 10 December and 14 December. The timing makes little sense. Either Cooper was still pulling strings behind the Canadian Committee’s back, or, what is more likely, this is a fragment that was included in the wrong place when Cooper’s diary was being typed out. On the other hand, Chester’s version of the story makes it seem as though the matter was essentially decided after the 11 November meeting in which he spoke out, but this was probably just self-congratulation on his part. In fact, Cooper does not seem to have been particularly fazed by Chester’s impassioned speech, writing in his diary simply “A meeting with Murray, Peacock, Allan, Chester and Stacpole. Chester examined and criticized the Simpson organization in detail for us.”<sup>33</sup> The diary indicates that meetings with Chester, Allan and Simpson’s president Charles Burton went on for weeks afterwards. Furthermore, his meeting with Allan on 10 November seems to have made more of an impression. After the meeting of the full Board, Allan

...met [Board members] Murray, Peacock, and myself, and wholeheartedly condemned Simpson’s and our proposals. It was very evident that he had coached himself and been coached, but he overdid it and Murray firmly pointed out to him that it would have been better for him to have expressed his opinion on the matter, but to have reserved judgment until he had time to study the situation and proposals.<sup>34</sup>

And on 12 November Cooper wrote, “Went over the ground for our meetings with Burton. Allan very sticky. Chester silent. Peacock was admirable.”<sup>35</sup>

For Cooper and Burton the end of the idea seems to have come on 24 November 1936. According to his diary, when the two met, Cooper told Burton that:

...we had been studying his financial structure and policies, and that I had discussed these with my colleagues. We felt that in view of the difference

## Something Dead Under the House

between their and our financial structure and their policies with regard to finance we could not see any possibility of linking the two concerns together. Moreover the merchandising and personnel policies adopted by himself and Chester were so widely divergent, that I saw little prospect of amicable working, even if we succeeded in getting the two concerns together financially. He was naturally disappointed, but took a sensible and calm view of the situation. He immediately said that he would take steps at once to remove his Buying Office from ours.<sup>36</sup>

In Chester's version of events, when the deal fell apart President Burton was furious with Cooper and willing to "spill the beans" (a favourite phrase) to the Canadians.<sup>37</sup> In Cooper's story, though, Burton was angry with Chester:

...he broke out in a regular tirade against Chester and Martin [Chester's manager of retail operations],

said he found them both impossible people to deal with, and described in detail how, on their return from London, they had dodged him and his associates and how Simpson's had to send Colebrook to Winnipeg and the very unpleasant way in which he had been received there. He wound up by saying that the only way to work the Buying Office was with confidence and goodwill, and stated with emphasis: "We have no confidence, and Chester and Martin have no goodwill." It was quite evident from our talk that he had in mind that in the amalgamation he would eliminate Chester and Martin completely.<sup>38</sup>

Both Chester and Cooper, respectively seem to have regarded Burton as being "on their side," when perhaps he wanted to declare a pox on both their houses.<sup>39</sup> Further, contradicting his later memory that 11 November was the pivotal date, on 24 November Chester sent a telegram to his subordinate Francis Martin in Winnipeg: "Very satisfactory



HBCA, 1987/363-W-315/101.

**The Winnipeg store.** The neighbourhood was still partially residential when this aerial photo of the five-year-old Hudson's Bay Company store along Portage Avenue was published in the September 1931 issue of *The Beaver* magazine.

outcome for Buying Offices and other party decided to make own arrangements and expect discuss with them tomorrow after which will cable again."<sup>40</sup>

Cooper's decision to give up on the Simpson's amalgamation seems to have been influenced as much by other factors as by Allan and Chester's opposition. In his diary he wrote of negotiating with President Burton and J. H. Gundy (the founder of Wood Gundy stockbrokers) who, as one of Simpson's main shareholders, served as an outside director.<sup>41</sup> Cooper was not impressed: "Gundy puts cold shivers down my back, and I feel thoroughly anxious regarding his bona fides. He started bluffing heavily about calling off the negotiations, etc..."<sup>42</sup> On the same day, he talked with Peacock who had sent someone to consult Sir Joseph Flavelle. Flavelle, until recently a major stockholder in Simpson's, was "giving ... very emphatic warnings" against "the Simpson Amalgamation."<sup>43</sup> He was a Canadian millionaire who, like Edward Peacock, had come from a modest background, put his business talents to work for the Empire, and received a knighthood for it. The fact that he was counselling Cooper indicates that questions of class and wealth were far more important than notions of British or Canadian nationality.<sup>44</sup>

After the plan was given up, both the London Board and the Canadians seem to have wanted to downplay it for the record. The Board minutes for 24 November (a meeting at which Allan and Cooper were present) referred to "recent discussions" among Cooper, Murray, Peacock, Allan, Burton and Gundy:

...as to the possibility of arranging some closer association in respect of the operations of the Retail Stores of the two companies, in connection with which question Mr. Allan had been invited to come to London so that the Board might have the benefit of his advice and guidance. During the discussions, however, it had not been found possible to arrive at any comparable basis of the respective financial structure, personnel and operating policies...<sup>45</sup>

Burton and Cooper thus agreed that there was no point in pursuing the question further.

It is worth noting that Chester's role in the discussions is not mentioned at this point, and it is possible that the British did not want to give him too much satisfaction, since at the end of the affair he did in fact win a number of concessions. Though he was originally chastised for ending the Joint Buying Office without consulting London, "future arrangements for HBC purchases of merchandise" was handed over to him, "subject to report to the Canadian Committee and the Board."<sup>46</sup> The entry ended with the Governor and Board genteelly expressing "their warm appreciation and thanks" to Allan and Chester for having come all the way to London in order to offer "the benefit of their advice."<sup>47</sup>

The Canadian Committee held a special meeting on 23 December to hear from Allan and Chester when they

returned. The minutes read, simply, "The Chairman made a verbal report to the Committee upon his recent visit to London."<sup>48</sup> This diplomatic omission is unsurprising, if Chester's memories of the outrage expressed at that meeting were even partially true. Copies of these minutes were, after all, sent to London. The Canadian side did, however, leave a more official record in the minutes of the January 1937 Store Managers' Conference that was held in Calgary. Allan gave the gathered managers an official and likely sanitized version of events, beginning, "I feel I must make some reference to the many wild and unfounded rumours that have been circulating about our Stores and Simpson's." After explaining the Committee's desire to split up the Joint Buying Office that had been shared with Simpson's, he stated that the Governor and London Board

...have always valued very highly this association with Simpson's, and before this was done they very naturally wished to see if it could be sustained, even if it meant a closer tie-up than had heretofore prevailed. The Governor called me and our General Manager to London to discuss the matter, and it was very soon found that no closer association or tie-up was possible, so plans were completed for the splitting up of the Buying Offices. There is still the greatest friendliness and co-operation between Simpson's and ourselves. I and my associates on the Canadian Committee value this and wish it to be sustained, but that is all there is to it, and I can say without hesitation that our recent discussions on any form of closer association will never be renewed.<sup>49</sup>

This reassuring version contains the basic contours of the story but in considerably more diplomatic form than Chester's later telling. It is worthwhile noting the fact the Canadian Committee ordered two copies of these Minutes be sent to the London Board, and explicitly drew their attention to the paragraphs quoted above.<sup>50</sup>

Cooper's assistant, F. A. Stacpole's first letter to Chester after he returned to Canada is dated 28 December 1936. In it he made no direct reference to the Simpson's deal or any conflict between Cooper and Chester. In passing he mentioned a contemporary event, King Edward VIII's abdication in order to marry the American divorcée Wallis Simpson. In this connection he wrote: "In fact I should imagine the Simpson matter covered a good deal of deeper underlying factors."<sup>51</sup> This may have been nothing more than a straightforward reference to the King's intended bride. Whether or not Stacpole intended a double meaning, Chester chose to create one. In his response, in a letter dated 4 February 1937, he indulged in a little gloating:

As you probably heard, there are many stories circulating round Canada, some of which are about why the HBC is like the Duke of Windsor, and the name of Simpson appears in the answer.... We have

tried hard to scotch the rumours throughout our own organisation – unfortunately, a little too much of the truth did get about – but on the whole I think it can be said that all’s well that ends well, and the general consensus of opinion is not too wide of the mark in its reflections.<sup>52</sup>

Though Chester’s account remembers F. A. Stacpole as a confidant, in 1942 the latter would write an in-house historical analysis of the administrative relationship between Winnipeg and London that was critical of both Chester and Allan. He argued that many of the HBC’s problems had stemmed from an ill-defined allocation of authority between the Board and Committee which had become particularly problematic after 1930. He also suggested that the Committee had frequently over-reached itself and yet, having won authority, had not used it effectively to create a centralized administration within Canada. Therefore, he recommended moving the Canadian headquarters to a larger and more dynamic city, such as Vancouver, which could supply more open-minded and cosmopolitan businessmen to serve on the Committee.

Stacpole’s candid treatment of the Simpson’s deal is instructive. He writes that the Canadian Committee may have felt that they had “scored rather a victory over the Board” in 1936. This was because “they brought about the breaking off of the discussions with the Simpson Company on the subject of a possible amalgamation,” a view which gives more credit to the Canadians’ role than Cooper does. Stacpole admits that the Committee may have been correct in opposing the plan as unworkable and that the Board showed undue haste in rushing “this particular fence.” However, he criticizes the Canadians for defensively opposing all amalgamations on principle and cautions that some sort of merger may very well prove necessary in the future.<sup>53</sup>

The wide range of sources examined here show that the Simpson’s deal was not simply a duel between Philip Chester and Patrick Cooper, though their personalities were definitely contributory. It was an episode in an ongoing struggle for authority within the company, informed and enflamed by the distance between London and Winnipeg, and by differences in class and national outlook (though as we have seen the differences between British and Canadian identities were not so clearly defined at this time). The Canadian Committee, and particularly its chair, George Allan, seem to have believed that because they had a better grasp of local realities than did the London Board and that the more leeway the Committee had to act, the better off the Company would be. They resisted any change, including mergers, which they believed would entail shifting the Company’s focus and authority away from their hometown, Winnipeg.<sup>54</sup> The Board, meanwhile, viewed the Committee as parochial and frequently saw its demands after 1930 as unreasonable. Cooper’s assistant, F. A. Stacpole, dismissively summarized the Canadian position as ‘Unless we are given a blank cheque to do what

we want to do we can’t (or perhaps rather won’t try to) do anything.’<sup>55</sup>

Governor Cooper may have seen amalgamation as a way of wresting back authority that had been unwisely given to the Committee in 1930, but first and foremost the Simpson’s deal had to make economic and structural sense. He and the Board ultimately backed away from the idea as being too unwieldy and drastic. His diary indicates that he did not wholly trust Simpson’s, that he received significant warnings against the merger, and that the differences in company structure were a real barrier. The welfare of the

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**[Stacpole] argued that many of the HBC’s problems had stemmed from an ill-defined allocation of authority between the Board and Committee which had become particularly problematic after 1930.**

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Company had to come first, and the temperamental Chester was, ultimately seen as doing more good than harm. In fact, in 1946 Chester was given a seat on the English Board, and became “Managing Director” for Canada.<sup>56</sup> Despite his lofty position as a very well-connected “gentlemanly capitalist,” Cooper had to contend with and give ground to assertive subordinates. Nor was he untouchable; Governor Cooper was ultimately forced to resign in 1952, because it was discovered that he was spending Company funds inappropriately on himself.<sup>57</sup> In the long run, an amalgamation did take place: the Simpson’s chain was bought by the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1978. By that point, the Company was under Canadian control. ☞

### Notes

1. Hudson’s Bay Company Archives (hereafter, HBCA), Stacpole, F. A. *Aide-Memoire: the Administrative System and Structure of the Hudson’s Bay Company*, Sec. B, Pt. 56.
2. Peter C. Newman. *Merchant Princes*. Toronto: Viking, 1991, p. 348.
3. Newman, pp. 159-161.
4. HBCA, Stacpole, *Aide-Memoire*, Sec. A, Pt. 42.
5. David Monod. *Store Wars: Shopkeepers and the Culture of Mass Marketing, 1890–1939*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996, 217. See also Newman, pp. 279-306.
6. Newman, p. 258.
7. HBCA, quoted in Stacpole, *Aide Memoire*, Sec. B, Pt. 53.
8. *Ibid.*, Sec. B., Pt. 64; Sec. B. Pt. 53.
9. HBCA, Philip A. Chester, “Notes on a biography of G. W. Allan”.
10. All quotations in this paragraph: *Ibid.*
11. Alfred D. Chandler, Jr. *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977, pp. 490-500.
12. Newman, pp. 283-285.
13. Mark Brayshay, Mark Cleary, and John Selwood. “Power geometries: social networks and the 1930s multinational corporate elite.” *Geoforum* 37 (2006), p. 989.

14. HBCA, Cooper, "London Diary," [microfilm].
15. Newman, pp. 285-288.
16. HBCA, Vivian Smith and Frederick Richmond, London, England, to George Allan, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 13 March 1931.
17. *Ibid.*
18. HBCA, Philip Chester, Winnipeg, Manitoba to George Allan, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 29 March 1931.
19. HBCA, Cooper, "London Diary," 17 January 1935 [microfilm].
20. HBCA, Cooper, "London Diary," 15 January 1935 [microfilm].
21. HBCA, [Edward Peacock], to James Richardson, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 9 January 1935. This draft letter is unsigned, but as the author was on the London Board, identifies himself several times as a Canadian, and refers to Queen's University, it is safe to assume it was Peacock, a Queen's alumnus and native of Ontario.
22. McInnis, Marvin. "Sir Edward Robert Peacock." Queen's University Economics Department [http://qed.econ.queensu.ca/funds/peacock.php, viewed 28 March 2008]
23. *Ibid.*
24. HBCA, all quotations in this paragraph: Ian Napier, London, England, to Patrick Ashley Cooper, London, England, 7 January 1935.
25. Newman, p. 265. He writes: "In the mid-1930s the British Governor hinted that a move to Toronto might be desirable, to take better advantage of the country's future opportunities." Unfortunately he offers no reference to back up this statement. He goes on to indicate that there was an outcry in Winnipeg's business community over this hint, which would indicate its public or semi-public nature.
26. Newman, p. 284.
27. HBCA, Patrick Ashley Cooper, London, England, to George W. Allan, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 24 April 1934.
28. HBCA, Patrick Ashley Cooper, "London Diary, dictated aboard the *Beringia*," May 1936, [microfilm].
29. HBCA, all quotations in this paragraph: Cooper, "London Diary," 18 March 1937, [microfilm].
30. HBCA, Cooper, "London Diary," 26 November 1936 [microfilm].
31. *Ibid.*, 27 November 1936.
32. HBCA, Patrick Ashley Cooper, London England, to George W. Allan, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 10 August 1936. Included in London Minute Book 1934-1937 volume, 6 October, p. 195.
33. HBCA, Cooper, "London Diary," 11 November 1936 [microfilm].
34. *Ibid.*, 10 November 1936.
35. *Ibid.*, 12 November 1936.
36. *Ibid.*, 24 November 1936.
37. HBCA, Chester, "Notes on a biography of G. W. Allan."
38. *Ibid.*
39. Interestingly, Chester claimed in his notes that Charles Burton's autobiography originally contained a whole chapter on "these events with HBC" which was cut out in response to Chester's urging. Whether or not this is true, Burton's biography, *A Sense of Urgency*, does not contain any direct mention of the failed merger. HBCA, Chester, "Notes on a biography of G. W. Allan." and Charles L. Burton, *A Sense of Urgency: Memoirs of a Canadian Merchant*. Toronto: Clarke Irwin Company, 1952.
40. HBCA, Philip A. Chester, London, England, to Francis F. Martin, Jr., Winnipeg, Manitoba.
41. Burton, pp. 216-7, 231, 340.
42. HBCA, Cooper, "London Diary," 13 November 1936 [microfilm].
43. *Ibid.*
44. Bliss, Michael. *A Canadian Millionaire: The Life and Business Times of Sir Joseph Flavelle, Bart., 1858-1939*. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1978.
45. HBCA, Governor and Board, Hudson's Bay Company, Minutes, 24 November 1936.
46. HBCA, Governor and Board, Hudson's Bay Company, Minutes, 24 November 1936. The minutes also stated: "With regard to the London Joint Buying Office and arrangement for European purchases through that office, Mr. Burton had intimated that, in view of the situation which had developed on the 27/28<sup>th</sup> July, 1936, the Robert Simpson Company, Limited, Toronto, wished to terminate the Joint Agreement, and it had been arranged that the necessary steps in this connection should be discussed and settled by the General Manager for Canada and the representatives of the Robert Simpson Company, Limited, Toronto."
47. *Ibid.*
48. HBCA, Canadian Committee, Hudson's Bay Company, Minutes, 23 December 1936.
49. HBCA, Minutes of Store Managers' Conference, held at Calgary, January 1937.
50. HBCA, Minutes of the Canadian Committee Meeting, held 21 January 1937.
51. HBCA, F. A. Stacpole, London, England, to Philip Chester, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 28 December 1937.
52. HBCA, Philip A. Chester, Winnipeg, Manitoba, to F. A. Stacpole, London, England, 4 February 1937.
53. HBCA, F. A. Stacpole, *Aide-Memoire*, Sec. C, Part 10. David Monod's book *Store Wars* cites this section of Stacpole's *Aide-Memoire* as a footnote to its brief mention of the Simpson's deal, which asserts that "the London shareholders" became so desperate during the Depression that "in 1936 they offered to sell the entire chain to Simpson's. Apparently, C. L. Burton did not feel that his store could afford the expansion." See Monod, p. 217. I have been unable to find a reference to Burton in Stacpole's work.
54. Newman, pp. 264-266.
55. HBCA, F. A. Stacpole, *Aide-Memoire*, Sec. C, Part. 9.
56. Newman, p. 441.
57. Newman, p. 307.

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# Welcoming Immigrants at the Gateway to Canada's West: Immigration Halls in Winnipeg, 1872–1975

by Robert Vineberg  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

**I**n 1869 the new Dominion of Canada arranged the purchase of Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company and the deal was concluded in early 1870. From that time until the coming of the Great Depression in 1930, a principal preoccupation of the Canadian government was to populate the Prairies. The small town of Winnipeg had been established at a key water transportation point—the forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers. Until the arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) in 1881, the main route to the West was via the United States, and then down the Red River to Winnipeg. Once the railway started pushing west from Winnipeg, the growing city became the western headquarters for Canadian immigration activities and for over sixty years the distribution point for all immigrants seeking to settle in the West. All were required to de-train in Winnipeg and be processed through immigration offices located there. In order to manage this process, the immigration department had to provide accommodation for the immigrants. This article tells the story of the numerous immigration halls that were built and operated in Winnipeg during Canada's first century.



Library and Archives Canada, PA-122676.

**"The great unwashed"**. Photographer G. F. Ridsdale captured this view of people at the Winnipeg Immigration Hall, circa 1900.

## What were Immigration Halls?

The immigration hall was very much the tangible symbol of Canada's commitment to its immigrants in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The concept of truly providing for immigrants rather than just "getting them out of the way" was a key element in the government's thinking. Even before

Confederation, in order to provide basic comfort and care to arriving immigrants, and to protect them from the countless hustlers trying to part immigrants and their life savings, the government of Canada decided that immigration stations had to be provided, serving not only as offices for immigration agents but also as decent accommodation for immigrants. Such stations had been built at ports of arrival such as Quebec City and Montreal, but also at inland points, including Ottawa,

Kingston, Toronto and Hamilton. In 1872, the government of the new dominion authorized the construction of two more stations, one in London, Ontario, and the other in Winnipeg, the capital of one of the country's newest provinces.<sup>1</sup>

Originally called "immigration sheds" as in other countries, the more impressive term "immigration hall" was adopted later and came into common usage by the 1890s. Winnipeg, as the transportation gateway to the west, was the logical place for large immigration facilities to be placed.

In time, over fifty immigration halls would be built in almost every Prairie city and town of any significance. All immigrants to the west, however, with the exception of Americans moving north from the Plains states, would pass through Winnipeg and be directed onward after a

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Archives of Manitoba, Elswood Bole 6, N13803.

Immigrant shed at the Forks, Winnipeg, built in 1872 and demolished in 1884.

short stay, usually of about four or five days, at a local immigration hall. During this time, homesteaders would be counselled by Dominion Lands agents on the availability of land, while artisans were provided with labour market information from communities across the West. Once a destination was determined, arrangements for onward train

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travel were made to another community with a smaller immigration hall and, after another stay at government expense; immigrants would travel by horse or wagon to their final destinations.

### **The Immigration Sheds at the Forks**

As noted above, before the arrival of the CPR on the Prairies immigrants to Western Canada travelled by train to St. Paul, Minnesota and were then transferred to steamers that travelled down the Red River to Winnipeg, arriving at the levée at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine rivers. The new immigration agent at Winnipeg, Gilbert McMicken, reported at the end of 1871 that:

In view of the expected immigration this year, and which will most probably set in early, I would recommend that a building be erected in the neighbourhood of Fort Garry for the reception of the families of settlers on their arrival; at present there is no accommodation or shelter of any kind that they can procure.

The building might be in length 150 feet and in width 30 feet. This divided into thirty compartments

would afford temporary accommodation for at least thirty families at a time. There should be ten or more cooking stoves provided and placed in temporary sheds contiguous to the building.<sup>2</sup>

McMicken did not pick these dimensions out of his head. His proposals were based upon similar designs previously built in eastern locations. In 1872, the Canadian government did indeed build an immigration shed at The Forks, close to the levée at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine rivers. In his report to the Minister of Agriculture for 1872, McMicken wrote:

The Immigrant Building which you authorised to be erected here will be found of great utility, and be a great boon to immigrants on their arrival. There are 30 (thirty) apartments in the main building, with two commodious cooking-houses contiguous to it, one on the east side, the other on the west, with comfortable and necessary conveniences [latrines] attached. The buildings are situated just at the confluence of the two rivers—Red River and Assiniboine—where, of course, water is convenient, and the situation in every way desirable.<sup>3</sup>

A family would be crowded into each compartment, measuring about ten feet by twelve feet. Depending on the size of the family, the immigrant shed might accommodate up to 200 to 250 people. The cookhouses were in separate buildings to reduce the risk of fire. In 1873, a second immigrant shed, likely about the same size, was added, giving the immigrant sheds at The Forks a capacity of up to 500 people<sup>4</sup>. They were located close to the present site of the Manitoba Children's Museum.

Immigrants could stay in the sheds for free for at least seven days and longer if there was space. In the summers, with the sheds often filled to overflowing, the army barracks at Fort Osborne, located at Broadway and Osborne



streets, were called into service and sometimes tents had to be set up as well. The sheds at The Forks provided very basic accommodation. They were intended for summer use only and “[b]uilt without foundations or weeping tiles, the floors frequently flooded and there was no provision for hot water.” The unheated bath houses were useless in winter. When the Pembina Branch Railway (later to become part of the CPR in 1881) linked St. Boniface to the United States–Canada border at Emerson, and to the Minneapolis and St. Paul Railway in 1878, the immigration sheds at the Forks, just across the river from the station, began to serve those arriving by rail. The sheds continued in use until they were demolished in 1884.<sup>5</sup>

William Hespeler succeeded McMicken as Immigration Agent at Winnipeg in August 1873.<sup>6</sup> The 1876–1877 *Manitoba Directory* (later known as the *Henderson Manitoba Directory*) listed William Hespeler as immigration agent in Winnipeg with his office at the “immigration shed on the Levée [at The Forks].” However, the 1880 *Henderson’s Directory* listed Hespeler as having his offices at the corner of Broadway and Main Street.<sup>7</sup> Apparently, the immigration officers sought better space than could be offered in the sheds by moving into the Dominion office buildings on Main Street.

