



Delta History News

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The Fourth Station

What's in a name? Plenty, if you are interested in the history of a place! Names often commemorate early pioneers, prominent landforms, or notable events. In an area as large as Delta Marsh, it is therefore not surprising that a wealth of names have been given to its waterways, ponds and bays, many of them with interesting stories on their origin.

For instance, Cadham Bay is a large shallow "lake" south of Delta Beach, on the east side of Highway 240 as you drive towards Lake Manitoba. It is named for long-time Delta cottager and hunter Dr. Fred T. Cadham (1880-1961), whose summer home once stood at the East Beach. A nephew of Portage hardware merchant J. O. Cadham, Fred Cadham was a well-known athlete early in the 20th century, playing on the famed Winnipeg Victorias hockey team. He would go on to become a prominent physician, especially noted for his work on disease-causing bacteria. The Cadham Provincial Laboratory in Winnipeg is named in tribute to his many contributions to Manitoba medicine.

Bonepile Pond, a small water body in the eastern part of the marsh, was named for the piles of horse bones that once bordered it. In the 1930s and '40s, prairie farmers seeking greater efficiency through mechanization adopted the tractor as a source of "horsepower." Mink ranchers at Delta would purchase the obsolete "old nags" as food for their animals, with the leftover bones being discarded.

The basis for some names in the marsh are clear. Section Five Bay and 22 Bay are situated in land sections 5 and 22, respectively. Names such as Canvasback Bay or Gadwell Bay (a misspelling of Gadwall) presumably acknowledge the ducks and geese that have attracted hunters to Delta for generations. Other origins are more obscure. How about Porkchop Point or Mad Woman Bay? Cram Creek? The 1933 Canadian government document "Place Names of Manitoba" suggested that this creek, which flows through the western part of the marsh and appeared on maps as early as 1875, got its name when an early traveller developed a cramp while crossing it. Cram Creek was later truncated to its present form.

So how did Delta Marsh get its name? There are at least two possible explanations. One story, advocated in the 1933 government document, is that "Delta" acknowledges the marshy nature of the landscape. Yet, strictly speaking, a delta is formed at the mouth of a river, not along a lakeshore as in the case of Delta Marsh. Geologists working in the area during the 1970s discovered that the marsh *did* form at the mouth of the Assiniboine River when it flowed northward into Lake Manitoba over two thousand years ago (as opposed to its present course eastward to meet the Red River in Winnipeg).

But support for the riverine origin of the name came to light long after "Delta" was in common use. A second, and perhaps more likely basis for its name comes from the railway line that once linked Portage la Prairie with Lake Manitoba. Early in the 20th century, before our current provincial road network was well established, trains were the predominant means of transporting people and materials. The rail line to Delta was constructed in late 1900 to enable steamships carrying lumber, fish and gypsum on Lake Manitoba, as well as grain farmers along the rail line, to transfer their goods to trains and thence to market. Four stations were established along the route. They were allegedly named for the first four letters of the Greek alphabet: Alpha, Beta, Gamma, and Delta. Although early maps do show Alpha and Delta, there is no indication that Beta or Gamma were used for the intermediate stations. Nevertheless, this explanation seems most likely because, prior to construction of the Northern Pacific rail branch, Portage newspapers would mention pleasure trips to "The Lake" or "Lake Manitoba" but not to "Delta." The weekly paper *The News and Portage la Prairie Review* used the name for the first time when it announced in October 1900:

"The terminus of the new branch is to be called Delta. It is admirably situated for a watering place. A large expanse of uninterrupted water, which spreads out beyond a hard sandy shore, behind a grove of ash, makes a pleasant shade, and with the improvements the company intend to put in it will doubtless be a most popular spot for Winnipeggers to spend a few months of the summer."

Do you have a story for how a particular site in or around Delta Marsh got its name? Following is a sampling of names found on old maps or heard from long-time Delta residents. If you can give us information on these or any other names, please let us know!

Aikin's Bay	High Point Lake	Riley Bay
Armstrong Bay	John Bull Creek	Robertson Creek
Blackburn's Island	Johnson Lake	Roys Canal
Bruce Lake	Kitson's Bay	Simpson Bay
Cherry Ridge	Klyne Lake	Smith Creek
Clair Lake	Lavallee Creek	Spurgeon's Base
Cook Creek	Lyttle Bay	St. Marks Lake
Frenchman Creek	MacKenzie Bay	Thompson's Bay
Gibby's Islands	McCallum Point	Wescan Bay
Goldeye Pond	McLean Lake	Williams Creek
Greys Pass	Peacock Pass	Wilson Lake

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Canada Day Fish Fry

Come enjoy all-you-can-eat pickerel and learn more about Delta history at the third Delta History Fish Fry.

Date: Monday, 1 July (Canada Day)
Time: Anytime between 11:00 am and 2:00 pm
Location: Delta Interpretive Center
Cherry Avenue, Delta Beach
(end of Highway 240 at Lake Manitoba)

Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$5 for children 12 and under (kids under 6 free) and are available at the door or from members of the Delta Marsh History Initiative.

Delta in the News – 1952 to 1955

Snippets from The Enterprise Press

10 July 1952

“For the summer season dances were held at Delta (in the dance hall of the McDonalds’ hotel) on Saturday nights. Supplying the music this season is Portage’s newest dance orchestra