### Immigration Halls in the CPR Station Area

After the arrival of the CPR mainline to Winnipeg in 1881, immigrants began arriving in the city by train in greater and greater numbers. A new immigration hall had to be built near the new CPR station at Main Street, beside the mainline which ran parallel to and just south of Point Douglas Avenue, somewhat to the north of Fonseca Street (now Higgins Avenue).

The first hall in the general area of the CPR line, located on Dufferin Avenue between Salter and Aikins, was constructed in 1881 and served as both an immigration hall and an immigrant hospital. However, at the same

time a disaster struck the Winnipeg General Hospital. The bacteria from an epidemic could not be disinfected and the directors of the hospital decided that the only solution was a new hospital, so they made an emergency plea to the Dominion government to buy the new immigration building. The immigration service already realized that the building was too far from the new station and was more than willing to build another immigration hall closer to the station. So, on 20 December 1881, Cabinet agreed to sell the Dufferin Avenue facility to the Winnipeg General Hospital for \$5,000.<sup>8</sup> Subsequently, tenders for another new immigration hall were issued almost immediately and on 4 January 1882 Cabinet authorized the construction of this hall and another in Brandon.<sup>9</sup>

The 1882 *Henderson Directory* noted that the existing “immigration sheds” were near the CPR depot.<sup>10</sup> The new immigration hall was built by the CPR tracks about 5 blocks west of the CPR station.<sup>11</sup> This immigration hall proved to be still too far from the station for immigrants laden with baggage to get there easily; so when it burned down in the spring of 1887 the government sought a new location closer to the station. Three lots on the west side of Maple Street, north of Fonseca Street, just to the east of the CPR station were identified and Cabinet approved their purchase on 14 November 1887.<sup>12</sup>

The new Dominion Government Immigration Hall was located at 177 Higgins Avenue and opened in 1890. Originally, Higgins was called Fonseca Street and for some years the names seemed to be used interchangeably. While this hall was under construction, temporary facilities in a two-storey brick building were procured at the corner of King Street and the CPR tracks, just one block west of the station.<sup>13</sup> Shortly after the new building opened, it had to be closed for sanitary reasons. On 11 August 1892, following epidemics of scarlet fever, diphtheria and measles that left thirteen dead in a period of forty days, all immigrants



Winnipeg Immigration Hall.

Library and Archives Canada, PA-046609.

were evacuated from the building at 177 Higgins Street. Luckily, the building on King Street that had been rented as a temporary hall was still available and was leased again for several months while the new hall was fumigated and renovated.<sup>14</sup>

The volume of immigrants increased and, by the time the new hall reopened, it was realized that two halls were required and the King Street hall was retained for some time. By January 1899, W. F. McCreary, the Commissioner of Immigration in Winnipeg was requesting permission to obtain a third building for up to three months.<sup>15</sup>

### The Winnipeg Immigrant Hospital

Another important part of the complex of immigration facilities was the Winnipeg Immigrant Hospital. Though not considered an immigration hall, it provided accommodation and care to the most vulnerable of immigrants—the sick. As early as January 1897, the Minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton, suggested that an isolation facility in Winnipeg would help control outbreaks of infectious diseases among immigrants.<sup>16</sup> After several years of discussion, tenders were finally issued and a contractor was approved by Cabinet on 20 May 1902.<sup>17</sup> The Immigrant Hospital was built on Maple Street, just behind the Immigration Hall and opened in 1903. It was a three-storey structure, measuring about 70 feet by 30 feet. Given the shortage of immigrant accommodation, the hospital building was designated “Immigration Building 2” and was used as an additional immigration hall, accommodating some sixty people until a new immigration hall opened in 1906, at which time it commenced operations as a hospital although it continued to take overflow from the regular immigration halls when required.<sup>18</sup>

Unlike the immigrant hospitals at the ports of Québec, Halifax and Saint John that were mainly used to detain persons who were to be deported on medical grounds, the Winnipeg facility was to provide free medical care to immigrants who fell ill on the journey inland to the Manitoba capital. In 1907, in a full page feature entitled “How Settlers are treated in Winnipeg”, the *Manitoba Free Press* described the role of the hospital as “but one of

the many agencies of the immigration department—that most paternal of organizations—which strives to help, in every way, and at every stage, the man, woman or child coming out under its auspices.”<sup>19</sup> The Immigrant Hospital

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**Unlike the immigrant hospitals at the ports of Québec, Halifax and Saint John ... the Winnipeg facility was to provide free medical care to immigrants who fell ill on the journey inland to the Manitoba capital.**

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continued to operate until the middle of the First World War, at which time sick immigrants were referred to city hospitals.<sup>20</sup>

### Building the Immigration Complex

The growth of Winnipeg throughout the 1890s and into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was truly astonishing. So was the increase in railway traffic and the CPR decided to build a massive new railway station to demonstrate the importance, both of the city and the CPR. The new station, located to the west of the old station on Higgins Avenue, would run as far as Maple Street, taking in the lots that the government had bought in 1887 for its immigration hall.<sup>21</sup> This immigration hall also proved inadequate to deal with the increasing numbers of immigrants. So, the government planned construction of a new Dominion Immigration Hall while retaining the hall built on Higgins Avenue as well. The original plan was to purchase the property for the new immigration complex just across the street on the south side of Higgins Avenue. The new complex was to consist of immigration offices, a new immigration hall, as well as the old hall and hospital that would be moved from their original sites. In any event, this created an opportunity to build new and better facilities. The Deputy Minister of the Department of the Interior, James A. Smart, wrote to the Minister, Clifford Sifton, “that steps should be taken to put up a more prepossessing building,” adding that “I really know of nothing that would so impress new arrivals, especially from the old Country, as having good comfortable accommodation provided for them.”<sup>22</sup> The location finally chosen was along the CPR tracks both for convenience and because the CPR was willing to do a land swap.

However, as the CPR would be constructing their new station before the new immigration hall would be ready, the Commissioner of Immigration in Winnipeg had to take some extraordinary measures to provide for his staff and incoming immigrants. In his report for 1903–1904, the Commissioner, J. Obediah Smith, wrote:

The large and extensive improvements to the terminal facilities of the Canadian Pacific Railway



Library and Archives Canada, PA-046607.

The Immigrant Hospital at Winnipeg, opened in 1903.

in Winnipeg, necessitating the erection of a new station, offices and other buildings, led to an amicable arrangement between the government and the railway company, whereby the land at the corner of Higgins Avenue and Maple Street, in the said city, on which the immigration buildings were situated, was exchanged for other land immediately contiguous to the proposed new station buildings, forming a more convenient arrangement for all concerned, and furnishing additional land for a new and large immigration building, together with a spur track and platform in front of the same sufficiently large to care for ten coaches of immigrants at once. Unfortunately, the arrangements were in progress at such time as to make it extremely difficult for our officers to afford reasonable accommodation for newcomers during the spring of 1904. The buildings themselves had to be moved from the old site to the new one.... During the season, the department rented the old St. Lawrence Hotel [at Main on the north side of Higgins] and a vacant warehouse, both near the railway station. In addition, a temporary building 40 feet by 100 feet was erected, and a large tent, 30 by 90, floored and framed, also provided as convenient to the main station building as possible, in order to accommodate the large numbers requiring temporary shelter. It is learned with much gratification that the contract is about to be let for a new and large immigration building, which will obviate the necessity for renting totally unsuitable buildings, in addition to the public buildings which have already been erected.<sup>23</sup>

The surveyor's plan for the site showed the layout of the immigration complex with the new immigration hall immediately to the east of the CPR station and the old hall and the Immigrant Hospital relocated to new sites to the east of the new hall.<sup>24</sup>

The relocation of the old buildings was a very complex operation and fraught with delays and difficulty. Both the old immigration hall and the Immigrant Hospital, as well as the caretaker's cottage and a baggage hall, were to be moved. The immigration hall was a large building, three storeys tall and measuring 130 feet by 31 feet, and the Immigrant Hospital, also a three-storey building, measured about 70 feet by 30 feet. To move them, even the two hundred yards to their new locations, east of the site of the new building, would have been quite a feat. The CPR promised to build new foundations for the buildings and move them all by February 1904, but the contractor they hired to do the work fell so far behind that he was dismissed and CPR crews moved the buildings themselves.<sup>25</sup> The work was only completed in April, after the spring flood of immigrants resumed. The move of such large buildings was big news and the *Manitoba Free Press* reported on their progress, as it took several weeks for each of the buildings



Archives of Manitoba, Architectural Survey-Winnipeg-Maple St/1 28/69 N21668.

**Dominion Immigration Building** at 83 Maple Street, with the CPR tracks in the foreground, 1970.

to be relocated.<sup>26</sup> In addition, the old temporary hall on King Street at the CPR tracks was returned to service. The St. Lawrence Hotel was also in the way of the new CPR terminal so by April 1904 it was no longer available as an immigration hall.<sup>27</sup> North of the tracks, at the southwest corner of Sutherland and Argyle, as the Commissioner reported, the Department of the Interior rented a lot and erected a temporary hall and a large tent.<sup>28</sup> In all, during the summer of 1904, there were five immigration halls in operation in Winnipeg.<sup>29</sup>

Once the old buildings were in place, construction of the new hall could begin. The contract was let in the late summer of 1904 with an unrealistic completion date of 31 December 1904. It was not until April 1906 that the ground floor offices were occupied by Canada Immigration and only later in the summer were the floors above opened for immigrants.<sup>30</sup>

### **The New Immigration Hall No. 1 (Dominion Immigration Building)**

The new CPR station had opened in 1904 and the huge new immigration hall, being constructed immediately to the east of the station, was designed to complement the architecture of the station. Both were to be clad with brick and trimmed with stone. In 1904, Cabinet approved a tender for \$147,000 for the construction of the building, a huge sum for the time—indicative of how big the building was to be.<sup>31</sup> It was four storeys tall with a mezzanine over about a third of the main floor, and measured approximately 200 feet by 60 feet.<sup>32</sup>

This building at 83 Maple Street was the flagship of the immigration halls across the country. The ground floor offices were opulent with 19-foot ceilings, arched windows and beautifully polished wood counters and desks. On the three upper floors, the building could comfortably house up to 500 immigrants at any given time. At the height of the immigration season, however, this number might easily be doubled.<sup>33</sup> Each of these floors had about 33 rooms for families and a dormitory for single men. The rooms were

small—those on the outside, with windows, were twelve feet square and those on the inside, with light coming only from the transom above the door, measured twelve by eight and one-half feet.<sup>34</sup> Each floor also offered large washrooms with baths, a communal kitchen, where immigrants could prepare their own food, and a dining hall. Laundry facilities and more washrooms were located in the basement.<sup>35</sup>

The immigration hall also contained the office of the Commissioner of Immigration for Western Canada. He was one of three commissioners, one located in Ottawa for eastern Canada, one in London, England for overseas operations, and one in Winnipeg. From here he ran the biggest inland immigration operation Canada has ever seen.

This building was now designated “Immigration Hall No. 1” and the old hall was designated “Immigration Hall No. 2.” The Hospital was known variously as the Immigrant Hospital or “Hall No. 3.” Hall No. 1 was reserved largely for English-speaking immigrants and “foreign” immigrants had to put up with the less desirable accommodation in Hall No. 2. In order to improve the older buildings, it was decided to veneer them with brick to make them more fireproof and also to make them blend in with the new building.<sup>36</sup> The new Commissioner, J. Bruce Walker, reported that in the 1907–1908 fiscal year, Halls 1 and 2 provided 76,393 days’ accommodation to immigrants.<sup>37</sup> Given that the immigration season lasted only about 200 days, from mid-April to the end of October, this meant that the halls were housing, on average, 382 people per day.

The new building and its location started to pose problems within a few years. In 1913, the CPR proposed to raise the tracks beside the building by six feet, a change that would place the main entrance to the hall, facing the tracks, below grade and totally useless.<sup>38</sup> In addition, in 1914 the City of Winnipeg’s public health authorities banned the use of interior rooms for accommodation and this rendered forty-eight of the rooms in Hall No.1 uninhabitable. The solution recommended by Commissioner Walker, was a new immigration hall to replace the two existing halls and the Immigrant Hospital.<sup>39</sup>

### What Might Have Been ... and What Was

After Ottawa approved the idea of a new hall and acquired property for it nearby, plans were drawn up for a new and even grander Immigration Hall in Winnipeg. It was to be located two blocks south of Immigration Hall No. 1 at the corner of Maple Street and McDonald Avenue. The building would have had over 100 rooms for immigrants as well as large new offices for the Commissioner of Immigration, away from the noise of the CPR mainline. It was never built. Instead, Immigration Hall No. 1 was extensively renovated a few years later.

Immigration Hall No. 1 served many purposes through its career. During the First World War, the two upper floors were converted into a Convalescent Hospital for injured and disabled war veterans and it also served as a receiving depot for returning soldiers.<sup>40</sup> The Convalescent Hospital was only removed in the summer of 1922.<sup>41</sup> Also,

in 1918, about one-third of the main floor, basement, and mezzanine was turned over to the Post Office for Postal Station “A”, which had grown too large for its space within the CPR station.<sup>42</sup> The new Department of Immigration and Colonization, created in 1917, was not able to get back full control of Immigration Hall No. 1 until 1924. It was then in need of major renovations to repair the damage done by the creation of the postal terminal and to bring the living space in the building up to standard. In addition to electrical and plumbing work, the issue of the inside rooms

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**Given that the immigration season lasted only about 200 days, from mid-April to the end of October, this meant that the halls were housing, on average, 382 people per day.**

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had to be addressed. The solution was to move the kitchen and dining rooms on the second and third floors from the outside of the building to the interior space. The former kitchen and dining areas were converted into dormitories. It was not considered necessary to make these changes on the fourth floor as the interior rooms received natural light from a large skylight that ran the length of the building. Also, the mezzanine was converted to improved detention facilities. The progressive renovations from 1925 to 1930 made 83 Maple a useful building once again.<sup>43</sup> During the Second World War, it was used as an army barracks. This fine building was last used to accommodate immigrants on 30 September 1962 but it remained the immigration office in Winnipeg until September 1969.<sup>44</sup>

### Immigration Hall No. 2

Immigration Hall No. 2, as noted earlier, was the old hall moved from the corner of Higgins and Maple to its new site just fifty feet east of the new immigration hall. During the First World War, it was turned over to the army for use as a detention centre.<sup>45</sup> After the war, it was declared surplus by Canada Immigration and turned over to the Department of Public Works. Early in the 1920s it was used as a shelter for the unemployed.<sup>46</sup> However, as immigration picked up in the 1920s, it was needed again and the Department of Immigration and Colonization asked Public Works for its return.<sup>47</sup> It was completely renovated to the extent that when it re-opened in June 1924, it was considered to be a new Hall No. 2.<sup>48</sup> The *Manitoba Free Press* described the “new” Hall No. 2 as being “very spacious and well furnished.”<sup>49</sup> It continued to operate until the downturn in immigration in the 1930s.

### The Water Street Immigration Hall

As early as 1914, E. J. Chamberlin, President of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, wrote the Minister of the Interior, J. D. Roche, seeking an Immigration Hall for the area near

## Welcoming Immigrants to Canada's West

the new Union Station on Main Street which the Grand Trunk shared with the Canadian Northern Railway. He argued that the need for a hall near the Union Station was greater than the need for another new hall near the CPR station.<sup>50</sup>

During, and shortly after, the First World War, several railways, including the Canadian Northern and the Grand Trunk Pacific faced bankruptcy and were nationalized and merged to form the Canadian National Railway (CNR). With the resumption of immigration in the 1920s, the CNR actively sought immigrant business. It recruited immigrants overseas and delivered them to their destinations in western Canada in direct competition with the CPR. However, in Winnipeg the CNR was at a disadvantage because the two immigration halls were both near the CPR station on Higgins Avenue, not the Union Station on Main Street at Broadway. CNR officials complained to the press that "considerable dissatisfaction had been expressed by incoming immigrants" who had to trek up to Maple Street for overnight accommodation. The CNR lobbied the government to build a hall beside Union Station. This "would popularize, officials stated, Canadian National immigration very considerably."<sup>51</sup> However, the Department of Immigration and Colonization was unable to obtain funds for another immigration hall.

The CNR's solution was to create a third immigration hall at its own expense and at a location of its choice, near their station. They chose 168 Water Street, a building that

was originally the Northern Pacific and Manitoba Railway Station, built in 1888.<sup>52</sup> The following year, the Northern Pacific and Manitoba Railway also opened Winnipeg's first railway hotel, the Manitoba Hotel, on the triangular lot at Main and Water adjoining the station. The hotel offered the finest accommodation between Toronto and Vancouver for a decade but was destroyed by fire in 1899. The station, however, survived and continued in operation.

The Northern Pacific and Manitoba Railway was later taken over by the Canadian Northern Railway and when the Union Station was opened in 1911, the Water Street station was converted into railway offices. The CNR then decided to convert the old station into an Immigration Hall in 1926. CNR Vice-President W. D. Robb wrote to acting Minister, Charles Stewart, on 10 February 1926, advising him of the railway's intention and seeking the department's cooperation.<sup>53</sup> The old station was a long, narrow, three-storey building approximately 230 feet by 30 feet.<sup>54</sup> The *Manitoba Free Press* reported at length on the opening of the new hall on 11 February 1927:

[The] Official opening of the new immigration hall constructed by the Canadian National railway on Water Street, took place yesterday and the building was handed over to the federal government, through Thomas Gelley, commissioner of immigration, by Sir Henry Thornton, president of the Canadian National railways...



Library and Archives Canada, C-075993.

**Welcome to Manitoba.** The interior of the Dominion Immigration Building was festooned with garlands to draw an immigrant's attention to Manitoba's agricultural bounty.



Archives of Manitoba, Martha Knapp Fonds, Photograph Series, No. 14.

**Dutchmen at Winnipeg.** A group of Dutch immigrants pose for a photo upon their arrival at the Immigration Hall on 21 April 1893.

The building, consisting of three stories, has two floors given over to sleeping accommodation, and one to office, kitchen, recreation and dining requirements, and it is considered to be the most modern building of its kind in Canada. The second floor is divided into two large dormitories for men while the third floor contains a number of separate rooms for the use of women and families. Both these floors have special laundry and bathroom facilities. The ground floor contains the office where the immigration authorities will conduct their business, rest rooms for the men and women, kitchens and also a lunch counter.

With the opening of the new hall, immigrant trains will run on to sidings close to the hall and the passengers will enter the facility without having to go out into public thoroughfares.<sup>55</sup>

The new hall had forty private rooms on the third floor with single or double bunk beds transferred from the immigration hall in Vancouver and the two dormitories for men on the second floor were equipped with 62 triple beds from the immigration detention facility in Saint John, New Brunswick. The capacity of the building was about two hundred and seventy-five persons.<sup>56</sup>

The Department of Immigration designated the new facility as Winnipeg Immigration Hall No. 3. The following fiscal year (1927–1928) it quickly became the busiest of all three Winnipeg immigration halls. It handled 10,973 immigrants, while Hall No. 1 handled 8,494 and Hall No. 2 handled 5,718. Taken together, one can see the magnitude of

the immigration movement flowing through these facilities in the late 1920s.<sup>57</sup>

After fronting the investment in the hall, in 1928 Sir Henry Thornton appealed to the Department of Immigration and Colonization to cover the costs of operating the hall, arguing that the CPR did not have to pay for the operation of the halls near their station. The Minister, Robert Forke, responded that the “providing for and equipping of a third Immigration Hall at Winnipeg was undertaken on the initiative of, and by, the Canadian National Railways.” He added, somewhat disingenuously, that the two existing halls were adequate to handle all the immigrants passing through Winnipeg and were available equally to passengers of both the CNR and CPR. He concluded by stating that “the additional expenditure involved in the operation of the third Hall is not a situation for which the Department is in any way responsible and I cannot approve of the transferring of such expense to the Department.”<sup>58</sup> This was the first of many exchanges between Sir Henry and the Minister, all with the same result.<sup>59</sup>

The CNR facility had a short career as an immigration hall. With the advent of the Great Depression in 1930, immigration to Canada was effectively shut down. The immigration hall was used as a soup kitchen and hostel for the unemployed in the 1930s,<sup>60</sup> and as an army barracks during the Second World War. The CNR removed the top floor and converted the building back to offices in 1951. It was demolished in 1982.<sup>61</sup>

### After the Second World War

After the Second World War, only Hall No. 1 continued in operation. During the war, it had been used as a barracks

and immediately after the war it provided accommodation for war brides. In 1950 it sheltered Winnipeggers who had been evacuated from their homes due to the Red River Flood. One of these was R. N. Munro, then the District Administrator of Immigration, and his family. Over time, the top two floors were closed off as fewer people sought to stay in immigration halls. However, during 1957 and 1958, the upper floors were opened again to house thousands of Hungarian refugees who arrived in Western Canada.<sup>62</sup>

The Hall served as the Western Regional Headquarters for the new Department of Citizenship and Immigration from 1950 until 1966, when the Immigration Branch was merged with the National Employment Service to create Manpower and Immigration Canada. The Regional Headquarters for Immigration was merged into the Regional Headquarters of the new department and relocated to the Royal Bank Building on Portage Avenue. The local Canada Immigration Centre remained at the Hall until September 1969. Then, sixty-five years after construction began in 1904, the building known variously as the Dominion Immigration Building, Winnipeg Immigration Hall No. 1, and, to the staff who worked there, simply as "83 Maple", was closed and abandoned.<sup>63</sup>

Given the deterioration of the neighbourhood at that time, Crown Assets Disposal was unable to sell the grand old building. Valued at \$115,000, it was now worth less than it had cost to build in 1904–1906 and the City of Winnipeg was the only interested buyer. The city originally offered \$60,000 and that offer was accepted by Crown Assets Disposal, but in an extremely short-sighted move the city reduced its offer to \$1, which was refused.<sup>64</sup> Finding no other buyers, it was demolished in 1975. The era of the immigration hall in Winnipeg had come to an end.<sup>65</sup>

### Conclusion

Canada no longer operates immigration halls staffed by government employees. However, through the *Resettlement Assistance Plan*, Citizenship and Immigration Canada funds several "reception houses" in major centres across Canada, including Winnipeg, to provide short-term accommodation to government-sponsored refugees when they first arrive in Canada. These reception houses are operated by not-for-profit immigrant settlement agencies. The concept that worked so successfully in Canada's early days is kept alive in modern refugee programs.

In the 1990s, the Canada Immigration Centre in Winnipeg and Citizenship and Immigration Canada's Prairies and Northern Territories regional office both moved into the newly renovated Johnston Terminal Building at The Forks. The building, formerly known as the National Cartage Building, was built in 1928 with an extension added in 1930 for CN's subsidiary, National Cartage and Storage.<sup>66</sup>

It is most appropriate that Canada's Citizenship and Immigration department has chosen to locate its modern Winnipeg offices in a restored railway building just steps away from the location of Canada's first Winnipeg

immigration facilities, built almost a century-and-a-half ago at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine rivers.

In the modern age Winnipeg is no longer the major immigrant gateway that it once was. The city's important role as the distribution point for managing the flow of hundreds of thousands of immigrants annually to the

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**The city originally offered \$60,000 [for the Dominion Immigration Building] and that offer was accepted by Crown Assets Disposal, but in an extremely short-sighted move the city reduced its offer to \$1, which was refused. Finding no other buyers, it was demolished in 1975. The era of the Immigration Hall in Winnipeg had come to an end.**

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Canadian west in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries truly made it the "Gateway to Canada's West." However, this part of Winnipeg's history has now been largely forgotten. Telling the story of the buildings that housed both immigrants and immigration staff in Winnipeg may help to revive the larger story of the importance of the city in the settlement of Western Canada. ❧

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## The Building of Starbuck Consolidated School No. 1150

by Brian Gouriluk  
Plumas, Manitoba

On Monday, 14 November 1910, teacher-principal Andrew Moore of the new Starbuck Consolidated School noted in his daily attendance register: "First day in the new school building."<sup>1</sup> The following day, the school was officially opened with the Minister of Education, the Honourable G. R. Coldwell, attending the ceremonies.<sup>2</sup> Starbuck Consolidated School was soon to be trumpeted in the newspapers and in the annual education report as one of the finest rural schools in the province and as a prime example of how the consolidated schools movement would improve the quality of education in Manitoba's rural communities. The building remains in use today, having reached its centenary, with its main floor serving as the lobby and kitchen of the local hockey and curling rinks and its second floor housing the classrooms and computer lab of the Starbuck Hockey Academy, an educational program of Starbuck School of the Red River Valley School Division.

This paper is not intended to offer a full history of the almost 100 years of this building. Rather, it will examine the conditions that led to the building of Starbuck Consolidated School, the conditions of the time in the community and the province that fuelled the consolidated schools movement, and the resulting educational benefits of the movement in Starbuck and other rural Manitoba communities.

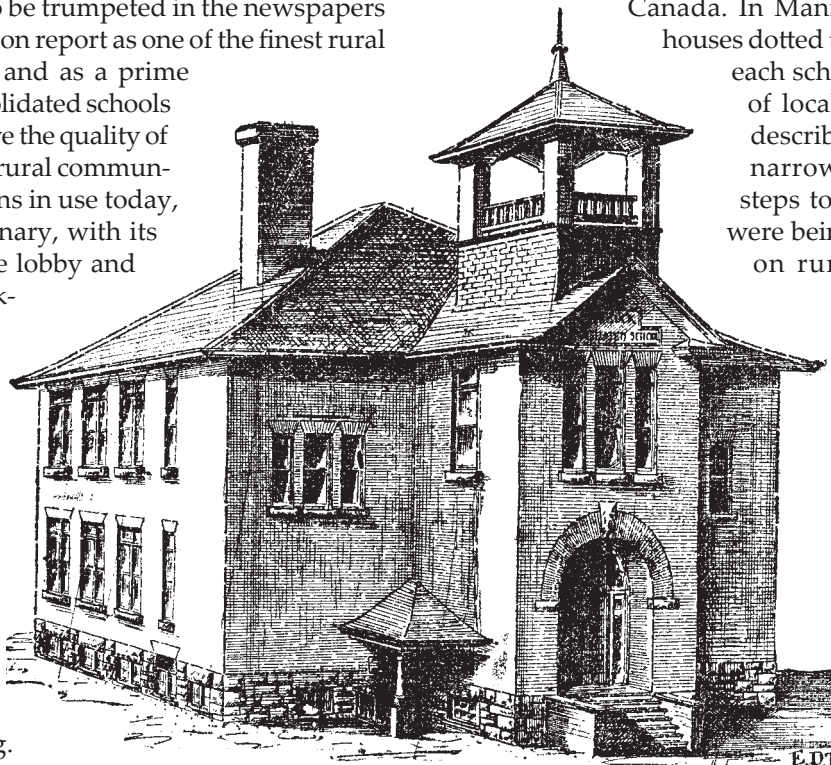
*Brian Gouriluk BA (History) BEd MEd is currently Superintendent of Pine Creek School Division. He was Principal of Starbuck School in the Red River Valley School Division from 2004 to 2010.*

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, rural education was described as being in a deteriorating condition, falling far behind urban schools in the quality of education provided to its students.<sup>3</sup> This condition was not restricted to rural Manitoba, but was prevalent through the United States and Canada. In Manitoba, one-room school

houses dotted the rural landscape, with each school operated by a board of local school trustees, many described as incompetent and narrow-minded.<sup>4</sup> As the first steps towards an urban society were being taken, the first effects on rural communities were becoming evident.

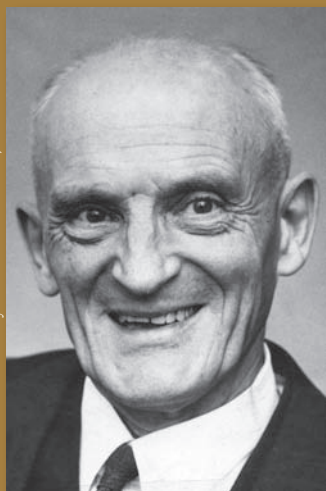
Student enrolments in one-room school houses began to decline and the ability of local boards to pay competent teachers to teach in their communities was strained. This led to a high turnover rate for teachers—with some schools changing teachers several times in a given school year. With few students and a variety of grades to be taught, rural programming

was restricted and the variety of curricula being offered in urban settings could not be implemented in one-room school house. Quality was further affected when rural schools were forced to close a few months early, as local boards often ran out of money. Finally, attendance at one-room school houses was poor because manpower requirements during fall harvest and spring seeding, along with harsh winter weather, largely determined student attendance.<sup>5</sup>



*Manitoba Free Press, 30 April 1910, page 19.*

**School's In!** Designed by Winnipeg architect Eldred D. Tuttle (1878–1965), Starbuck Consolidated School opened in November 1910.



**Andrew Moore** was not yet 20 years of age when he served as the first principal of the Starbuck Consolidated School. This was the beginning of a long and illustrious career in service, government, and education.

From Starbuck, Moore went to Clearwater as Teacher-Principal. He interrupted his educational career to serve in the Royal Air Force during the

First World War. He was wounded, captured and held in a German prison camp after being shot down during a bombing raid in the summer of 1918. After returning from the war, he attended university and received baccalaureate degrees in Arts (1920) and Science (1921). He later obtained a law degree (1927) and a doctorate in Educational Administration (1944). In 1921, he was appointed Manitoba's first Provincial Registrar for the Department of Education.

Moore left this position in 1927 to stand as a government candidate for the provincial constituency of Cypress. When he did not win the seat, the

government, which had maintained its majority, appointed him a School Inspector. Opposition parties were outraged that Moore was given a severance payment upon resigning his civil service job to run for the governing party then rehired to a higher-paying position after his defeat. Their anger was for naught, as Moore kept his job. He would go on to serve for nearly thirty years, except for a period during the Second World War when he was Deputy Chairman and Director of the Canadian Legion Educational Services.

Retirement in 1956 led him into two new careers as a newspaper columnist with the *Winnipeg Free Press* and as a trustee for the Winnipeg School Board. His first column gave advice to senior citizens but he soon returned to the theme of education with a new column entitled "Education and You", where he was highly critical of declining standards in education. This dissatisfaction led him to run, unsuccessfully, as an independent candidate in the constituency of River Heights during the 1958 provincial general election. As a trustee, he continued to work to support his "quaint idea that schools are for education". In one speech to the School Board he urged the use of a newly purchased computer to set up an "index" of student records. He remained an active and vocal member of the Board until stepping down in December 1965 – over 55 years after his time at Starbuck Consolidated School. Moore passed away on 12 July 1974 at the age of 83.

The consolidated school movement had its origins in Massachusetts in 1869 and spread across thirty-three of the United States by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, emerging as a solution to many of the problems plaguing rural schools.<sup>6</sup> The principle was simple. A number of small local school districts would merge to form a larger, "consolidated" district. The pooling of resources would allow the consolidated district to address major issues: building larger, better-equipped schools in central communities; providing horse-drawn vans and sleighs to convey students to the new schools, thus improving school attendance despite the greater distances involved; attracting and retaining qualified teachers by offering work in modern buildings on a staff of teachers with classes divided into more efficient learning groups; offering a greater variety of programming including practical arts such as carpentry for older male students and sewing for older female students; operating throughout the school year without closures forced by the loss of teachers or shortfalls of revenue. All these changes would lead to a better education for rural students.<sup>7</sup> The sale of the old school buildings would further add to the resources of the new district.

One of the champions of this movement in Manitoba was School Inspector Marshall Hall-Jones whose East-

Central Inspectoral District included the Starbuck area. Hall-Jones became an Inspector with the Department of Education in 1908<sup>8</sup> after having previously served as Principal of the Western Canada Business College.<sup>9</sup> He was an inspector until his death in 1927 and is credited for his work in advancing the consolidation movement in Manitoba communities.<sup>10</sup> Hall-Jones found an ally in Robert Houston (1849–1934), Secretary of the Starbuck Local School District Board. Houston came to the Starbuck area in 1879 and became a school trustee in 1883. In addition to his many years of involvement in local education, Houston was also a long-time member of the Manitoba Trustee Association, serving as auditor of the organization for seven years.<sup>11</sup> Together these two men led the Starbuck community towards the formation of one of Manitoba's first consolidated school districts.

However, the formation of a consolidated school district, especially in the early days of consolidation in Manitoba, was not without local opposition and intrigue. Newspaper accounts of the day recount stories of local citizens and trustees not wanting to lose the local school house in their district and fearing a rise in the school tax levy. Many feared that the long distances children would be transported would tire students for their studies at

## Starbuck Consolidated School

school and for work on the farm. Ratepayers who did not have children or whose children were no longer in school opposed being taxed to create a benefit for others. Elderly, absentee landowners resented paying taxes that would grant their tenants' children a better education than that of their own children.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, local trustees lobbied to have their community be the home of a new consolidated school over neighbouring communities. Hall-Jones describes another challenge in convincing citizens: "When consolidation was first proposed in Manitoba in 1904 as the best remedy in view, many who heard the plan at all gave it no thought, merely treating it as a new fad set forth by over-zealous educationalists."<sup>13</sup>

In the Starbuck area these concerns were overcome, with much credit being given to Robert Houston. When progress on consolidation was reported in a *Manitoba Free Press* article on 11 November 1909, Inspector C. K. Newcombe of the western inspectoral district was quoted as stating: "In addition to those organized thoroughly, there are eight other districts in which consolidation will come into force as soon as the necessary equipment can be acquired. These are Starbuck, Sperling, Elphinstone, Medora, Miniota, Brigdon, Gilbert Plains and Sulphur Creek. A score of others are contemplating the project, and are working upon it."<sup>14</sup>

The Starbuck consolidation merged the Starbuck district with those of Holyrood and Kinlough. Debentures for \$12,000 were issued to fund the building of a state-of-the-art rural school on a ten-acre parcel of land along the La Salle River in the community of Starbuck. Additional funds for the project were to come from the local levy and



Archives of Manitoba, School Inspectors Photos GR2664, C65.

**The ancestors.** Two of the one-room schools merged into Starbuck Consolidated School were Holyrood School No. 391 (left), 2¼ miles southeast of town, and the original Starbuck School (right).

from the sale of the old school buildings in the three former school districts.<sup>15</sup> Architect E. D. Tuttle was commissioned to design the building and tenders for the building of the school were published in the *Free Press* on 26 February 1910.<sup>16</sup> On 30 April 1910 the *Free Press* reported further on progress, publishing the architect's rendering of the brick school house and providing the following information on the project: "A new consolidated school house is to be built this summer at a cost of \$15,000. The debentures are sold and the contract let, so that before the end of the present year the town will have a large brick school consisting of four class rooms, a large basement, a library and other rooms."<sup>17</sup> The article went further to comment on the impact the new building would have on the quality of education:

This important change in the school affairs at Starbuck will mean a material benefit for the settlers in the vicinity as every detail which will tend to promote the best results in the matter of education, have been carefully studied by the architects and the trustees. The latter are also to be commended for providing facilities for a department or class for domestic science to be started when the opportune moment shall arrive. This branch of scholastic work is now recognized as a highly important and necessary element in the education of girls, and is a laudable departure from the customary school routine.<sup>18</sup>



Archives of Manitoba, School Inspectors Photos GR2664, C65.

**The school van.** As consolidation through the 20<sup>th</sup> century gathered students from increasingly large catchment areas, it became necessary to organize formal shuttle services to get them to school. This horse-drawn example, from the Gilbert Plains area circa 1911, was typical of the time when Starbuck Consolidated School was established.

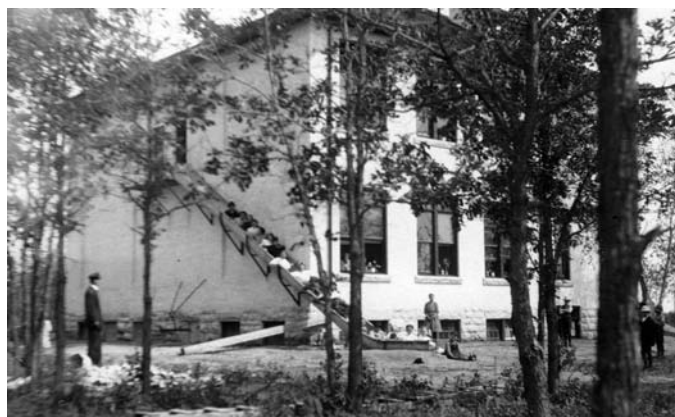
The school opened in November 1910, with an

## Starbuck Consolidated School

enrolment of 85 students under the direction of Principal Moore along with teachers Nellie Young and Lillian Henders. In addition to Mr. Houston, trustees C. O. Stenberg and A. Meakin were also serving on the Starbuck board at the time of the opening.<sup>19</sup> After the new school building opened, the *Free Press* continued its coverage of the progress of the consolidated school with another article including the following praise of the project: “Starbuck is an excellent example of what may be accomplished by any rural community that really values the education of its children ... Great credit is due to the board and particularly their energetic secretary, Robert Houston, for what has been accomplished.”<sup>20</sup>

In order to make the consolidated school concept successful, much attention had to be paid to the transportation of students to and from school, given that the distances—up to seven miles for some students—were too far for students to walk or for parents to take time away from their farm to transport their children. Starbuck Consolidated School used two vans for the transportation of students at the opening of the new building in 1910, built at a cost of \$170 each and operated at a cost of \$2.95 per day for one route and \$2.75 per day for the other route.<sup>21</sup> When it is considered that the two female teachers working alongside the male principal were earning \$550 and \$600 per year,<sup>22</sup> we can see that the value of the contract paid to the van drivers over the 211-day school year was a substantial portion of the school operating cost. It is a reflection of a time when the work of men was valued over the work of women, regardless of the level of responsibility.

The formation of the Starbuck Consolidated School had an influence on other school districts in the area and the Starbuck board cooperated with Hall-Jones in further

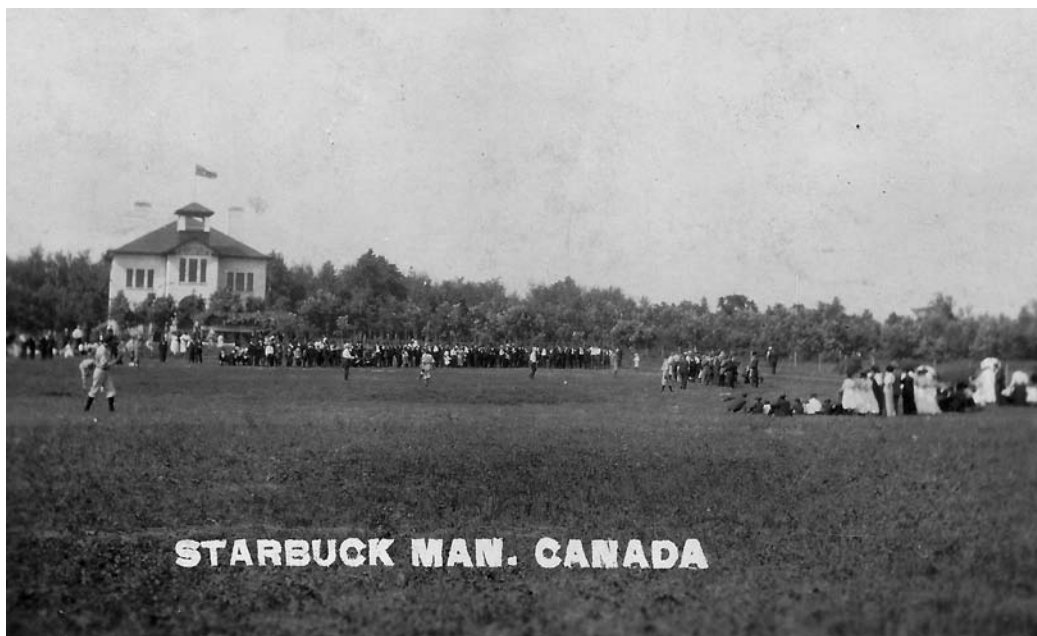


Archives of Manitoba, School Inspectors Photos GR2664, C65.

**Fire drill.** The new Starbuck Consolidated School building boasted a chute from the second floor to get students to safety in the event of a fire, demonstrated in this photo from 1911.

promoting school consolidation in the region by attending meeting and reporting on their success. In *Hugging the Meridian*, Betty Dyck writes, “Robert Houston promptly became a trustee of the new Starbuck Consolidated School, and continued to advocate consolidation throughout the municipality.”<sup>23</sup> Houston accepted an invitation from the Department of Education to assist in the department’s educational campaign to bring the benefits of consolidation to the attention of Manitoba ratepayers.<sup>24</sup> The *Free Press* of 22 February 1911 reports on the Trustees convention of the municipality of MacDonald: “Robt. Houston, of Starbuck, gave the experience of the people with consolidation at Starbuck. He stated that there was the greatest satisfaction with the scheme and everyone was pleased. They have a district of about 60 sections, a site of ten acres beautifully

treed on the banks of the La Salle River, and a \$15,000 school house of four rooms. The school tax of Starbuck village was about the same as before consolidation.”<sup>25</sup> While Mr. Houston and the *Free Press* reported on the minimal tax increase in the Starbuck village, it should be noted that the taxes of Kinlough and Holyrood districts faced a more significant increase.<sup>26</sup> Based largely on the success of the Starbuck experience and the promotion by Mr. Houston, Sanford and Oak Bluff formed new consolidated districts within the Rural Municipality of Macdonald by 1913.<sup>27</sup>



R. McInnes

A buccolic day on the baseball field outside Starbuck Consolidated School is the theme of this postcard from the 1920s.

When the Education Report for 1910 was tabled

by the Minister of Education, Starbuck School and its new consolidated school were to figure prominently in the report of Inspector Hall-Jones as he devoted several paragraphs and photographs to the new school.

The Department of Education changed its year-end format the following year, so that the annual education report would be made at the end of each school year rather than at the end of the calendar year. The department then took the opportunity to author a special report on the progress of the consolidated school movement to the end of 1911. Once again, Starbuck School figures prominently, described as “the best school district and cheapest run school the delegates visited.”<sup>28</sup> As well, a letter from Robert Houston included in the report describes the Starbuck experience as giving “universal satisfaction.”<sup>29</sup> Hall-Jones continues the praise of the Starbuck Consolidated School by reporting that, “It is one of the best schools I visit for a number of reasons, the majority of which are a direct result of its being a consolidated district.”<sup>30</sup> He reported that the Starbuck’s “excellent school spirit is unequalled in any other school”,<sup>31</sup> and included the lyrics of a school song that sang the praises of the consolidated school:

Starbuck is up-to-date, she is sailing with the wind,  
Progression is our watchword and our rule;  
We are marching to success while others lag behind,  
For we’ve faith in our consolidated school

CHORUS:

Hark! Hark! Hark! The children marching!  
Hear the rumble of the vans!  
For from over hill and vale we can hear the children chant,  
Praises for our good consolidated school.

Every morn the vans roll in, with the children fresh and trim,  
And unload their precious burdens at the door;  
And with happy, smiling face, we can work all day with vim,  
For we never fear the snowdrift any more.

(Sung to “Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys,” etc.)<sup>32</sup>

The report does get beyond such enthusiastic and subjective praise of the consolidated school

model and offers some objective data on the successes of consolidated schools in addressing rural education concerns. First and foremost, school attendance is highlighted. The average attendance of students improved from an average of 50% in the five years prior to consolidation to 73% since consolidation. With the provincial average attendance being 55% in 1911, the data indicate a significant improvement for consolidated school districts over the one-room school house.<sup>33</sup> The report also demonstrated a growth in the number of special programs offered in consolidated rural schools: eleven schools are doing work in agriculture or gardening, two have engaged an agriculture specialist, five offer manual training or sewing, and 18 have students preparing for teachers’ examinations.<sup>34</sup> Finally, the report demonstrated that the costs of the consolidated school have not seriously impacted local taxes, given the improved quality of education and the reduced costs for rural families of transporting or boarding their older children seeking high school education. Hall-Jones offered this summation, again referring to the Starbuck experience:

While it is true from the experience of Manitoba consolidated schools that the cost in some cases is greater than that of operating some of the old one-room rural schools, yet it must be remembered that the nature of the work being done is of a far higher and more satisfactory nature than in those old rural schools, and if returns for money spent is to be the test, as it is in all commercial matters, then consolidation is much cheaper. It is a striking feature that some of the largest and best consolidated schools are costing the least to operate and but a small fraction more than the old merged rural schools



G. Sproule

**Alma mater.** When Lillian Livingston graduated from Starbuck Consolidated School, principal Andrew Moore gave her this congratulatory postcard.

cost. In this connection might be mentioned the two largest districts, Starbuck and Roblin.<sup>35</sup>

And so began the story of Starbuck Consolidated School No. 1150. It is clear from the reports of the time that the school earned its place as an exemplary school in the march to modernized rural education in the province of Manitoba. The building of the school was largely due to the efforts of two consolidated school advocates, Trustee Robert Houston and School Inspector Marshall Hall-Jones. Fortunately, the building remains in use today, over 100 years later, as a symbol of their educational legacy. ∞



G. Sproule

**The high school.** With growing numbers of older students in the 1930s, more classrooms were needed so a high school was built on the grounds of the Consolidated School, just east of the earlier building. In the 1960s, as enrollment declined and a new central high school was built at nearby Sanford, the Starbuck High School was closed, used for a few years as a kindergarten and seniors centre, then demolished. The original school remains standing and is used by the community as a recreation and sports facility.

### Notes

1. Archives of Manitoba (hereafter, AM), Government fonds, A-15-8-7, Cr 638, Daily attendance register, Starbuck School, 1910.
2. "Starbuck consolidated school completed", *Manitoba Free Press* (hereafter *MFP*), 25 November 1910, p. 15.
3. AM, Department of Education, *Consolidation of Rural Schools in Manitoba: Special Report of the Department of Education for the Year 1912*, p. 5.
4. "Education report: Consolidation gains ground", *MFP*, 16 February 1912, p. 13.
5. *Consolidation of Rural Schools in Manitoba*, p. 7.
6. "Rural school consolidation", *MFP*, 9 July 1913, p. 13.
7. *Consolidation of Rural Schools in Manitoba*, p. 6.
8. "Two more inspectors", *MFP*, 27 March 1908, p. 2.
9. "Western Canada Business School" advertisement, *Morning Telegram*, 27 December 1902, p. 2. [<http://manitoba.ca/cocoon/launch/en/newspapers/TMT/1902/12/27/2/Olive>]
10. Herriot, A. A. "School Inspectors of the Early Days in Manitoba." *Manitoba Historical Society Transactions*, Series 3, 1947-8 Season [www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/transactions/3/schoolinspectors.shtml]
11. Olsen, Floris. *Starbuck Seedlings: A History of Starbuck and Vicinity*. Derksen Printers, Steinbach, 1973, p. 11.
12. "Rural School Consolidation." *Portage la Prairie Weekly Review*, 5 February 1913, p. 3. [<http://manitoba.ca/cocoon/launch/en/newspapers/PWR/1913/02/05/3/Olive>]
13. *Consolidation of Rural Schools in Manitoba*, p. 54.
14. "Extols benefits of consolidation", *MFP*, 11 November 1909, p. 7.
15. AM, Government fonds, A-15-8-7, Cr 638, "Annual report of the school trustees for the School District of Starbuck Number 1150 for the year 1910" Daily attendance register, Starbuck School, 1910.
16. "Tenders", *MFP*, 26 February 1910, p. 2.
17. "Starbuck makes progress", *MFP*, 30 April 1910, p. 19.
18. *Ibid.*
19. AM, Government fonds, A-15-8-7, Cr 638, Daily attendance register, Starbuck School, 1910.
20. "Starbuck makes progress", *MFP*, 30 April 1910, p. 19.
21. "Starbuck consolidated school completed", *MFP*, 25 November 1910, p. 15.
22. AM, Government fonds, A-15-8-7, Cr 638, Daily attendance register, Starbuck School, 1910.
23. Dyck, Betty. *Hugging the Meridian, Macdonald: A Manitoba Municipal History, 1881-1981*. Friesen Printers, Altona, 1981, p. 107.
24. *Starbuck Seedlings*, p. 68.
25. "Trustees confer school matters", *MFP*, 22 February 1911, p. 8.
26. *Consolidation of Rural Schools in Manitoba*, p. 36.
27. *Hugging the Meridian*, p. 107.
28. *Consolidation of Rural Schools in Manitoba*, p. 62.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

## “Maud’s Diary”: Ireland and Manitoba, 1798–1874

by Phillip Giffin  
Milwaukie, Oregon

Most of us wait too long before we put it down on paper. Maybe we do not have time; or we do not think we have the necessary skills; or we do not think anyone is interested. And then it is too late. Fortunately my Grandmother Rachel “Maud” Johnston Giffin sat down on 2 January 1938 and began to write a series of letters, notes, and diaries for her two sons detailing family memories reaching back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Ireland, to the birth of her grandfather Joseph Johnston in 1798 and to the arrival of her husband’s ancestors in Boston in 1737.<sup>1</sup>

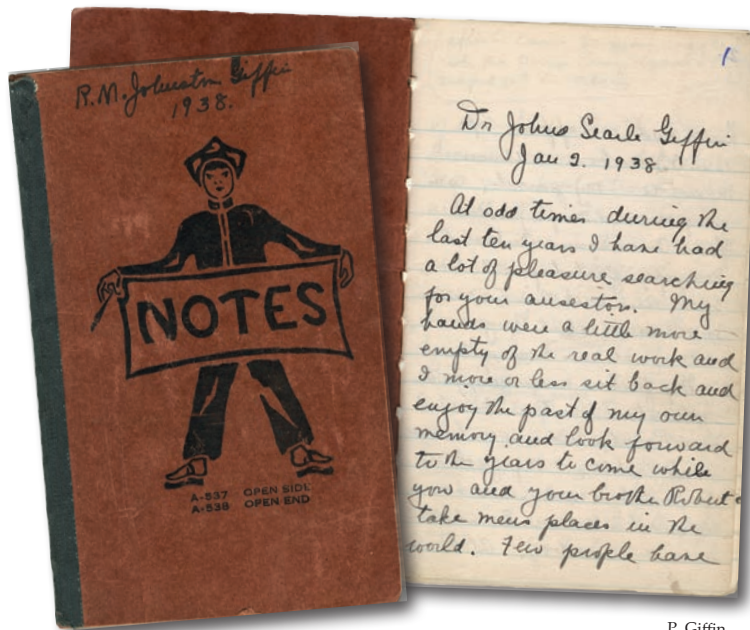
My father collected what came his way, but he did not seem to know what to do with it. He was a busy man: a veteran of the Second World War, a medical doctor, a devoted husband, a pillar of the church and community, and a father of four children. After his mother passed away in 1942, he put her papers into an old dusty trunk in the attic. As youngsters my three siblings and I would rummage through the barrels, boxes, and trunks. We dressed up in old gowns and military uniforms. We wrote school papers based on

family letters from the Canadian trenches and casualty clearing stations of the First World War. As children we knew all the battlefields: Ypres, Gallipoli, the Somme, and Passchendaele. We thought everyone’s attic was filled with such fun stuff.

I never knew the magnitude of Maud’s accomplishment until 60 years after she finished working on it. In the summer of 1998, just before he died, my father pulled a small brown Pilot notebook from a dresser drawer one afternoon and gave it to me with a typically laconic comment, “this is for you.” It was his mother’s diary of 1938; until then I didn’t know it existed. He didn’t tell me what to do with it. He knew I would read it, and that I could never just let it sit. I would have to find out more. He never told me that his mother and I were kindred spirits.

The diary, a small, brown, notebook of 145 pages filled in neat, tiny handwriting with amazing details about her family:

from the birth of her grandfather Joseph Johnston in North Ireland in 1798, his marriage to Margaret Wilson in 1829, their life in Ireland raising 13 children, their struggles during the great potato famine of 1845–51, the family migration to North America 1851–1873, settling on the tall grass prairie near Morden, Manitoba 1873–1898, and of the family service to Canada during the Boer War 1898–1902 and the Great War of 1914–1918. Considering that she was writing in Superior, Wisconsin in 1938 before computers and Internet access to modern genealogical libraries and web-sites, it is an astonishing collection for its breadth and detail.



Maud Johnston Giffin’s diary, 1938.

P. Giffin

*Phil Giffin grew up in Oregon and worked for twenty-five years in international marketing in the transportation and paper industries. He retired early, obtained an MA in Teaching and, since 2001, has been teaching Social Studies at David Douglas High School in Portland. He gained a new appreciation for Canadian history in 1998 when he inherited the extraordinary diaries of his grandmother, Maud Johnston Giffin.*

How and why did she take on such a Homeric task? It appears that she gathered most of her information from listening and talking with "the older generation." There was no written Johnston genealogy in those days. The only hint that she gives is that as a child in Manitoba she spent her winter evenings wrapped in a buffalo robe before the fireplace absorbing old family tales. And, as a married woman she mined her husband's grandparents and the local library of the Daughters of the American Revolution for similar information about the Giffin family reaching back to Colonial Boston and Halifax.

With time I came to discover that several distant cousins of mine share the same family genetic code for reading, writing, and researching family history; I have borrowed heavily from the materials they have shared with me.<sup>2</sup> Maud's family love to share the old stories. Fortunately, Maud and her sisters Susan and Mary took the time to write out the old family stories and to save the old tintypes and carte de visite. In one of her 1938 letters Maud wrote "...who knows, there might be grandchildren out there some day who will be interested."

On a cold day in January 1938, Maud sat down and wrote letters to her two sons as she began writing her diaries:

Just now there are wars and rumors of wars, and a more terrible war has just been averted, though some people believe it is only postponed to a more evil hour. ... You don't remember the Great War (1914-1918). ... I want you to understand what my people have been through.

Maud's letters, notes, and diaries are written with the same sense of urgency in very simple, clear, stream-of-consciousness style. She wrote and rewrote her stories as she remembered them, and not in strictly chronological order. Because of the jumbled chronology, the best way to approach her papers is with a copy in hand of the magnificent family genealogy of the late Allan Stacey of Winnipeg, *The Johnston Family: Joseph and Margaret Johnston and Their Descendants*.<sup>3</sup>

Maud's Johnston family diary begins:

... At odd times during the past 10 years I have had a lot of pleasure searching for your ancestors. My hands are a little more empty of real work and I more or less sit back and enjoy the past

of my own memory.... Few people have had a happier life.... I was born at Glencross, Manitoba (1878). My parents came to Winnipeg just before the boom ... about the year 1871.... The Johnstons are Scots-Irish, Protestants from the lowlands of Scotland who settled in North Ireland during the Seventeenth Century....

With a little research I found a recent (1996) Johnston family history by Ontario Justice Russell C. Honey, *The "Gentle" Johnstones: The Story of the Johnston/e Family*. Honey documents the family history back to its origins in Scotland as early as the year 1200.<sup>4</sup>

In Scotland the Johnstones were among the handful of tenacious families (such as the Bruce and Maxwell Clans) that held the disputed border lands separating Scotland from England. For centuries the Scots fought the English (and each other) for dominance of the border area called "Annandale." Russell Honey cites the poet Sir Walter Scott and an old Scots ballad:<sup>5</sup>

Within the bounds of  
Annandale  
The Gentle Johnstones ride,  
They have been here a  
thousand years,  
A thousand more they'll bide.

In the seventeenth century the Johnstons joined the great migration of lowland Scots to North Ireland and eventually to North America (future generations would call them the "Scots-Irish").<sup>6</sup> In 1603 when the English Queen, Elizabeth I, died without a direct heir, the Throne of England passed to the Queen's nephew, a Scot. King James Stuart VI of Scotland became King James I of a United Kingdom

of England, Scotland, Wales, and North Ireland.

The Lords of Scotland could not have been more pleased, and the new King was quick to reward them. On 16 April 1604 by Royal Decree James granted large portions of North Ireland to his Protestant supporters "for the purpose of planting colonies among the wild and unruly Irish (Catholic) population." His generosity to the "Plantation Scots" resulted in another four hundred years of animosity and warfare in that troubled land.

Unfortunately, the English attitude towards the Plantation Scots began to harden over time. Historian Charles Knowles Bolton describes the deteriorating life of the Plantation Scots in his book, *Scotch-Irish Pioneers in Ulster and America*. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century the English



P. Giffin

**Maud Johnston Giffin**, a nurse graduate from the Freemasons' Hospital at Morden, 1902.



Parliament passed a series of Acts, forcing the Scots off their Irish land, out of their churches (Presbyterian), and out of local government.<sup>7</sup> The English grip on North Ireland became so uncomfortable that a quarter million Irish Protestants (mostly Presbyterians) left Ireland for North America during the six decades before the American Revolution. My Giffin ancestors arrived in 1718 among the first boat loads of Scots-Irish immigrants to New England (but that's a story for another time).

The Johnston families were among the more fortunate of the Scots in North Ireland; they were Anglicans, firm supporters of the English Church and Crown. According to Russell Honey, the huge Johnston clan settled in the most remote and most dangerous corner of North Ireland, the "Lakeland" area of Lough Erne, Fermanagh County.<sup>8</sup> The little village of Inniskillen (the spelling was later changed to Enniskillen) sits on a neck of land separating two lakes, Lower and Upper Lough Erne. All roads in the area led through the town of Enniskillen; whoever held the town controlled access to a broad area of North Ireland.

In 1607 the entire area had been granted to Sir William Cole to build and fortify against the Catholic enemy in Southern Ireland. Sir William, his descendents, and neighbours successfully held the town against the "uprisings" of Roderick Maguire (1641) and the Jacobite assault of 1688. While defending their own town, the defiant soldiers of Enniskillen harassed the attackers of Londonderry and helped eliminate Catholic resistance in North Ireland. In recognition of their invaluable contribution to the English Throne, Enniskillen was given the honour of providing the personal bodyguard for King William of England at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690.

In her diaries Maude wrote, "everyone from Enniskillen was a staunch Anglican ... (and) related to the Noble 600." At first I had no idea what "Noble 600" she was talking about. An "Anglican" is a member of the Church of England (or, an Episcopalian in the United States). We "Anglicans" are not generally described as "staunch..." Most Scots and "Scots-Irish" are Presbyterians, congenitally opposed to the English Church. What was Maud saying? And, who were the "Noble 600"?

I found my answers at the bottom of Maud's dusty trunk. Among her well-worn collection of books is a 1901 volume *The Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson*.<sup>9</sup> The first clue came from Tennyson's famous poem, "The charge of the Light Brigade:"

...Theirs not to reason why  
Theirs but to do and die:  
Into the valley of Death  
Rode the Six Hundred.

But what does this have to do with the Johnstons of Enniskillen? With a little further reading I discovered that Tennyson wrote several poems about the Battle of Balaclava during the Crimean War (25 October 1854). The answer to my questions lies in Tennyson's lesser known poem, "The Charge of the Heavy Brigade:"

...Thousands of horsemen, drew to the  
valley — and stay'd;  
For Scarlett and Scarlett's three hundred  
were riding by

When the points of the Russian  
lances  
arose to the sky...  
... [Scarlett] bade his trumpeter  
sound  
to the charge, and he rode on  
ahead, as  
he waved his blade.  
To the gallant three hundred  
whose glory  
will never die....  
...Brave Inniskillens and  
Greys....  
Lost are the three hundred of  
Scarlett's Brigade.



P. Giffin

Margaret Wilson (1810–1895) and Joseph Johnston (1798–1885) are buried at Glencross Cemetery outside Morden.

The "Enniskillens" were from the old home town. With a little more research I discovered that the town had not only supplied King William's personal guard at the Battle of the Boyne (1690), but also it had provided two famous regiments to the British Army ever since, the Enniskillen Fusiliers and the Dragoons, the "Brave Inniskillens" of Tennyson's poems. The people of Enniskillen were Anglicans and loyal supporters of the Crown.

Great grandfather Joseph Johnston (1798–1885) lived through the violent years of the Napoleonic Wars. He was born the year the English crushed Napoleon's fleet at the Battle of the Nile (1798), and he was 17 years of age the year Wellington defeated Napoleon at Waterloo (1815). According to Maud "he was lucky to have missed the King's pressmen." Enniskillen provided a continuous supply of young men to the Protestant Armies of a United England and North Ireland since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. And, the King's military recruiters were notoriously eager to grab young men out of the fields and off the streets whenever new recruits were needed.

According to Maud's Diary, "our ancestors Joseph and Margaret Wilson Johnston grew up and married (1829) in North Ireland during a relatively peaceful time of plenty." "Plantation Scots," particularly the Anglican variety with good farm land prospered during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Plantation farms were able to export a surplus of meat, butter, wool, and grains. Jobs were plentiful in the thriving new industries established by the English, particularly the growing and processing of flax and the manufacture of linen. It was a time even the poorest Irishman could subsist on potatoes which grew easily in the smallest field of stony soil.<sup>10</sup>

Joseph Johnston was a farmer and cattleman who worked 35 acres of land leased from the Earl of Enniskillen, Lord Cole, a direct descendant of Sir William Cole founder of the Protestant plantation in Fermanagh County. According to his granddaughter Maud, "Joseph was a tall, stern man, a stout Anglican and a staunch Orangeman" (a supporter of the English Throne and the Protestant plantations in Ireland).

We know little of Joseph's childhood in Enniskillen. According to the family genealogy, his parents were Andrew and Eleanor MaCoy Johnston; and he had two brothers (Adam and Thomas) and two sisters (Annie and Sarah).<sup>11</sup> Family tradition indicates that his parents may have died leaving the youngest children to be brought up by relatives, a practice that was fairly common at the time. We know that Joseph Johnston turned out to be a "good catch" for 18-year-old Margaret Wilson of nearby Croaghrim. Her parents, James and Jane Porter Wilson were Presbyterians. They raised sheep on rented land in the nearby village of Croaghan, Fermanagh County. According to her granddaughter Susan:

Margaret lost her father when she was quite young... her grandparents later adopted her (and 3 siblings) when her mother remarried... In those days... it was considered disloyal for a widowed mother to remarry (although it was essential for a hard working man to find a new mother quickly for his children)... It was feared a step-father might use the children unfairly.... She was an attractive woman, small in stature.... She always wore a lace or frilly cap; white at first but after the death of her daughter Ann (1879) she wore black. She told me she had worn a cap since before her first child was born.<sup>12</sup>

Of her grandfather Joseph, Susan would write:

...He took his position as head of the family very seriously. Even after his sons grew up and were raising families of their own, Joseph considered it their duty to consult with him and to obey his orders.... He was honest, just and kind, but not a very tolerant man.<sup>13</sup>

Between 1830 and 1858 Margaret and Joseph would have thirteen children (ten sons and three daughters): William, Ann, Andrew, John & twin Robert, James, Thomas, Joseph, Margaret, Alexander, Adam, Henry, and Ellen. They were highly successful parents as all thirteen lived to adulthood through the famine years in Ireland and all migrated successfully to Manitoba.

Maude records in her diary that her father, John Johnston, and his twin Robert were born 10 January 1836 in Enniskillen:

Johnnie and Uncle Robbie were the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of 13 children in the family.... The twins were mischievous little tots, always pulling off each other's bonnets, and occasionally getting into more serious trouble. ... At the age of 3 they had been left alone in the house for a short time, just long enough to find a bag of precious grain. Margaret returned to find a trail of grain through the house. The twins had been waddling between the bag and the fireplace, tossing handfuls of grain into the fire until the sack was empty and the fire had gone out. Not only had they wasted this precious grain but this was an age before matches. If the family fire went out Margaret had a long walk to a neighbor's home to borrow hot coals. And, a long run home while the coals were still glowing enough to restart the fire.... There were other narrow escapes when the boys discovered trout in Lord Cole's private fishing preserve, the Arney River. No one could throw in a line without an invitation; and the young Johnston boys never saw one of those. But they fished anyway... Many a time the boys would dash into the house, toss their caps aside and sit coolly unconcerned as Lord Cole's watchman banged on the front door. Their father would pay no fine if the boys were caught — they would have to suffer the consequences which meant imprisonment or transportation (exile to Canada or Australia).... But they were never caught.... At the age of seven (1843) the twins were breeched [given adult pants and separated more from their mother's care].... and sent for schooling to a stern old disciplinarian, a veteran of the famous Inniskillen Dragoons. Master Scarlet had been wounded at the battle of Balaclava. And, he trained his school boys as he had been trained for the Army with a leather strap. Her father carried a scar on his neck from one such training session.

Unfortunately Maude may be confusing her father's schoolmaster "Scarlet" of 1843 with the Scarlet in Tennyson's poem about the Battle of Balaclava (1854). Sir James Yorke Scarlet Commanding General of the Heavy Brigade at Balaclava was born and raised in Lancashire England, not Fermanagh North Ireland.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps the boy's

school teacher in Ireland was a different Scarlet, a veteran of an earlier war.

In one of her letters Maud wrote about the farm in Ireland:

Flax was grown on the farm and girls were hired from the mountains to "scutch" it and soak it in water and pound it to prepare it for spinning. This process broke the hard shell surrounding the white strands inside the flax straw of which linen is made. Cattle were also kept on the farm, and Margaret received great commentating for her butter. Her husband had built her a fine milk house and there was a spring bubbling up continuously in it so that everything was kept cool.

Everything had to be spotlessly clean... noggins and trenchers (wooden cups and plates) were used for utensils. A little pan was a skillet ... the cow barn was the byre. Not only did the women have to get the flax ready for spinning, but they had to spin it and then make it into cloth. They also had to make candles to see by at night... they had moulds whereby they put a piece of cord through the center and then filled it with tallow. This is the time when you hear the rhyme, Man works from sun to sun, but a woman's work is never done.

According to Maud, the peaceful, plentiful years ended abruptly for everyone in the summer of 1845. The weather was unusually cool and wet that year, and families were shocked to discover that a virulent fungus was spreading through their fields of potatoes. Almost overnight an entire crop of healthy potatoes shrivelled and turned into black, rotted pulp. By fall the crop was gone, and the blight returned again and again for the next five years. People began to starve. Historians estimate that the population of Ireland declined by as much as 25% from some 8.2 million to 6.0 million during the famine years 1845–51 because of "disease, starvation, and emigration."<sup>15</sup>

...The words famine and starvation came to have a meaning that later generations would never know. Beggars soon appeared at the door, starving children, the poor, emaciated, and elderly. Then whole families appeared at the door actually

starving. The poor had nothing to eat and could only beg for help from neighbors who had little themselves.... All left an indelible imprint on their memory that could not be erased.

By then Joseph and Margaret had a large family (the ninth of their 13 children was born in 1846). But the Johnstons were better off than most. Maude said:

...No one was ever turned away from our grandparent's door; somehow food was provided and extra work was found. Joseph was tender-hearted, he could always use help. His fields needed work, and his cattle had to be tended, slaughtered, and dressed.... Margaret hired women from the mountains to help churn her butter and harvest her flax. They helped soak the flax in water and then scutch it (work it) to separate the fibers. She kept several women busy on spinning wheels making thread. And she hired local men to help her weave and bleach white linen shirt cloth.

A serious parent with several children (like Joseph) must have spent considerable time pondering his family's future. What future was there in Ireland when the country was unable to feed itself? Why train ten sons to be farmers when his 35 acres barely supported his own family? There was little hope the boys would be able to lease additional farm land as they started families of their own.

The oldest boys (William and Andrew) were already farming with their father, but it was not too late to arrange apprenticeships for his younger sons in other useful

professions. Perhaps it was time to make serious plans to leave Ireland for lands of greater opportunities overseas, possibly North America or Australia? During the famine years Joseph and Margaret began to spin together a closely knit family unit that was frugal, self-reliant, and resourceful. When they moved to North America they would bring everything needed to survive and flourish on the tall grass prairie of Manitoba. They knew how to raise, shear, milk, and butcher cattle and sheep. They could grow, scutch, bleach, spin, and weave flax into linen clothing. They could build houses, barns, and stone walls; and, they could forge and repair almost any tool needed on a ranch or farm.

The first stages of Joseph's plan for migration began in 1849. That year the twins were 13 years old, the age when



P. Giffin

**The Shaws.** This tintype from around 1860–65, shows recent Irish immigrants (L-R) Robert, James, and Susan Shaw.

the sons of a yeoman (a freeman able to choose his son's occupation) would typically begin working full time for their father, or they would be sent out as apprentices in another profession. If the family was to be successful in North America, his sons would need a broader range of skills than just farming.

At 13 the twins were assigned apprenticeships, John with a local cabinet maker and his twin "Robbie" with a stone mason. Another of the sons, Alex, would go to work with the local police force. And, in 1851 the oldest son William was dispatched to scout out farming opportunities in America. In all likelihood William was given sufficient family cash to purchase land and start a farm in New England. He settled on a "market garden" property at Woburn, MA about ten miles north of Boston. From there he began providing fresh produce to the markets of Boston.

He also began sending a steady stream of letters and a trickle of cash back home to Ireland. According to Maud, "his letters were filled with glowing reports of his new bride, Rebecca Ray (married 1854) and of his new farm at Woburn; and his younger brothers were soon consumed with a desire to join him...."

Irish and American newspapers at the time carried advertisements and personal letters encouraging potential immigrants of ship sailings and "grand opportunities" in the New World. For decades we've had such a letter among our family papers. Tucked away in an old family Bible we've had an enigmatic family letter written in 1866 in a strange dialect of French. The letter is addressed from Moutier, Switzerland to Constant Chevalier a distant (maternal) relative in Iowa.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, no one seemed to be able to read the letter. After decades of searching we found a translator through the French Department at Smith College in Massachusetts. Nicole Ball volunteered to take on the mysterious French dialect.

After struggling with the letter for weeks, Nicole reported that the problem was that "... the man who wrote the letter was quite illiterate as is obvious by his (fractured) spelling, syntax, and total lack of punctuation." We don't know the name of the mysterious author of this 4-page letter to a distant maternal grandfather as he failed to sign it. But, we know what he wanted. He wanted very much for the family to help him migrate from the small watch-making village of Moutier, Switzerland to Iowa.

Moutier

December 30, 1866

Dear Constant ... I am hurrying to send you the [watch] jewels you asked for, and 5 pairs of hands.... If you could possibly help me make my passage [travel expenses], I will bring enough [watch supplies] to pay for it. I could then earn enough to have my family come over. I don't like it in Moutier anymore, it's not possible to make enough [money] ... all the watch makers are sick of working here; the factory is not worth anything.... The bosses are greedy to the core. Half the workers

would like to be able to go to America. That's all people talk about here.... If I could only get to you I would be rich enough....

According to Maud, William's letters and an outpouring of immigration stories in Irish newspapers had predictable results:

... The Johnston boys were soon getting restless. By 1857 John, Robbie and James had convinced their father that it was time for them to join their brother William in Boston.

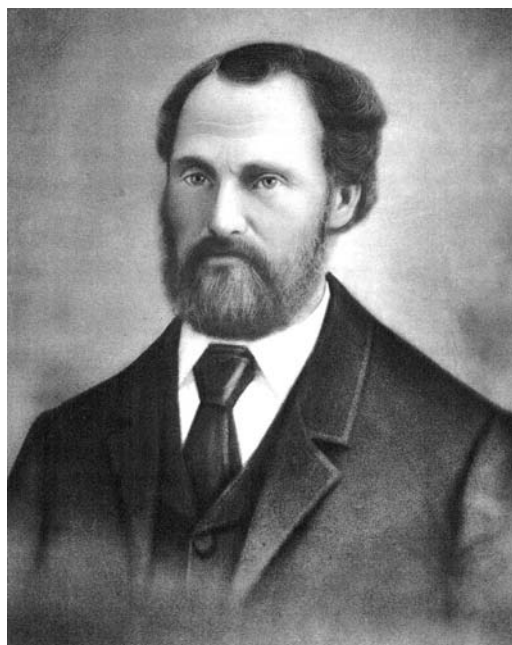
We do not know what route they took to Boston, but we can make an educated guess. It has been said that the poor sailed from Limerick, and those who could pay for their passage sailed from Dublin. Being on the wealthier side of that equation, it seems likely that they sailed from Dublin. Johnnie Johnston would later use Dublin names for his hard scrabble Manitoba property. He named his ranch Phoenix Park, after the magnificent city gardens of Dublin; and he called the muddy little stream that crossed his property the Liffey after the broad river that carried boatloads of Irish out of Dublin to the lands of opportunity in North America.

According to family records, the three boys arrived in New York on 6 September 1857. The boys must have been amazed at the hustle and bustle of the city, and of the sights on their way to Boston. Maud records that her father John wrote home to Ireland about an enchanting afternoon concert at Tremont Temple Boston listening to a memorable performance by the gorgeous Swedish Nightingale, Miss Jenny Lind.

John would also admit to his granddaughter Maud that golden opportunities were not so immediately apparent in their new hometown of Boston:

... There weren't many jobs for cabinet makers in Boston at the time. John found the town bursting with immigrants and it was hard to find work of any kind. He worked for his brother William for a while, but ...he wasn't much of a vegetable farmer.... He knew cattle; he loved horses; and he was a good driver. So he applied for a job with a wealthy Boston family as their coachman.... He worked for the Appletons for several years, until his quick Irish temper got the better of him.... One day he overheard Mrs. Appleton referring to him as the servant and he could no longer endure it. He almost quit on the spot and left her without a ride. But he relented, long enough to get her home.

By then it was 1863 and the American Civil War was approaching the worst of its destructive rage. That summer Confederate armies probed deep into Pennsylvania. In a panic the Union army began drafting tens of thousands of young men. Replacements were desperately needed to feed the slaughter at Gettysburg. Riots broke out in the cities.



P. Giffin

Rachel Shaw Johnston (1849-1900) migrated with her parents from Armagh, Northern Ireland to Canada circa 1861. John Johnston (1836-1898) migrated from Enniskillen, Northern Ireland to Boston in 1857 and on to Winnipeg and Morden around 1873.

Maud records in her Diary that her father "... was drafted into the Union Army but he was able to use his British citizenship to avoid the bloodletting. By the fall of 1863 John and his twin Robbie used their British citizenship to leave Boston for a more peaceful land." By then they had an option in Canada.

Two years previously (1861) another of the Johnston sons, Andrew and his new bride Anne had left Ireland for Canada. Andrew had settled and was working a farm near Owen Sound, at Keppel Township, Grays County, Ontario. Without a doubt Andrew was writing letters to the family in Ireland and to his brothers in Boston. Prospects for the Boston brothers (John, Robbie, and James) were much better in Canada than in Mr. Lincoln's Army. So in 1863 after several years in Boston with little to show for it, the three brothers migrated north to join brother Andrew at Owen Sound. The oldest brother William stayed behind in Woburn to run his farm. He would join them later.

About the twins John and Robert, Maud wrote:

... They settled in Wiarton, Ontario for a while where they found work pulling stumps from fields and helping raise new barns for local farmers. It was hard work but John was soon distracted. He fell in love with Rachel Shaw, the daughter of the local school teacher.... The Shaws were Scots-Irish Presbyterians from Armagh County, North Ireland. Rachel Shaw's father, Gavin was an educated man, a teacher. According to family tradition Gavin Shaw's father was distantly related to the famous Irish playwright, George Bernard Shaw (born 1856).

Unfortunately any such connection probably goes back to a far distant time, perhaps as distant as the Battle of the Boyne (1690). George Bernard Shaw was directly related to a Captain William Shaw who had fought at the Boyne, for which he received a large land grant from King William in Kilkenny County in the South of Ireland. Quite possibly the predecessors of Gavin Shaw had also fought at the Boyne, although such a connection has not come to light as yet. George Bernard's ancestors were wealthy Anglican landowners in the extreme south of Ireland at Kilkenny. Our ancestors, the Shaw's of Armagh were Presbyterian tenant farmers in the extreme north of Ireland.

According to the family genealogy, in 1861 Gavin Shaw of Armagh sold his sheep, left his rented land in Ireland, and migrated to Canada with his wife and eight children: Benjamin, Gavin Jr., William, Eliza, Robert, Rachel, Susan, and James. His daughter (my great grandmother), Rachel Shaw, was twelve years old at the time. She later would tell her daughter Maude that "the family spent 14 weeks on a storm tossed sea sailing to Canada, a trip she would never forget". Unfortunately she didn't provide us with any details. In good weather the average sailing time would be 4-6 weeks, so they must have had a stormy time of it.

We have an early tintype of the three youngest of the eight Shaw siblings (Robert, Susan, and James). The image appears to have been taken a decade after their arrival in Canada. Great grandmother Rachel Shaw (Johnston) would have been the oldest of this group of siblings, but she is not in the photo. She was twelve when she arrived and Robert would have been 1-2 years younger. In the tintype, Robert looks to be at least 20 years old with his stylish moustache, tie, and three-piece business suit. Susan, seated in the photo,

is fashionably attired in a multi-layered, black linen gown with a pot of flowers for a hat. The youngest brother James looks like he is ready for Eton (or perhaps a somewhat less expensive Irish or Canadian college). The Shaws were educated people.

It is possible that the Shaw family crossed the Atlantic on the same ship that brought another Johnston brother and his bride to Canada. Andrew and Anne Johnston were married in Ireland and migrated to Canada in 1861. They settled in the same town in the same year as Gavin Shaw and his family. They certainly knew each other; it was a small town. And, the families would soon intermarry; some of the Shaws would join the Johnstons in Manitoba.

According to Maud, Andrew was writing letters to his parents and his brothers, inviting them to join him in Ontario. In all likelihood their father Joseph had decided to reassemble the family in Canada. John, Robbie and James left Boston for Ontario in 1863, and two years later their parents Joseph and Margaret Johnston arrived from Ireland with the rest of the family. One hundred years later Grandson William Purvis discovered immigration records for "Hugh" (sic) and Margaret Johnston and seven of their children who had sailed from Ireland on the SS *Hibernia* which arrived in Quebec on 11 September 1865.<sup>17</sup>

Grandson William Purvis also found a wonderful description of the *Hibernia*. She was a 3,000 ton, iron-screw steamer, built at Dumbarton, Scotland in 1861. Joseph and Margaret were traveling on one of the faster, more comfortable passenger ships; another indication that they were relatively "well to do" compared to other immigrants at the time.

By 1865 the entire family was together again in Ontario, only William had remained on his farm outside Boston. One by one the Johnston children began to marry and start their own families in Canada. Johnnie Johnston (my great grandfather) convinced Rachel Shaw to marry him on 26 April 1867. But there was one more leg in their journey to the "promised land." According to Maud:

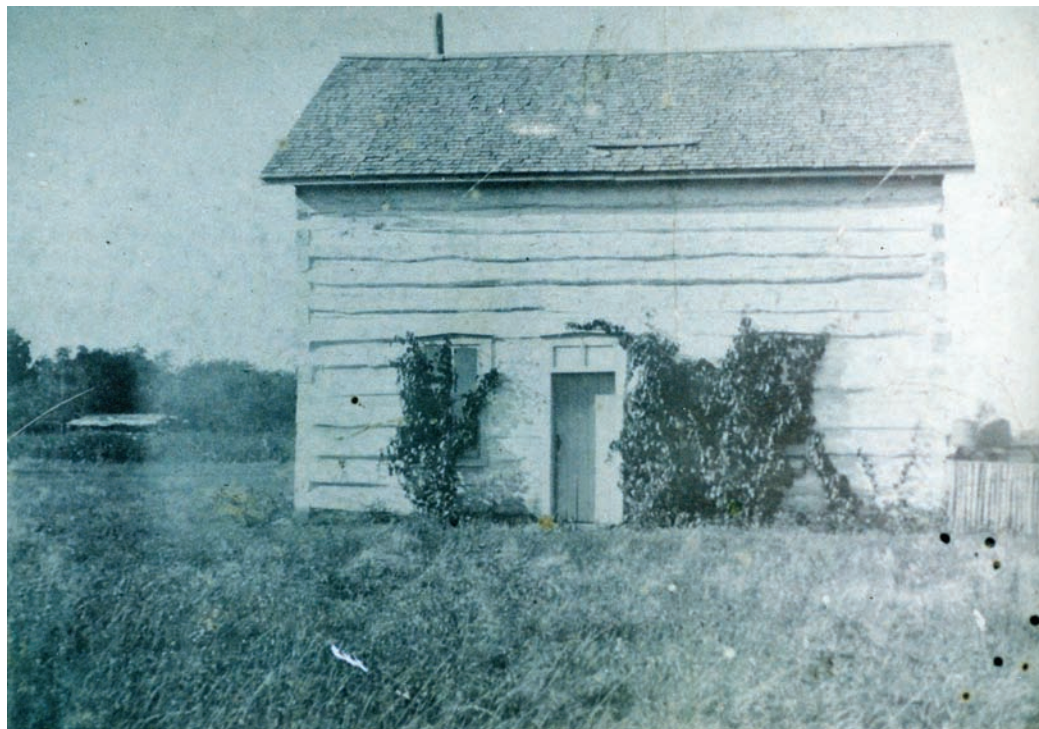
... John and Rachel lived with her parents in Ontario for a while. Their son Joseph was born in January 1869. And then John and his twin Robbie got restless again.... Father said he had a strong desire to

put his feet under his own table.... His one ambition was to own so much land that one could not see it all with one glance of the eye.... He would keep looking. Sometime in 1869–1870 they moved west to Prince Arthur's Landing [later Port Arthur, today Thunder Bay, Ontario] where the brothers hoped to work together as contractors building homes. At the time it was not an attractive place as the forests around Port Arthur had been devastated by wild fires in the late 1860s....

John stayed at Port Arthur just long enough for Rachel to provide him with his second child, the first of his five daughters (Susan, born 1871). Then, according to Maude's diary:

John began hearing stories of greater opportunities to the west along the Red River.... Under the terms of the Dominion Land Act of 1872 settlers to the new Province of Manitoba could acquire free land if they would establish homesteads and farms. John decided to venture westward with his wife and two children. John's twin, Robbie returned to Owen Sound to find a bride.

In all likelihood some of those tales of "greater opportunities" to the west were coming from his younger brother Alexander "Sandy" Johnston. According to the family genealogy:<sup>18</sup>



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The home of John and Rachel Shaw Johnston at Glencross, Manitoba, circa 1900.

Sandy traveled west with Col. Wolseley's Red River Expedition on the overland route from the Ontario lake-head, arriving in Winnipeg in 1870. He worked for a time for Ballentine's Wholesale and Supply Company, a Winnipeg firm.

How I wish I knew more about Uncle Sandy's adventures in early Manitoba. In all likelihood, somewhere in Canada there is a distant cousin with an attic full of reminiscences. Sandy would homestead with the rest of the family on the tall grass prairie just south of Morden at the foot of the Pembina Hills. The family genealogy further records that; "in 1876 Sandy worked with the surveying crews at the United States border and in sections 1 and 2."

Unfortunately Maud's historical reportage breaks down a bit at this point. There are so many details of local history that she skips in her diary. She does not mention the Red River Rebellion and the battles for Manitoba with the Métis, the Fenians, and filibusters.<sup>19</sup> Nor does she mention the difficulties and hazards of the "Dawson Road" the old overland route used by fur trappers heading to Manitoba from Thunder Bay on Lake Superior. In 1870 it took the Wolseley Expedition some 96 days to cover 700 miles of wild rapids, long portages through storm ravaged trails, fallen timber, clouds of mosquitoes, leaches, scarcity of game, sickness and dysentery.<sup>20</sup>

How did a family with two young infants travel across the rugged Laurentian Shield and into Manitoba? In 1873 the Dawson Road across Canada was useless as an immigration route. The family genealogy mentions that "they traveled by flat bottomed boat to Manitoba." It seems most likely they followed the route taken by W. F. Butler in his 1870 trip to Winnipeg.<sup>21</sup> Butler traveled first by steamboat down the Great Lakes to Chicago, then by railroad north to Milwaukee (Wisconsin), where he transferred to another railroad traveling west to Prairie Du Chien (Wisconsin), then by steamboat across the Mississippi River to the town of Macgregor in Iowa, then by train again to St. Paul (Minnesota), where he transferred to another railroad traveling west to Georgetown on the Red River, and finally by steamboat up the Red River to Pembina on the Canadian/US border and on to Winnipeg.

Maud picks up her story:

... In the summer of 1873-1874 John and Rachel arrived in the muddy little village of Winnipeg. They must have been exhausted. They had two young children (Joseph and Susan), and Rachel was soon expecting a third (Margaret born 5 August 1874)... With every rainstorm the town became a sea of red, sticky, mud... tenacious stuff that coated everything and left a permanent stain on clothing even after brushing and washing. Rachel remembered the shrieking of the Red River carts as they passed down Main Street in Winnipeg caked with mud. The carts were made entirely of wood, great square boxes balanced on a single axle

with a pair of five-foot wooden spoke wheels, all pulled by an ox or a horse.

By fall the drinking water was bad and the family had fallen deathly ill with typhoid fever. Rachel was as sick as everyone:

But she couldn't give way to it—she first nursed one child and then another through the long weary fall." Winter came at last and the sickness broke. Somehow they all survived, but it took baby Margaret four years to learn to walk.

After reading a little of the local history it seems they may have received considerable assistance in Winnipeg from the Rev. Doctor George Young and the ladies of the Winnipeg Methodist Church.<sup>22</sup> In one of her rare moments of critical commentary Maud commented:

The Johnstons were strong Episcopalians. Mother was brought up Presbyterian.... My parents compromised by joining the Methodist Church so as to have a family Church.... The denomination of a Church means so little to me as there is so little difference in the fundamental things in the Protestant world... I do dislike the emphasis placed on Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian.... I like them all.

In the 1870s the town of Winnipeg was a rough, dangerous place, full of voyageurs, buffalo hunters, whiskey traders, Indians and saloons. The Northwest Mounted Police were just beginning to establish outposts and bring law and order to the area. Maud remembered her father's stories of early Winnipeg:

I do remember father telling of Indians he had seen in Winnipeg who told stories of how they had surrounded, killed and scalped travelers in '49 as they were going westward in covered wagon days in the US. One blood-curdling tale was of a woman with long, fair hair who drowned in a river rather than face being captured. The Indians marveled at the hair, as they had never seen anything like it before among their raven-haired squaws. I listened with baited breath without my father noticing me.... he just could not sit still while the brave told about it... he said he felt like striking him in his tracks and choking him as he gloated about the fiendish tale.

In 1871 the Legislative Assembly of the new Province of Manitoba met for the first time and began handing out free plots of prairie land to anyone who would settle and build a farm. John was working as a wheelwright with the firm J. H. Ashdown in Winnipeg, but he soon began riding out of town looking for potential properties. According to

Maud he finally found what he was looking for at the foot of the Pembina Hills, just south of what is now Morden, Manitoba:

He spent months searching for the right stream and the right soil. He finally settled on a deserted area about 80 miles from Winnipeg at the foot of the Pembina Hills, 1875 Land Grant Township 2, Range 5, and Section 1.<sup>23</sup>

... The soil was a dark, rich loam and they were the only family in the area at the time. There were oak, ash, elm and box elder along a nearby stream. John spent that first summer felling trees and building a log cabin while the family lived in a tent. By fall there was an abundance of fat, juicy berries hanging on the haw bushes along the creek.

They named that muddy little stream Liffey Creek, and their new home Phoenix Park. The rest of the family must have had a good laugh over those prophetic names. The phoenix was the mythological bird that rises from its own ashes. Maud records that the ranch was built on deserted and recently burned-over land. At the time great fires would periodically sweep across the prairie, fires ignited by lightning, or by settlers clearing their land, or by Indians attempting to drive animals towards their hunting parties.

Their new home would "rise from the ashes" on the banks of Liffey Creek in Manitoba. The Liffey River in Ireland winds through Dublin, past its magnificent city garden Phoenix Park, along its docks and wharves, and into the Irish Sea. The broad Liffey carried the family and thousands of other Irish families out of Dublin and off to America. The land of "golden opportunities" for the Johnston family began on the scorched banks of a muddy creek on an inland sea of tall grass in Manitoba.

Sometime about 1880 Joseph and Margaret Johnston posed proudly for their portrait. Joseph stands rigidly erect; proudly wearing the bold sash of the "Order of the Orange." His wife Margaret sits beside him with the wise, tolerant smile of a woman who has overcome considerable obstacles in her lifetime.

They had good reason to be proud of themselves. Their entire family had survived the Famine and successfully gathered about them in Manitoba (William the oldest son joined them in 1891). The family had traded 35 acres of rented land in Ireland for thousands of acres of rich Manitoba prairie land. Of course transforming that tough prairie sod into some of the richest farm land in the world would take decades of hard work. But that too is a story for another time. ☞

#### Notes

1. Johnston, Maud. "Diary of the Johnston Family." 1938. An unpublished family history. The original is with the author in Portland, Oregon. See note #2 below.

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## Future History

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

- 90 years of the Winnipeg Foundation
- The Alloways: Winnipeg's early power couple
- Poor children in fresh air
- The Children's Hospital and the treatment of polio
- *and more!*



## The Story of Elzéar Goulet

by Jérôme Marchildon  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

On 12 September 2008, near the corner of Taché Avenue and La Vérendrye Street in St. Boniface, a new heritage park was opened and a monument and interpretive signage was unveiled.<sup>1</sup> The park was created in the memory of Elzéar Goulet. The interpretive signs celebrate his life and tell the story of his tragic death during one of the most tumultuous times of the history of the Métis in Manitoba. In the local community newspaper, *The Lance*, Goulet is described by Elzéar's great grandnephew, author George R. D. Goulet, in the 18 September 2008 issue as a "Métis martyr." He states that Goulet "should be looked upon as a hero if you define a hero as someone who loses his life fighting for his people."<sup>2</sup>

Prior to the opening of the park, few Winnipeggers were aware of Elzéar Goulet's story.

St. Boniface councillor Dan Vandal initiated the project, telling CBC News on 26 November 2007, "It's not very well known, but it's one of those remarkable Winnipeg stories, and Winnipeg needs their stories, I think...to be brought to life."<sup>3</sup> What is the legacy of Elzéar Goulet and how does his story resonate with the Métis in Manitoba today?

Elzéar Goulet was born on 18 November 1836 in St. Boniface.<sup>4</sup> He was the son of Alexis Goulet and Josephte Siveright, and was the third child in the family of six children.<sup>5</sup> The well-documented history of the Goulet family in the Canadian fur trade can be traced back to the voyageurs who paddled the waters from Québec westward from early in the eighteenth century.<sup>6</sup> One of Elzéar Goulet's ancestors came west from New France with explorer Pierre Gaultier de Varennes et de La Vérendrye, in search of the western sea in the 1730s.<sup>7</sup> La

Vérendrye and his men were the first Europeans to set eyes on much of the landscape, flora and fauna, and peoples of western Canada.

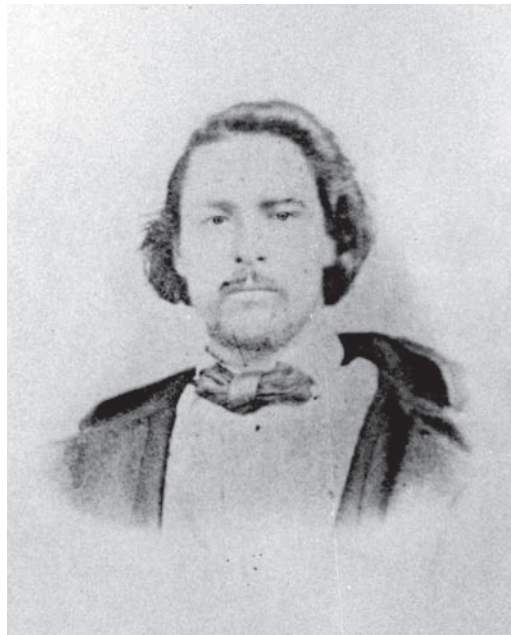
Elzéar Goulet's grandfather, Jacques Goulet, was posted in Athabasca where he worked for the North West Company as a voyageur from 1804 to 1821.<sup>8</sup> From 1821 to 1824, he worked in the Saskatchewan District for the Hudson's Bay Company. Jacques Goulet retired from the HBC service in 1824.<sup>9</sup>

The legacy of the Goulet family, who worked for the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company as voyageurs, was passed from father to son, as Jacques Goulet's son, Alexis Goulet became a Bay man, too. Elzéar's father, Alexis, was born in St. Boniface, Manitoba in 1811 and died on 25 December 1856. Little is known about his life as a child, but he worked for the Hudson's Bay Company in Brandon House as a Middleman, or middle oarsman position, on a York boat, from 1829 to 1832. When his contract with the Hudson's Bay Company expired, he became a Freeman in the Red River Settlement until 1835.<sup>10</sup>

Elzéar Goulet came by his zeal for Métis rights from his father, Alexis. Alexis was one of twenty-two other buffalo hunters, traders and freighters who assembled on 29 August 1845 to write a letter

demanding Métis rights to hunt and trade at a fair price.<sup>11</sup> This letter was written by James Sinclair, who was a factor for the Hudson's Bay Company at the time and it was submitted to the Governor Alexander Christie of Red River. The letter demanded that, "as Natives of this country and as half breeds, [we] have the rights to hunt furs in the Hudson's Bay Company's territories where we think proper, and again sell those furs to the highest bidder likewise having a doubt that Natives of this country can be prevented from trading and trafficking with one another."<sup>12</sup>

Very little is known of Elzéar Goulet's mother. Her name was Josephte Siveright and she was born in 1816



Archives of Manitoba, Personalities – Goulet, E. 1, N21685.

**Métis martyr** Elzéar Goulet (1836-1870).

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and died in 1891. Josephthe's mother—Elzéar's maternal grandmother—was a Métis woman named Louise Roussin, from Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario.<sup>13</sup> Elzéar's grandfather, John Siveright, was born in December 1779, in Drumdelgy, Parish of Cairnie, Scotland.<sup>14</sup> He began working for the North West Company in 1799.<sup>15</sup> John Siveright's personal history is very interesting. In 1815, when he was at Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, the Hudson's Bay Company considered him party to the North West Company conspiracy to destroy the Red River Settlement.<sup>16</sup> The following year, in 1816, after the pemmican war at Seven Oaks, he was charged as an accessory in the murder of Governor Robert Semple and twenty Scottish settlers.<sup>17</sup> Siveright went to trial in York (now Toronto), along with Alan McDonnell, Cuthbert Grant and other Métis, in October of 1818. The charges against him were dropped, as it was concluded that, "his involvement was peripheral at most."<sup>18</sup>

Leaving the incident at Seven Oaks behind him, John Siveright went to Sault Ste. Marie, Upper Canada to work as a clerk for the North West Company from 1816 to 1821.<sup>19</sup> After the amalgamation of the North West and the Hudson's Bay companies in 1821, Siveright was employed by the Hudson's Bay Company and was transferred to Fort Pelly, Saskatchewan, where he worked as a factor.<sup>20</sup> After 28 years of service to the Hudson's Bay Company, Siveright died in 1856. Elzéar Goulet's maternal grandfather, John Siveright is buried in Edinburgh, Scotland.<sup>21</sup>

Nothing is documented of Elzéar Goulet's childhood, or as a young man. As his father Alexis was a buffalo hunter, it can only be assumed that he accompanied him in the hunt.

In 1861, when Elzéar was twenty-five years old, he took over the mail route from Pembina to Upper Fort Garry from his eldest brother Roger. He would travel by horseback in the summer and by dogsled in the winter. Each trip took Elzéar three to four days. His weekly trips between the two settlements made him well known and respected.<sup>22</sup> During this time, Elzéar met Joseph Rolette, who was the postmaster at Pembina. Rolette was a very influential person in the Pembina area. As well as being postmaster, Rolette was a merchant, freighter and politician, who built a fur-trading post for the American Fur Company at Pembina in 1840, and started a line of Red River carts between Pembina and St. Paul in 1843.<sup>23</sup> On one of his trips to Pembina, Elzéar met Joseph Rolette's niece Hélène, and made her his wife. Elzéar married Hélène on 8 March 1859 in Assumption Church, at Pembina, Dakota Territory, where he became an American citizen.

Hélène Jérôme dit Sainte-Mathe lived with her uncle Joseph Rolette and his wife Angélique Jérôme. Hélène was born on 7 June 1844, in St. Boniface, and was the only child of Jean-Baptiste Jérôme dit Saint-Mathe and Josephthe Courchéne. Just over a year after Hélène was born, Jean-Baptiste died; he was only nineteen years old. Hélène's mother Josephthe lived a remarkably long life, however. She was born in St. Norbert, Manitoba in 1826 and died in 1920 at 94 years old.<sup>24</sup>

In 1847, Hélène's mother, Josephthe remarried Pierre Deschenaux in St. Boniface.<sup>25</sup> Baby Hélène did not live with her mother and her new husband, but was raised by her aunt Angélique and her uncle Joseph Rolette in Pembina. It is not clear why Hélène was not raised by her own mother and her new family in St. Norbert, but she lived with Joseph and Angélique until at the age of fourteen she married Elzéar Goulet. Elzéar and Hélène were married for eleven years and had six children.<sup>26</sup>

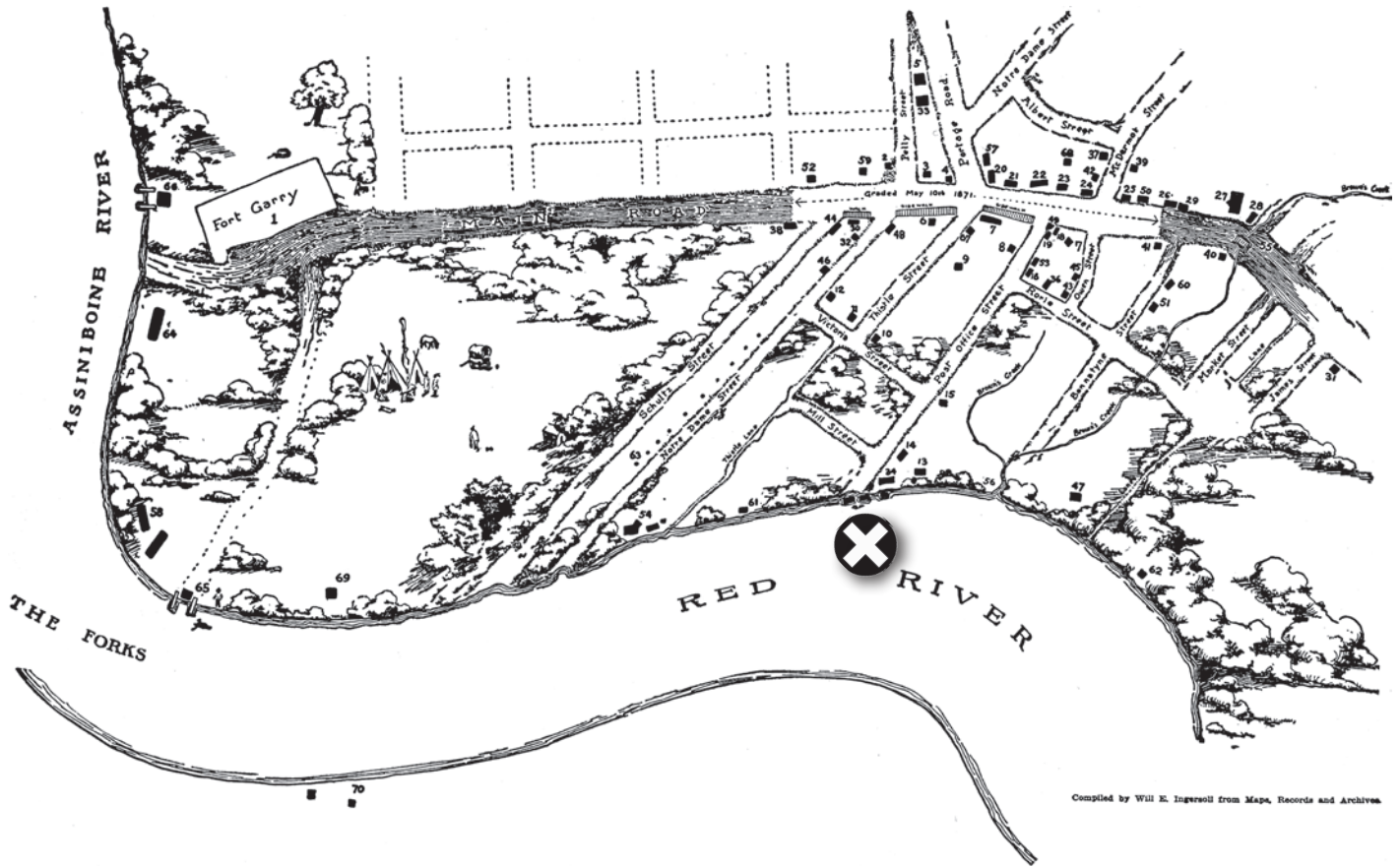
In the late fall of 1869, Elzéar joined an organized group of Métis led by Louis Riel. The group had constructed a barricade at the bridge on the La Salle River, which was the main north-south route from Upper Fort Garry to Pembina. This was to prevent the Canadian government officials from claiming land already occupied by the Métis.<sup>27</sup> The barricade was called "La Barrière." The site is now a park of the same name, just outside Winnipeg.<sup>29</sup>

Elzéar's older brother Roger was born in 1834, and died on 25 March 1902, in St. Boniface.<sup>29</sup> He was the godson and protégé of Monseigneur Provencher.<sup>30</sup> Roger was educated at St. Boniface College and held positions of surveyor, district judge and member of the Council of Assiniboia.<sup>31</sup> His connections to the church, the Government of Canada and his seat on the Council of Assiniboia gave the Goulet name status and notoriety. The Honourable Roger Goulet was authorized by the Ottawa government to negotiate with Riel and the Métis leaders on the Métis land claim that was presented at the same time as the barricade at La Barrière. As a representative of Ottawa, he was obliged to oppose Louis Riel's provisional government. Ironically, at the same time as these negotiations were taking place, Roger's brother Elzéar joined Riel's provisional government.<sup>32</sup>

The people of Pembina supported Riel's ideas on the Métis land claims. Elzéar's loyalty to Riel and his social standing, thanks to his brother, elevated him to the military rank of captain in Riel's provisional government.<sup>33</sup> Elzéar served directly under Ambroise Lépine, Riel's adjutant general.<sup>34</sup>

On 3 March 1870, Elzéar served as a member of the court martial for Thomas Scott, who was accused of treason against the provisional government in the Red River.<sup>35</sup> Scott was an Orangeman who had recently immigrated to Red River from Upper Canada and protested violently against Métis land rights.<sup>36</sup> Scott not only was in support of the Canadian government's claiming of Métis land to be redistributed to Ontario immigrants, but voiced racist and anti-Catholic sentiments.<sup>37</sup> On the day following the trial, Elzéar, with other members of the court, escorted Scott outside the walls of Upper Fort Garry and executed him by firing squad.<sup>38</sup>

After Scott's execution, Elzéar Goulet and Elzéar Lagimodière, who was Elzéar's brother-in-law, were given the duty of disposing of Thomas Scott's corpse.<sup>39</sup> To this day, no one really knows where the corpse was placed, but it was rumoured that they dressed Scott's body in Métis clothing, placed it on a sled and drove the sled onto the ice, and into the Red River.<sup>40</sup> By dressing Scott as a Métis, they



Archives of Manitoba, Maps Winnipeg 1872 #1. [Manitoba Free Press, 9 November 1922, page 22]

**Goulet walked these streets (and drowned at the X symbol).** This map reconstructed in 1922 shows Winnipeg as it looked fifty years earlier: 1. Upper Fort Garry, 2. Dominion Lands office, 3. William Drever's building, 4. Red Saloon, 5. Holy Trinity church, 6. Brian Devlin's restaurant, 7. Red River hall, also called McDermot's Row, 8. O. Monchamp's hotel, 9. Garrett House, 10. Indian Department, 11. Customs House, 12. Roman Catholic convent, 13. Andrew McDermot's windmill, 14. Andrew McDermot's residence, 15. fire hall, 16. post office, 17. parliament building (in A. G. B. Bannatyne's residence), 18 and 19. Bannatyne's store and salt warehouse, 20. McKenny block, first building in Winnipeg, 21. White saloon, kept by McIvor and McIntyre, 22. Davis hotel, formerly kept by George Emmerling, 23. John Higgins' store, 24. F. Gingras' building, 25. W. H. Lyon's building, 26. Henry Coutu's butcher shop, 27. jail, 28. Archibald Wright's building, 29. J. H. Ashdown's building, 30. Dr. John Schultz's drug store, 31. *Free Press* office, 32. Good Templars' hall, office of the *News Letter* and the *Manitoba Liberal*, 33. Knox church, 34. steamboat landing and small warehouse, 35. flatboat stores on river near levee, 36. office of *The Manitoban*, 37. Thomas Lusted's blacksmith shop, 38. Grace church, 39. William Harvey's livery stable, 40. A. M. Brown and Company's building, 41. Dr. Curtis J. Bird's building, 42. A. Strang's residence, 43. John Hackett's bakery, 44. brick block owned by J. C. Schultz, 45. Robert Stalker's harness shop, 46. Royal Canadian hotel, later Brouse's hotel, 47. old Ross house, residence of William Coldwell, editor of *The Manitoban*, 48. Lyster Hayward's auctioneering building, 49. W. Palmer Clarke's general store, 50. Alfred Boyd's store, 51. Bernard R. Ross' block, 52. shop shared by gunsmith William Chambers and jeweller and watchmaker George D. Northgraves, 53. "Pride of the West" billiard saloon, 54. W. J. Macaulay's lumber mill, men's boarding house, and office, 55. old tumble-down corduroy bridge across Brown's Creek, 56. Brown's Creek, 57. Merchant's hotel, 58. Immigration sheds, 59. Alexander McMicken's bank, 60. Alexander Begg's soda water factory, 61. Dick and Banning's sawmill, 62. residence of surveyor Duncan Sinclair, 63. group of residences, from river: John Johnston, H. Hodges, Thomas Collins, George E. Fulthorpe, James Irwin (city waterman), Matthew Davis (blacksmith), Thomas Jeffers (ferryman), Sam Spencer (drover), John Kennedy (registrar), William McGaw, Alexander Dunlop (*Free Press* employee), and Stewart Mulvey, 64. Hudson's Bay Company steamboat warehouse, 65. ferry from St. Boniface, 66. ferry across Assiniboine River, 67. Thistle store, 68. John Higgins' residence, 69. General hospital (moved to this location at end of 1872), and 70. St. Boniface Cathedral and College.

intended that he would be unrecognizable if his body was found later in the spring. The disguising and disposing of Scott's body in the river this way denied Scott a proper Christian burial to add further insult to injury to a man clearly hated by Riel and his supporters.

In August 1870, the Garnet Joseph Wolseley military expedition arrived at Upper Fort Garry. The Wolseley expedition was sent by Ottawa to take control and maintain

peace in Red River until Lieutenant Governor Archibald arrived. Wolseley and his militiamen were to act as a police force and secure the west from any future up-risings. Louis Riel and many members of his provisional government left the area for fear of a violent retaliation for Thomas Scott's death.<sup>41</sup> Elzéar chose to stay at Red River, a choice that would prove to be fatal.

A few weeks after the arrival of the Wolseley expedition, on 13 September, Elzéar entered the Red Saloon located at the corner of Portage Avenue and Main Street, in Winnipeg. The Red Saloon was a wild and rowdy drinking establishment run by American brothers from New York City, Bob and Hugh F. O'Lone.<sup>42</sup> So wild was this saloon that Bob O'Lone was killed in a bar room brawl in his own establishment shortly after Elzéar's death in the fall of 1870.<sup>43</sup>

Hugh O'Lone was a member of Riel's provisional government, which made the Red Saloon a safe watering hole until the Wolseley military expedition arrived at Red River.<sup>44</sup> Wolseley's soldiers were stationed at Upper Fort Garry, only a few hundred metres away from the Red Saloon. The Red Saloon soon became the tavern of choice for the soldiers and other Orangeman supporters.

It is unknown why Elzéar Goulet entered the Red Saloon on 13 September 1870. He boldly walked into the saloon in the middle of the afternoon believing that it was a safe time to avoid conflicts with patrons, but he realized too late that he had walked into a hornet's nest of a deadly brood of drunken men.<sup>45</sup> He was recognized for his role in the resistance by John Farquharson, who had been a prisoner of the provisional government.<sup>46</sup> Goulet was chased down Post Office Street, now Lombard Avenue, by Farquharson and a band of vigilantes led by officers of the Ontario Rifles.<sup>47</sup> At the end of the street, a desperate Elzéar Goulet dove in the Red River from the steamboat landing in an attempt to swim across the river to safety in St. Boniface. He was pelted with stones by his pursuers and was knocked on the head unconscious in the muddy currents of the river and drowned.<sup>48</sup>

Many soldiers in the Ontario Rifles and Canadian volunteers joined the Wolseley military expedition to take revenge for the execution of Thomas Scott.<sup>49</sup> They clearly saw this situation as an opportunity to do so. The mob attack was out of control. According to a witness, Joseph Tennant, who held the position of bugler with the Ontario Rifles, stated during the inquest, "The frenzied mob in pursuit hurled missiles of all kinds at the hunted man and stoned him to death in the water."<sup>50</sup>

Elzéar died at the age of 34 and he was buried in the St. Boniface Cathedral cemetery. Manitoba's first Lieutenant Governor, Sir Adams George Archibald appointed two Hudson's Bay Company magistrates to conduct an inquest into Elzéar's death. Twenty witnesses were heard, warrants for the arrest of the pursuers were prepared but no arrests were ever made.<sup>51</sup> The government in Ottawa left all decisions about the outcome of the inquest to the local authorities, who were clearly either biased, or simply trying to keep the situation from spiralling out of control into mob rule.<sup>52</sup>

During this period, Elzéar was not alone in being singled out and attacked by vigilantes. Other Métis men who served on Riel's provisional government were badly beaten and one was murdered by unidentified assailants.<sup>53</sup> It was commonly believed in Red River that these were

acts of revenge for the death of Thomas Scott, and since no official action was taken to bring these crimes to justice, the law seemed to favour those who were committing the crimes.<sup>54</sup> As many Métis feared for their safety, several Métis families moved away to places such as Montana, Saskatchewan and Alberta.<sup>55</sup>

In 1870, after Elzéar's death, the Red River census showed Héléne Goulet as a twenty-six year old French Métis, currently living in St. Boniface, and as a widow and Catholic.<sup>56</sup> She had then moved with her six children, Alfred, Elise, Albert, Roger, Sara, and Elie to live with her mother-in-law Josephite Siveright Goulet and fifteen-year-old brother-in-law Maxime Goulet in St. Boniface.<sup>57</sup>

Héléne applied for land scrip in Manitoba on 13 July 1875 in the name of her children. Héléne also stated in the application that Elzéar worked as a labourer while he was alive.<sup>58</sup> She later moved to the North West Angle of the Lake of the Woods and was buried in the town of Kenora on 18 October 1920.<sup>59</sup>

Elzéar and Héléne's son, Roger, was born in 1867, and like his uncle Roger, he was educated at St. Boniface College. He received his Bachelor of Arts from the University of Manitoba in 1891, and his Masters of Arts in 1895. In 1900, he was appointed inspector of bilingual schools in Manitoba and principal of the St. Boniface Normal School. In 1909, he became president of l'Union Nationale Métisse, and was a member of the Société Historique de St. Boniface.<sup>60</sup>

In the 1901 Canadian census, Roger was recorded as living at 97 Masson Street with his family. He lived directly across from St. Boniface Normal School.<sup>61</sup> In the column of the census labelled "race," he curiously stated he is "Scottish."<sup>62</sup> It is a mystery why Roger claimed to be Scottish and not French; however, as he was an elite academic scholar in Manitoba, it is plausible that he did not want to be identified or linked to his Métis ancestry to protect his interests and social status in the community early in his career.

Elzéar Goulet's youngest brother, Maxime, who was born in 1855, and died in 1932, was elected in December of 1878 to represent St. Vital in the Manitoba Legislature, and in January 1880, he entered John Norquay's cabinet as Minister of Agriculture.<sup>63</sup> Goulet Street in St. Boniface was named after him in 1891.<sup>64</sup>

The Elzéar Goulet story represents the political and civil tension which existed at the time the province of Manitoba and the city of Winnipeg were being created. Dan Vandal, city councillor for St. Boniface, stated that "Goulet represents the unknown, non-Riel, Métis leadership of the era. Riel was certainly not alone in the Métis struggle... Goulet fills some of that void."<sup>65</sup> There are other heroes and other stories to be told about the Métis and their endeavour to be recognized as a legitimate nation, deserving of a legitimate homeland. Elzéar Goulet's story is a tragic story of the fight to preserve a culture and way of life and to find a place of one's own.

Goulet's story is also a story of misunderstanding according to Dr. Phillipe Mailhot, curator of the St. Boniface

Museum. Mailhot feels Goulet never wanted Thomas Scott executed. “Goulet offered to take personal responsibility for Scott as an alternative to having him executed, but others — leaders and supporters of the provisional government — felt they had to send the Canadian government a message by executing Scott. His story is relatively unknown even to those who live in St. Boniface and Winnipeg today.”<sup>66</sup>

The telling of the Elzéar Goulet story symbolizes a bigger issue than a single event in time. It represents a dark period in the early beginnings of Manitoba that needs to be acknowledged. It is a human rights issue; where all people should be treated equally and fairly despite their colour, race, gender or religion. Elzéar Goulet was not a politician, government official, or an educated man. He wanted a good life for his family and to bring stability and fairness to Manitoba. He stood up for what he believed in, what was right and just. He did what he did for his children, so that they could live in a harmonious state. This is the message of his story. The impact Elzéar Goulet’s story has on the Métis people in Manitoba is the pride and the means to tell their own story, with their own heroes and martyrs. ☞

### Notes

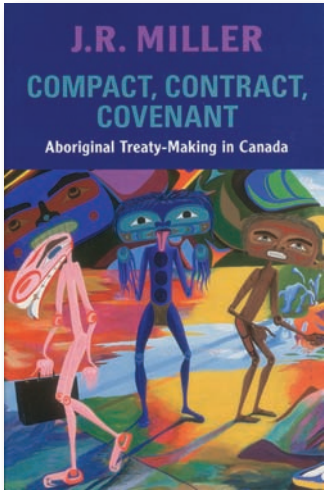
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57. “Unequal justice: The Métis in O’Donoghue’s raid of 1871”, *Manitoba History*, Number 39, Spring/Summer 2000, note #89.
58. *French Canadians of the West, Volume 1*, pp. 80-81.
59. *The Story of Manitoba*, Volume III, Winnipeg: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, p. 145
60. J. M. Bumsted, *Dictionary of Manitoba Biography*, Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999, p. 94
61. Archives of Manitoba, 1901 Canada census, microfilm T-6435, page 2, line 23.
62. *Ibid.*
63. *French Canadians of the West, Volume 2*, p. 93.
64. *Mosaic of Winnipeg Street Names*, compiled by J. B. Rudnychjy, Winnipeg: Canadian Institute of Onomastic Sciences, 1974.
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# Reviews

J. R. Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-Making in Canada*

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009, 448 pages

ISBN 978-08020-9515-2, \$35.00 (paperback)



Treaty-making has figured prominently in academic and public policy discourse since the 1970s. The negotiations of modern treaties such as the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (1975), Nunavut Territory (1993–1999), and the Nisga'a Treaty (1996–2000) have been the subject of intense debate over legal, political, constitutional, economic and environmental issues. They have sparked renewed investigations

into historical treaties and have focussed attention on Indigenous understandings and practices of treaty-making. Unlike studies that focus on single or regional treaties, Miller's latest work, *Compact, Contract and Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-Making in Canada*, sets a precedent as the first comprehensive overview of treaties in Canada from the time of contact to the present.

In this survey, Miller identifies commercial pacts, alliances of peace and friendship, and territorial agreements as the principal forms of treaty-making between Aboriginal Peoples and European newcomers in this period. The "compacts, contracts, and covenants" define and shape the relationships forged in Aboriginal treaty-making. Miller's analysis places the Indigenous concept of kinship and the cultural knowledge, spiritual beliefs and sacred elements intrinsic to it, at the heart of the treaty relationship. Drawing on a large and varied body of primary archival sources, oral histories, secondary published works and interviews, Miller argues that treaties have been foundational in the emergence of the Canadian state, and that the history of treaty-making offers a tangible marker of native-newcomer relations in Canada. He challenges the long-held assumption that treaties were forced upon Aboriginal Peoples for acquisition of land and suggests that the making of kin in the lengthy shared history of treaty-making brings natives and newcomers together as "treaty people"—a collective identity that Miller urges all to embrace.

French, Dutch and British newcomers first experienced Aboriginal treaty-making as commercial compacts: the exchange of goods for access to Indigenous travel routes and trade sites in their pursuit of furs. This tradition which endured into the mid-19th century in some locales

was marked by elaborate Aboriginal trade ceremonies of ritual welcoming, gift-giving exchanges, speeches, and the smoking of the sacred calumet signifying the presence of the Great Spirit. Europeans became adopted as "fictive kin" into First Nations' kinship circles through this custom and were able to fit themselves into existing Indigenous trade patterns and networks.

Representing the second stage of treaty-making, and occurring simultaneously with early fur trade commercial compacts, were the "peace and friendship" treaties that conflated trade exchange with diplomatic and military alliance. Best described in the 1735 statement of an Iroquois spokesman: "...trade and peace we take to be one thing," peace and friendship alliances such as the Great Peace of 1701 also included pacts that allied Europeans and Aboriginals in the Seven Years' War, the War of 1812 and the American Revolutionary War.

The Upper Canadian treaties, which Miller divides between those after the Seven Years' War (1756–1763) and those from the War of 1812 to 1862, were territorial agreements. These treaties followed the protocol of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 which placed all future treaty-making in the hands of the British Crown. The Proclamation was designed to quell wars between First Nations and the British after the defeat of the French, and to stem the tide of American land speculation east of the Thirteen Colonies. Before 1812, a total of 13 treaties dispossessing First Nations' land for one-time payments in goods, while protecting hunting and fishing rights, were completed. Though peace prevailed and kinship was celebrated in ceremonial exchanges, a few First Nations pointed out the Crown's fickleness in maintaining treaty promises. Indicating shifts in the relationship and a move toward European protocol, one First Nation found the English to be almost as bad as the Americans in taking away their land, and a Mississauga band asked for written evidence that settlers be sent off their lands.

In the treaties completed from 1815 to 1850, the Crown's policy for compensation changed from one-time payments to annuities. This departure was undertaken to decrease the Crown's initial outlay and to cover subsequent costs with settlers' mortgages. Buckquaquet of the Rice Lake Mississauga felt his people had little alternative to treaty as they were becoming more desperate. Voicing concern about the loss of the use of hunting, fishing and water sites and the depleting stocks of fish and game, he told Commissioner William Claus, "From our lands we receive scarcely anything...." Simultaneously, Indian Affairs' move from a military to a civilian focus indicated the increasing

influence of colonial society. While continuing to acquire First Nations' land, Indian Affairs began to alienate First Nations from themselves through an assimilationist "civilization policy" of reserve agriculture, Christianization and Euro-Canadian schooling for their children.

By 1846 the Crown had acquired access to all land south of the shield and began to look north. The issuing of mining licences to non-Aboriginal prospectors prior to making treaty led to criticism from Governor General Lord Elgin for its violation of the Royal Proclamation, and to crisis for First Nations. Ojibwa Chief Singuakonse's village lay within one "location ticket" area. After prolonged negotiations, the Lake Superior and Lake Huron treaties were peacefully completed in 1850 under supervision of William Robinson. Miller emphasizes the contemporary and future significance of these treaties noting that they reflected colonial society's increasing control, the Crown's decreasing adherence to the Royal Proclamation, and First Nations' disillusionment due to declining resources, depopulation, disease, and deterioration of the treaty-making relationship. The new settler government tended to perceive treaties as simple contracts and discouraged gift exchanges. First Nations' view of the land remained unchanged, and they grew more and more concerned.

Though the Southern Numbered Treaties (1871–1877) were also territorial agreements, Miller demonstrates that their most significant characteristic was the First Nations' "sense of proprietorship." First Nations requested compensation for their lands well in advance of the Dominion's move to treat with them. The young Dominion's annexation of Rupert's Land and the steady flow of settlers to the West, motivated Cree and Saukteaux of the southern Plains to request compensation for roads and construction of the telegraph wires. These First Nations made it clear that the territories in which they resided were theirs, and that the Crown had to take action to secure their agreement before strangers could use their resources. Chief Yellowquill's band posted a note on a church door requesting that settlers not cut down any more firewood. The Plains Cree of present-day Saskatchewan ordered a gang of telegraph construction workers out of the country, and the Blackfoot wrote to the Lieutenant-Governor of the Northwest Territories requesting treaty before settlement.

First Nations articulated similar appeals during treaty negotiations. At Treaty 4 talks, The Gambler told Commissioner Alexander Morris that "The Company have stolen our land...the earth, trees, grass, stones, all that which I see with my eyes." Another First Nations spokesman demanded the £300,000 paid for Rupert's Land. In an affirmation of ownership, Chief Mawedopenais stated at the closing of Treaty 3 talks, "... I deliver over my birthright and my lands..." Though most of the Crown's negotiators were lieutenant-governors from Manitoba and the Northwest Territories who had some previous experience in treaty-making, they did not refrain from exploiting their position and were accompanied by the Northwest Mounted Police (NWMP), a military presence,

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal missionaries, and Métis interpreters. The Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) assisted the government in housing and transporting officials. First Nations' refusal to treat on HBC territory or at the NWMP headquarters at Fort Macleod further emphasized their connection to the land and their resentment of its occupation by settlers.

Despite First Nations' unrest and the government's show of force, kinship played an important role in these treaties. Ceremonial protocol included the invocation both of deities and of the ceremonies practised almost two centuries earlier in the fur trade. Miller notes that much of this protocol was lost on the Crown representatives but that in the difficult negotiations of Treaty 4, for example, Commissioner Alexander Morris would have understood First Nations' displeasure when the pipe was not offered.

The government's attitude to First Nations changed after they achieved their goal of peaceful access to the land through the Numbered Treaties. Reinforced by the paternalism of the Indian Act and its legal definition of First Nations, the government neglected to fulfill treaty promises, which resulted in the lack of housing, food, implements, fuel, clothing, and in one case the skull of a bison for Cree and Saukteaux summer spiritual celebrations. The kin-like relationship that First Nations thought was embodied in the treaties had vanished. First Nations' proposals, petitions, and delegations were largely ignored.

The Northern Numbered Treaties 8 to 11, signed between 1899 and 1921, covered land in northern Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. Like the First Nations of the south, northern groups were motivated to seek treaty by depletion of subsistence resources. The federal government chose not to respond to their circumstances or requests until the economic opportunities of gold, oil and hydro became apparent. As a result, the Northern Treaties were hastily put together, often necessitating adhesions later (Treaty 8) or lawsuits (Lubicon Lake Cree) to correct past wrongs. Northern First Nations' awareness of previous treaties prompted them to voice their expectations at greater length than others had. Their hopes were seldom recorded, and the ceremonialism of the talks was reduced to feasting after the treaties were signed. Miller describes the government's role in northern treaty-making as the empire building of an "oppressive colonizer."

During the half-century from 1923 to 1975, treaty-making came to a halt in Canada. Miller attributes this gap to First Nations' disenchantment with the Numbered Treaties, the Great Depression, a hardening of leading bureaucrats' attitudes towards First Nations, and, to a lesser extent, a contemporary anthropological theory that First Nations were dying out. When treaty-making resumed in the 1970s, largely due to the persistence and strength of First Nations' leadership, it resembled former patterns of the one-time payments of the "peace and friendship" era. Modern negotiations were also characterized by government advantages, huge delays and further erosion

of ceremony. Provincial government involvement, initially in Quebec and then in British Columbia where Aboriginal title had not previously been recognized, brought changes and increased complexities. First Nations' resort to legal action to settle land claims further distinguished modern treaty-making from former pacts. This process established precedents for Aboriginal title that assisted in subsequent claims. Miller predicts that this modern form will continue into the future.

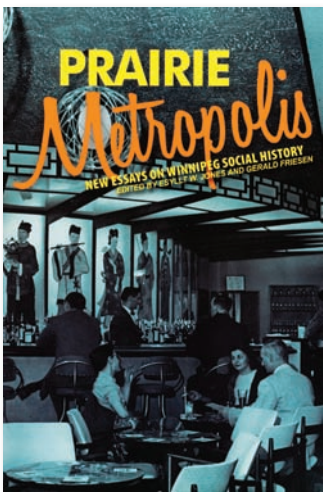
Building upon Miller's earlier work on the Saskatchewan treaties and numerous articles, *Compact, Contract, Covenant*, significantly reframes notions of Aboriginal treaty-making in Canada. Its investigation of continuities and shifts in the relationship between generations of Aboriginal leaders and non-Natives gives voice to Indigenous narrative memories of treaty-making and its cultural conceptions and comprehensions. Treaties were not only initiated by

Aboriginal Peoples, but their form and significance were influenced by Indigenous politico-religious theories and applications. Though his analysis is situated firmly within the context of the Canadian state, Miller does not hesitate to expose the flaws of government forces in treaty-making. He implores all residents of Canada, as "treaty people", to acknowledge responsibility for past, present and future treaty-making and to embrace and endorse the kinship embedded therein.

This survey is at once accessible, comprehensive, richly detailed and complex. It will enlighten popular audiences interested in the history of treaty-making and will be a most valuable reference for post-secondary instructors and undergrads, as well as an important text book for honours and graduate students in a wide variety of academic disciplines.

Denise Fuchs  
University of Manitoba

**Esyllt W. Jones and Gerald Friesen (editors), *Prairie Metropolis: New Essays on Winnipeg Social History*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2009, 264 pages  
ISBN 978-0-88755-713-2, \$29.95 (paperback)**



Too often the research products of graduate students remain buried in obscurity and do not reach a broader audience. This creative alliance between the Winnipeg Foundation, the University of Manitoba Press and two History professors, Esyllt Jones and Gerald Friesen, has resulted in the publication of a very useful collection of eleven essays by university scholars examining a diverse array of topics associated with Winnipeg's

social history.

We sometimes forget how recent the serious academic research, writing and teaching of Winnipeg and Manitoba's history are. Professor J. Edgar Rea's stimulating epilogue in this volume, "Prairie Metropolis: A Personal View", reminds us that he launched the first university course dedicated to the history of Winnipeg and Manitoba as recently as 1968–1969. This provocative personal overview sets the stage for the contemporary work on the social history of Winnipeg.

In their insightful introduction, Jones and Friesen effectively place the essays in their historiographical context as the successors to the "new" urban history represented

by Alan F. J. Artibise's *Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth, 1874–1914*. The current generation of historians represented in this volume pays rigorous and creative attention to categories of difference in Winnipeg's society—namely class, gender, ethnicity, race and sexuality. While appreciating the broad historiography in these areas, the reader will also be struck by the creativity of the articles in their use of primary sources hitherto not utilised broadly.

The essays are organised into two segments: Part One includes essays dealing with "reform and growth" in Winnipeg's first sixty years, and Part Two focuses on the Second World War and its aftermath. A recurring theme in Part One is the plight of the immigrant poor in the city's North End and the complex individual and institutional responses to this community of newcomers. Another recurring story that emerges from this first series of essays is that of how Winnipeg was out in front of the rest of Canada in some social areas, such as the creation of the juvenile court system, as illustrated by Kozminski and Woloschuk.

The essays in the second part, while strong academically in their own right, reflect the reality that research into the interwar and post-Second World War social history is only beginning to gain momentum. Clearly, Winnipeg's aspirations as a North American centre of influence have been replaced by a regional metropolis of reduced importance, but not without its distinctive personality. It is illuminating to read scholarly work by Janis Thiessen and Leslie Hall on two very important communities in Winnipeg's modern social fabric, the Mennonite and Aboriginal communities, through the lens of a successful



Mennonite-owned business and the evolution of the Winnipeg Indian and Métis Friendship Centre.

The publication of these eleven essays examining Winnipeg's social history is very encouraging. While they reflect a range of writing styles and a diversity of topics, this well-edited volume contributes considerably to the depth of research and analysis available to students of Winnipeg history and a broader public audience. What is particularly striking is the application of international

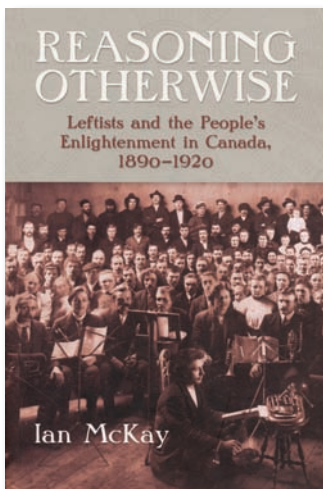
historiographical scholarship to urban history. To build on the tradition of Artibise and the recent emergence of strong popular Winnipeg thematic works, what is needed is a new synthesis of Winnipeg's history. Perhaps one of the talented historians represented in this volume will rise to the challenge and, in the spirit of Professor Rea, capture Winnipeg's "historic personality" once again.

Greg Thomas  
Parks Canada, Winnipeg

## Ian McKay, *Reasoning Otherwise: Leftists and the People's Enlightenment in Canada*

Toronto: Between the Lines, 2008, 643 pages

ISBN 9781897071496, \$49.95 (paperback)



Every now and then a remarkable book about some topic in Canadian history is published. Although not above criticism, Ian McKay's masterful tome *Reasoning Otherwise*, the eagerly anticipated, enthusiastically received, and thoroughly impressive first volume of an expected trilogy, is such a work.

In this massive study of social, intellectual, working-class and political history, McKay describes and analyzes what he calls the left's "first formation" in Canada from 1890 to 1920, a period in which "a distinctive and multifaceted socialist movement established itself as a permanent presence" (p. 1). According to McKay, a left formation is "an analytical term used to describe a specific constellation of parties, people, issues, and texts" united by its own "distinctive interpretation of an overriding political objective—that of reasoning and living otherwise" (p. 5). (These words, also forming the book's title, are taken from the slogan of Prairie socialist William Irvine.)

Compared to the 1920s and 1930s, when the Communist Party and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation were established in Canada, the earlier period has received considerably less attention from historians. McKay, a Professor of History at Queen's University and one of Canada's pre-eminent historians, is to be commended for "rescuing" the first formation and demonstrating conclusively that it was neither isolated nor ineffectual, but was alive and flourishing, and shaped the Canadian experience in subtle and powerful ways.

*Reasoning Otherwise* is a considerable expansion of McKay's 2005 book, *Rebels, Reds, Radicals: Rethinking*

*Canada's Left History*, published by the same independent Toronto press, *Between the Lines*. That book, in turn, was based on McKay's seminal article, "The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History," published in 2000. Building on the concepts he advanced earlier, in *Reasoning Otherwise* McKay utilizes the post-polemical methodology of critical reconnaissance of the Canadian left's complex array of different individuals, small groups, discussion circles, cultural associations, craft unions, and publications from Nova Scotia to British Columbia. In employing the reconnaissance concept, the author adopts the analysis of creating a new culture of Italian Communist Antonio Gramsci, who analyzed the success of liberal democratic states in resisting the working-class revolt after the First World War. For McKay, then, reconnaissance is a "political act of research" intended to awaken people to "little explored realities" and to "provoke a network of focused investigations," entailing acceptance that "on issues big and small, the latest word is not going to be the last word" (pp. 1–3).

The book is well organized, combining thematic and chronological chapters. After his introduction on reconnaissance and his subject's resistance to what he calls a hegemonic "liberal order," McKay offers the reader detailed analyses and interpretations starting with socialism, which he sub-titles the "revolutionary science of social evolution," founded on the arguments of Karl Marx, Charles Darwin (surprisingly) and, quite unexpectedly, the Darwin-inspired Herbert Spencer. The wide-ranging and dramatic influence of these thinkers convinced many members of Canada's first formation that socialism was not only inevitable but scientific, and that its attainment would be as necessary a part of man's evolution as the ability to walk. Subsequent chapters concern the emergence of the first formation in the 1890s, and then the questions of class, religion, women, and race. Throughout his narrative McKay emphasizes the important role of evolutionary thought in socialist and left analyses and the significant place that religion occupied in the debates and discussions

of leftist commentators from 1890–1920. While the author is sympathetic to the individuals and groups of the first formation, he writes candidly and in great detail of the unattractive and, by today's standards, reprehensible classism, sexism, and racism that permeated the Canadian left. McKay concludes *Reasoning Otherwise* with two chapters on the Winnipeg General Strike and its aftermath.

There are some problems associated with definition. While socialists and other leftists rigorously criticized and condemned capitalism in the period under review, they did so using such terms as “wage slavery” and “plutocracy,” and not McKay's “liberal order,” to refer to their nemesis. Moreover, despite McKay's carefully crafted definitions of a leftist and socialism (p. 4), the author is not consistent in limiting the left to socialism, because throughout the text he uses the words “left,” “leftist,” “socialism,” and “socialist” interchangeably, and his analysis of the left includes anarchism, and occasionally labourism, sometimes contrasting both with socialism (pp. 112, 131).

McKay, a Marxist, is concerned in *Reasoning Otherwise* not only with an analysis and interpretation of the past, but also the present, through a change of society to attain a socialist future (p. 10). As such, he is open to the charge of presentism—indeed, he states his embrace of present-minded arguments (p. 3)—or romantic or even wishful thinking as he links historical findings to contemporary political concerns and current struggles.

Readers of *Manitoba History* may be most interested in the Winnipeg General Strike chapters. Some of McKay's interpretations and conclusions can be challenged here. The author's perspective on the Strike (it began on 15 May, not 25 May, 1919, p. 459), which he calls the “great rebellion” (pp. 505, 474) and “a revolution” (p. 491) and suggests was similar to the Paris student and workers' strikes in 1968, is that it was only partially economic in nature, because the strikers had both “scientific and educational ambitions” (p. 491). This view is commonly accepted by the Marxist working class, and not by more traditional labour historians. McKay asserts that in the “high diction” of the Canadian left, the Strike became “a symbol of heroism” in which the strikers “created an event unlike any seen before in North America” (p. 495). That is debatable since the Seattle General Strike occurred a few months before Winnipeg's. It is also questionable to characterize the strikers, who wished to achieve the practical goals of union recognition,

collective bargaining, and higher wages (recognized only as partial factors by McKay, pp. 463, 466) as “democrats” and “seekers after the truth,” and their opponents, many of whom, as McKay himself states (p. 460) were “middle-class professionals and businessmen,” as “autocrats,” “philistine attorneys and book-burners” (p. 495).

For McKay, the Strike was a “hegemonic challenge to the existing political order,” as well as the climax of first formation socialism where, in “a landscape of repression,” thousands of men and women “struggled to find a new path to the realm of freedom,” and, in so doing, “dared to reason and to live in the bright clear air of the people's enlightenment” (p. 495). Just as this interpretation may be problematic, so too is the assertion that the trials of the Strike leaders were “show trials” akin to the infamous Moscow trials of the 1930s. Also debatable is the contention that William Pritchard “stood about as much chance of acquittal as did [Nikolai] Bukharin in Moscow in 1938” (p. 505). McKay himself acknowledges that charges were stayed against J. S. Woodsworth and that Fred Dixon (pp. 501–505) was acquitted (so was A. A. Heaps). Similarly, the author argues that the trials, which occurred ex post facto, were “pre-emptive strikes against an emergent realm of enlightened freedom” in which “authoritarian liberals” turned on Winnipeg's leftists the “same strategies of violence and exclusion they had earlier used on the Komagata Maru in 1914 and would later perfect in the violent repression of the On-to-Ottawa Trek in 1935” (p. 499). This neat linear progression is questionable.

These concerns do not diminish the overwhelming strengths of *Reasoning Otherwise*. One need not be a Marxist or other leftist to appreciate McKay's description and analysis of the Canadian left from 1890–1920 or the voluminous research in primary and secondary sources on which they were built. The book does not have a bibliography, but the scholarly apparatus employed throughout, including the 86 pages of endnotes and 24-page index, is daunting. Although the author states that his reconnaissance is “several steps down the ladder of comprehensiveness from a polished and final synthesis” (p. 1), this book is the benchmark for, and definitive work on the topic. For his monumental effort McKay very deservedly won the Sir John A. Macdonald Prize from the Canadian Historical Association for the best book published in Canadian history.

McKay can be assured that his hopes have been met, that *Reasoning Otherwise* will persuade readers that the “vanished world of left politics in turn of the century Canada is a fascinating and exciting field of study” and will generate “new conversations and debates” as a “means of reimagining the past of the left” (p. 11). His wish, however, that the book will anticipate the left's future and the “future hopes and prospects of those [formations] that are yet to come” (p. 11), remains to be realized.

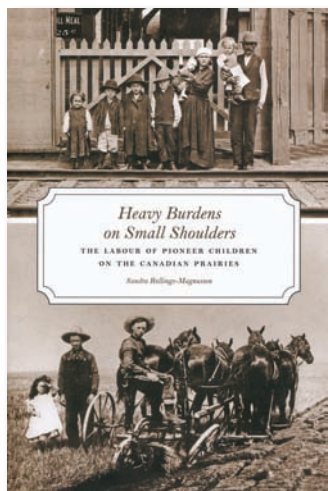
Henry Trachtenberg  
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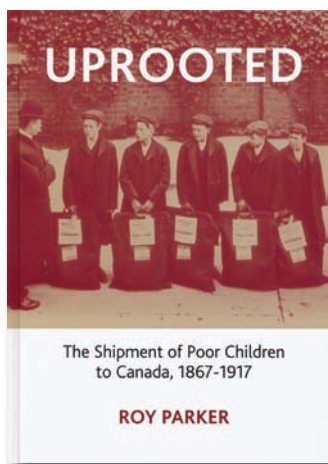
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**Sandra Rollings-Magnusson**, *Heavy Burdens on Small Shoulders: The Labour of Pioneer Children on the Canadian Prairies*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2009, 177 pages ISBN 978-0-88864-509-8, \$34.95 (paperback)

**Roy Parker**, *Uprooted: The Shipment of Poor Children to Canada, 1867–1917* Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008, 354 pages ISBN 978-0-7748-1540-6, \$45.00 (hardcover)



It is a rare treat to see one, let alone two, new studies related to the history of childhood in Canada. The publication of *Heavy Burdens on Small Shoulders: The Labour of Pioneer Children on the Canadian Prairies* by sociologist Sandra Rollings-Magnusson of Edmonton's MacEwan College, and *Uprooted: The Shipment of Poor Children to Canada, 1867–1917* by Roy Parker, Professor Emeritus of Social Policy at the University of Bristol, have added considerably to this field of literature.



Professor Parker's meticulous study focuses on the 80,000 British children who, in the 50 years following Confederation, were shipped to Canada to alleviate the stress on Britain's overburdened social welfare system. Using letters and other documents left behind by the emigration authorities, and sometimes by the

children themselves, Parker examines the child emigration scheme, the complex and competing forces that shaped it, and its results.

The cover image of *Uprooted* shows a serious-looking group of boys lined up, suitcases in hand, waiting to board a ship bound for Canada. This photo and a section of sixteen additional archival images are included to illustrate the text. These photos provide a glimpse of some of the children who are the focus of this study, along with scenes of the type of ship they would have sailed on, and a farm typical of those where the children were placed once in Canada. One wonders what additional images and perhaps artefacts might exist, hidden away in private homes, museums or archives.

Roy Parker introduces his work by placing it in a contemporary context, making it relevant to a wide readership. "Thousands of children are being uprooted as I write," he begins, whether as refugees or migrants, children sold into sexual slavery, child soldiers, child labourers, or youngsters accompanying their parents on family moves.

With this thought in mind, Parker emphasizes the importance of understanding not only the historical contexts and the sociological, political and economic reasons behind such moves, but also the impact being uprooted has on a given child. He dismisses the myth that children are survivors by nature—pliable and adaptable, and able to rebound from the most traumatic of experiences. Instead, he argues, children have "their own, unique histories, however brief and fragmentary, that remain a crucial part of their sense of identity."

Parker reviews Britain's child emigration schemes prior to the late 1860s, and describes the various circumstances that resulted in a return to emigration as a solution to the nation's social and economic problems. He explains how social workers, religious leaders and government authorities anticipated that the crisis in the social control of poor and destitute children (which intensified as technological change accelerated the loss of jobs) might be alleviated through emigration.

Canada's need for labourers of all kinds, especially domestic workers and agricultural labourers, made it an ideal destination for Britain's surplus children, as did the priority given to British immigrants, the country's relative proximity, and the availability of rural placements. The author explains how children, corrupted by the evils of the city and therefore placed in Britain's reformatories and industrial schools, were expected to be rehabilitated when relocated to the pure landscape of rural Canada.

The author explores the regulations that were put in place on both sides of the Atlantic to control the emigration and resettlement of children, and the role played by Protestant, Catholic, and other, "unorganized" advocates of emigration. He describes the placement of children in various circumstances across the provinces and, using letters written by some of the youngsters, details the difficulties that befell them. Worse, he explains, was the ill treatment that was inflicted upon many of these children, from physical abuse and neglect to sexual assault. He is careful to point out that it was not just the rights of child

emigrants, but of children in general, that suffered during this period of our history and points to the protest and reform movement that eventually resulted in improved treatment of children.

Parker completes his examination with a discussion of earlier Canadian studies of child emigration including *Labouring Children* by Joy Parr (1980), *The Home Children* by Phyllis Harrison (1979), and *Barnardo Children in Canada* by Gail Corbett (1981). Based upon his own research and the findings of these scholars, he concludes that most of the children uprooted by Britain's child emigration program suffered greatly. This begs the question, he warns, of how future generations will judge society's treatment of vulnerable children today.

*Heavy Burdens on Small Shoulders: The Labour of Pioneer Children on the Canadian Prairies* focuses on the work of pioneer children (as opposed to Parker's immigrant children), children's work on family farms in western Canada during roughly the same time period examined in *Uprooted*, the years of intensive settlement of this region from 1871 to 1913. Sandra Rollings-Magnusson uses more than two hundred children's diaries, letters, journals and poems, along with census data, other official records, and the existing scholarship in the field to explore the contribution of children to the survival of farm families during these years. She effectively demonstrates that, like women, "children worked hard to assist in achieving success, but were treated as economically invisible labour on the farm."

Thirteen statistical tables are included within the text, providing data on the nature of the agricultural workforce and the gender division evident in the kinds of labour performed by adults and children of different ages on the family farm. A selection of archival images scattered throughout the text offers a more subjective picture of this experience, and shows children at work in a variety of circumstances.

The author categorized the work performed by children as productive labour (including tasks like field work, livestock production, caring for horses, transporting crops, and other farm work); entrepreneurial labour (paid employment, raising animals for sale, selling goods like milk, butter, eggs or fruit, participating in gopher bounties, and trapping and selling furs); and subsistence labour (an endless list of chores including feeding chickens and pigs, milking cows, churning butter, picking berries and rosehips, gathering eggs, collecting wild mushrooms, washing clothes, spinning yarn, making beds, washing dishes, scrubbing floors, cooking meals, making and repairing clothes, hauling water, and caring for younger siblings).

As in Parker's study, the most poignant passages in this text come from the writings of the children themselves. In describing their work, they tell of the hardships they experienced, from developing calluses on their hands while cutting cordwood, to being terrified and risking injury while helping to douse a wildfire that threatened

their home. Unlike Britain's young exiles, however, these farm children also write of the satisfaction they felt in completing a difficult chore, or their pride in contributing to their family's well-being, like the child who planted irises to beautify the family farm.

While the circumstances of children working on the family farm under the supervision of their parents were scarcely idyllic by today's standards, Rollings-Magnusson demonstrates that the work experiences of the children she studied tended to compare favourably with those of the "home" children of Parker's study. However, as Parker points out, the child welfare reform movement that emerged in Canada in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was needed to protect the rights of all children.

In accessing and trying to control the work that children internationally are permitted to perform today, child advocates distinguish between child labour—exploitative work that is injurious to the child and threatens his or her right to an education and personal well-being—and child work, which is often a necessary contribution to a family's survival and may involve learning a skill that will serve the child later in life. Sandra Rollings-Magnusson's study tells us that the labour of pioneer children on the Canadian prairies fell into the latter category, and that their vital contribution to the development of the Canadian west deserves far greater recognition.

Clearly, there is more work yet to be done in this field. It is improbable that the voices of discounted or abused children would be found in the voluntary writings of the children that formed the basis of Rollings-Magnusson's research. Likewise, non-English speaking and illiterate children are not included in the study. The differences that existed across class and ethno-cultural lines, and the extent to which different families chose, or chose against, using child labour have not yet been considered. Perhaps future studies will be able to answer some of these questions and provide more information concerning the work performed by children and the role it played in their lives.

Sharon Reilly  
Curator of Social History  
The Manitoba Museum, Winnipeg

## Thanks ...

The Editors thank the following people who assisted in the preparation of this issue of *Manitoba History*: Monica Ball (Manitoba Legislative Library), Len Goldsborough, Melissa Knapp (Brechin Imaging Services), Rob McInnes, Delores Morrow (Montana Historical Society), Bronwen Quarry (Archives of Manitoba), Gwen Sproule, and Lewis Stubbs (University of Manitoba Archives).

# Cool Things in the Collection: Sessional Journal of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia, 1870

by Kathleen Epp and Joan Sinclair  
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On 15 November 2010, Manitoba's Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Minister Eric Robison announced the creation of a new provincial Métis policy that would mark an important step towards recognizing the contributions of the Métis in the creation of Manitoba. One archival record held by the Archives of Manitoba was featured as a key document in rewriting Manitoba history: the Sessional Journal of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia. In light of this attention, the Archives has digitized the journal and created a transcript, both now available on the Archives website.

## Background

The Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia sat from 9 March 1870 to 24 June 1870 with Louis Riel as its president and a council with councillors representing the French and English communities equally. The Legislative Assembly met to consider matters of governance for the region known as Assiniboia. This region encompassed roughly the area which would soon become the "postage-stamp" province of Manitoba. The meetings were held at Upper Fort Garry. The Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia concluded with the passing of the Manitoba Act and the entry of Manitoba as a province into Confederation.

## The Journal

The "Sessional Journal of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia" (AM, Red River Disturbance collection MG3 A1-15) contains a record of the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, from the first meeting of the First Session on 9 March 1870 until the last meeting of the Third Session on 24 June 1870.

The Sessional Journal begins with the session held on 23 March 1870—the date on which William Coldwell was appointed Clerk of the Assembly. Earlier sessions were entered on pages 11 through 15 of the journal, following the entry for 26 March and the listing of the bills passed in the First Session. The earlier sessions are documented largely through clippings from *The New Nation* that were glued into the journal.

The way in which the journal was kept leaves some questions as to its creation:

- When was the journal written? Was it written at the time of the sitting, beginning with the 23 March session? Was it written at some point after the existence of the Assembly?
- Who wrote the journal? The journal is not signed or inscribed in any way to identify its author. Was it William Coldwell, clerk of the Assembly, whose wife's descendants sold the journal to the Library?



G. Goldsborough

The 1870 Sessional Journal of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia is an innocuous tan-colored, leather-bound volume.

## How did the Journal Come to the Archives of Manitoba?

The Archives of Manitoba holds a variety of records documenting the Red River Settlement, the Red River Resistance and the establishment of the province of Manitoba. These records have come to the Archives from various individuals and from the

Hudson's Bay Company. Records from private citizens take different routes to come to the Archives and often pass through many hands before being offered to an archival institution. Information about the provenance of records acquired from private sources is often incomplete. The Sessional Journal of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia falls into this category.

This journal was purchased by the Legislative Library, then also responsible for archival records, in 1939, along with copies of the newspaper *The New Nation*. The journal was purchased for \$40 from Mr. E. R. James, of Rosser, Manitoba.

Read the Sessional Journal of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia. Digitized images of the full journal, as well as a full transcript, are now available on the Archives of Manitoba website.

[www.gov.mb.ca/archives](http://www.gov.mb.ca/archives)



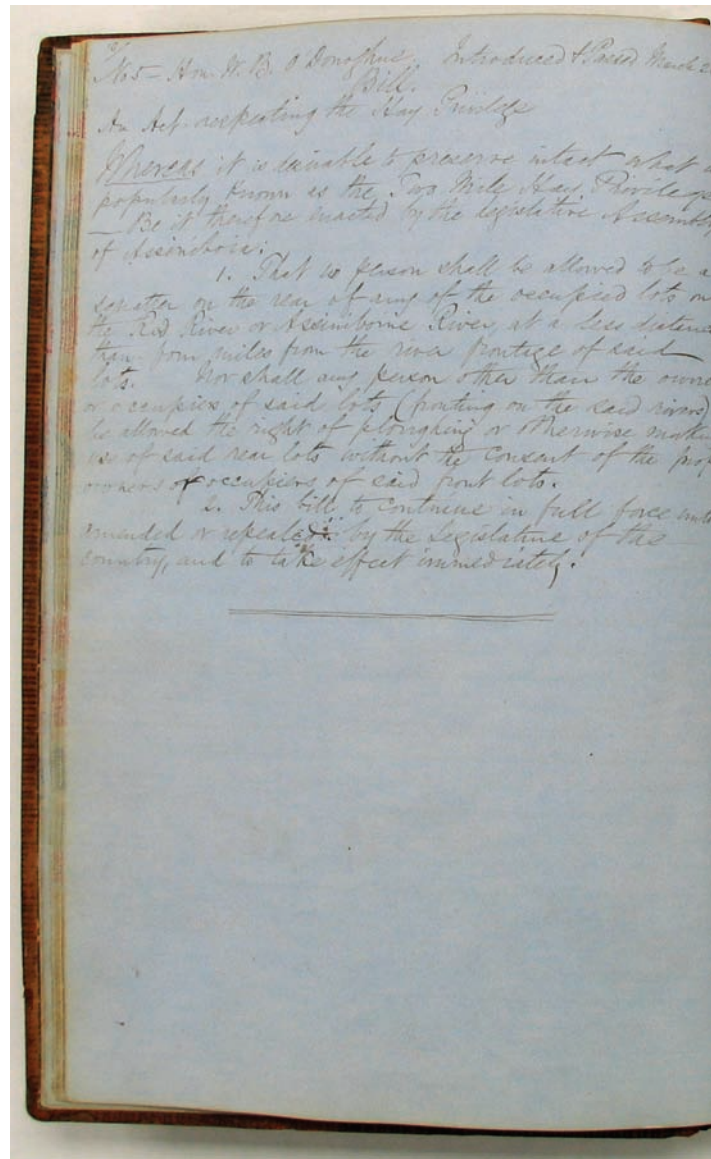
Archives of Manitoba, Mrs. John Black Fonds C44/2, #3.

**William Coldwell** (1834-1907) is thought to be the author of the Sessional Journal, in his capacity as Clerk to the Legislative Assembly of 1870.

The purchase of the journal, along with the newspapers, was noted in the annual report of the Legislative Library for 1939. At that time, the journal was noted as having been “kept by William Coldwell”.

William Coldwell came from London, England to Toronto in 1854 and then to the Red River Settlement in 1859. Coldwell was the publisher of the first newspaper in the settlement, *The Nor'-Wester*. He was married to Jemima Ross, daughter of Alexander Ross, and

subsequently to Jemima Mackenzie Ross, widow of William Ross. Coldwell and his second wife lived in Ross House at the end of Market Street, overlooking the Red River in Winnipeg. On 23 March 1870, Coldwell was named clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia. William Coldwell eventually moved to Victoria, BC and died there in 1907. His wife, Jemima Mackenzie Ross, moved back to Manitoba to live with her daughter's family in Rosser, Manitoba. In 1912, she passed away at the home of her grandson, Edward Ross James. His son, E. Renouard James, is presumably the E. R. James from whom the Legislative Library bought the journal.



**Record of a New Nation.** The Sessional Journal contains handwritten text along with pasted-in transcripts of the dialogue published in *The Nor'-Wester* proceedings of the first session on 9 March 1870.

### EXCERPTS FROM THE SESSIONAL JOURNAL

[page 11]

Assembly Chamber  
Upper Fort Garry  
March 9, 1870

The first meeting of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia was held in Upper Fort Garry today. There were present:

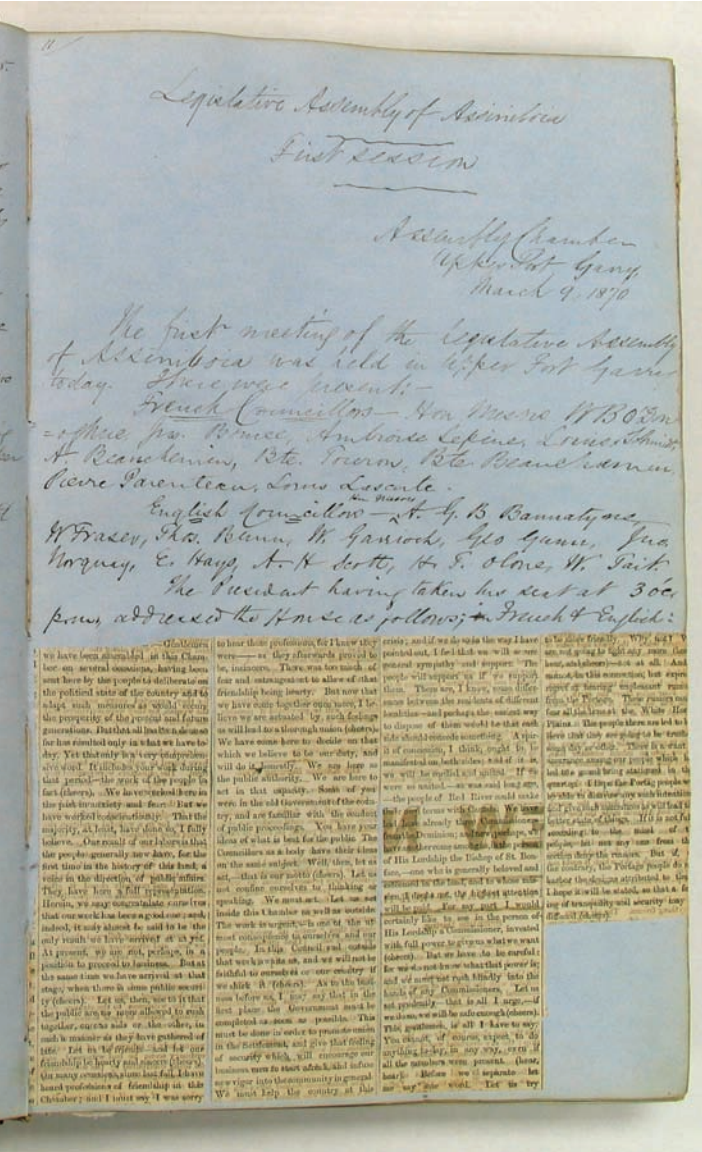
French Councillors—Hon. Messrs. W. B. O'Donoghue, Jno. Bruce, Ambrose Lepine, Louis Schmidt, A. Beauchemin, Bte. Touron, Bte. Beauchemier, Pierre Parenteau, Louis Lascerte.

English Councillors—Hon. Messrs. A. G. B. Bannatyne, W. Fraser, Thos. Bunn, W. Garrioch, Geo. Gunn, Jno. Norquay, E. Hays, A. H. Scott, H. F. Olone, W. Tait.

The President having taken his seat at 3 o'clock, p.m., addressed the House as follows, in French & English:

Gentlemen, we have been assembled in this Chamber on several occasions, having been sent here by the people to deliberate on the political state of the country and to adapt such measures as would secure the prosperity of the present and future generations. But that all has been done so far has resulted only in what we have to-day. Yet that only is a very comprehensive word. It includes your work during that period—the work of the people in fact (cheers). We have worked here in the past in anxiety and fear. But we have worked conscientiously. That the majority, at least, have done so, I fully believe. One result of our labours is that the people generally now have, for the first time in the history of this land, a voice in the direction of public affairs. They have here a full representation. Herein, we may congratulate ourselves that our work has been a good one; and, indeed, it may almost be said to be the only result we have arrived at as yet. At present, we are not, perhaps, in a position to proceed to business. But at the same time we have arrived at that stage, when there is some public security

C. Goldsbrough



Written minutes of the meetings of the 1870 Legislative Assembly, New Nation newspaper. This sample from pages 11 and 12 shows the

The Sessional Journal of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia demonstrates some important aspects of archival research. An archival record is always more than what is on the page. Understanding the “story” behind the record—the context of its creation, the history of its custody, how it got to the Archives, and the construction of the record itself—can provide important clues to interpreting the record and might just lead to brave new interpretations of history.

Find out more ...

Visit the Archives’ website and search the Keystone database for information about the Sessional Journal and other records related to the Red River Settlement, the Red River Resistance, and many other topics in Manitoba history:

www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/keystone

You can also contact the Archives about these and many other “Cool Things in the Collection”:

Archives of Manitoba
130–200 Vaughan Street,
Winnipeg, MB, R3C 1T5
(204) 945-3971
archives@gov.mb.ca

(cheers). Let us, then, see to it that the public are no more allowed to rush together, on one side or the other, in such a manner as they have gathered of late. Let us be friends—and let our friendship be hearty and sincere (cheers). On many occasions, since last fall, I have heard professions of friendship in this Chamber; and I must say I was sorry to hear such professions, for I knew they were—as they afterwards proved to be, insincere. There was too much of fear and estrangement to allow that friendship being hearty. But now that we have come together once more, I believe we are actuated by such feelings as will lead to a thorough union (cheers.)

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Assembly Chamber
June 24/70

The President [Louis Riel] took the chair at 4 o’c[lock] p.m. Rev. Mr. Richot [sic] occupied a seat in the Chamber by invitation.

The President expressed the pleasure he felt at seeing present Rev. Mr. Richot [sic], one of the delegates to Canada—congratulated him personally on the courage, perseverance & wisdom displayed in his mission—and asked the rev. gentleman to address the House in reporting the results of his mission.

Rev. Mr. Richot [sic] then addressed the House in French, which was translated into English by the President.

Hon. Mr. Bunn seconded by Hon. Mr. Bannatyne proposed a vote of thanks to Rev. Mr. Richot [sic], as one of the delegates to Canada.

The resolution passed amid cheers.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt seconded by Hon. Mr. Poitras moved that the Legislative Assembly of this country do now in the name of the people accept the Manitoba Act & decide on entering the Dominion of Canada, on the terms proposed in the Confederation Act—carried amid loud cheers.

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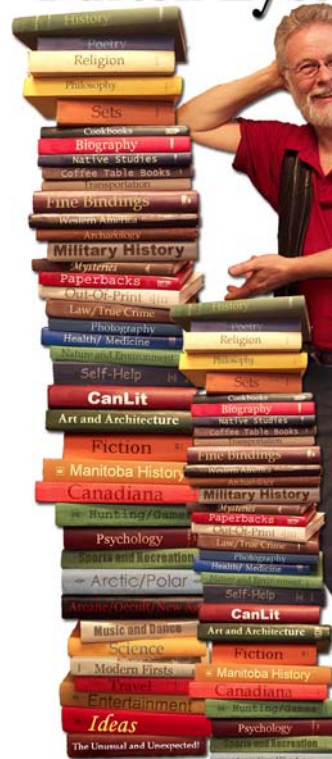
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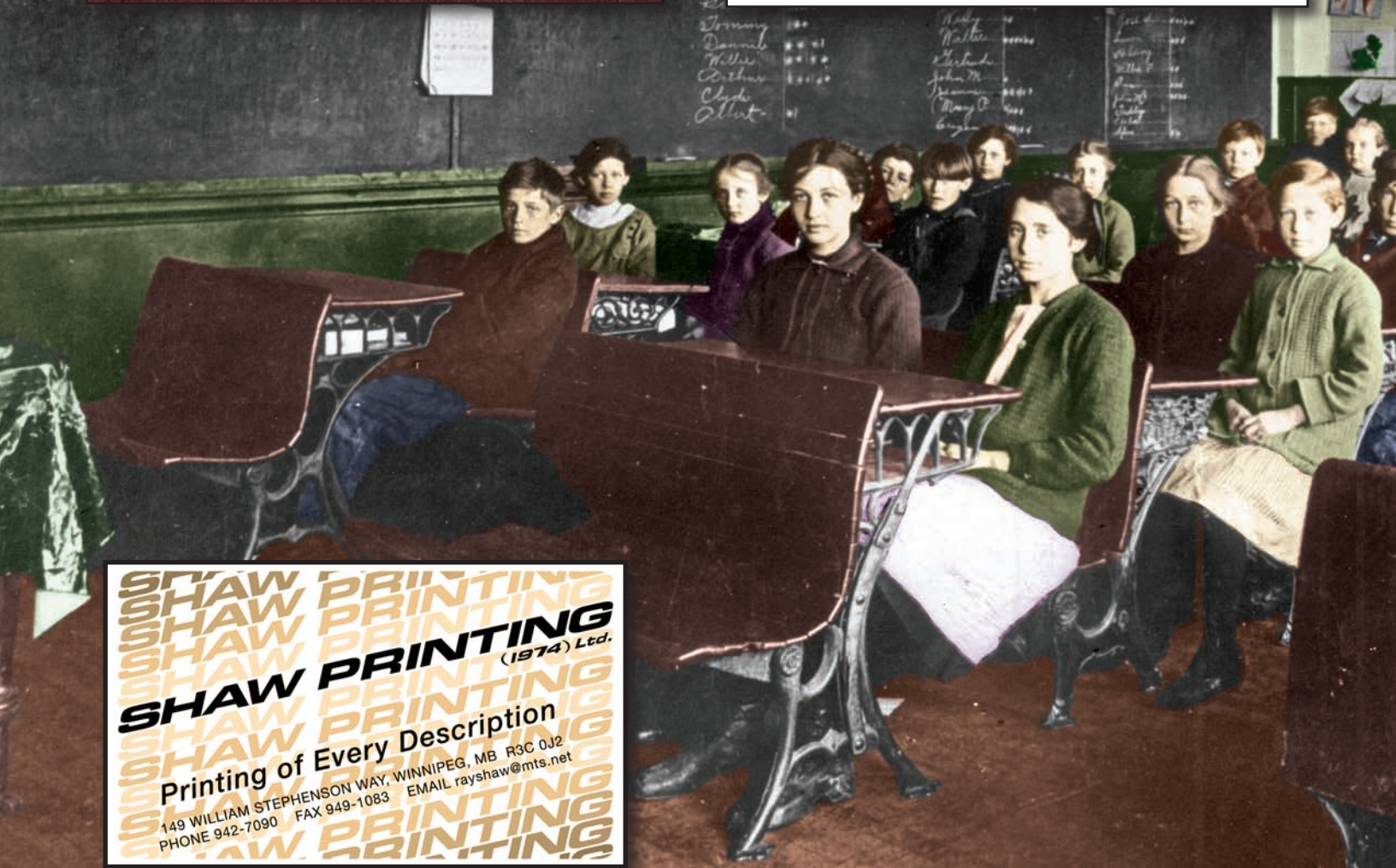
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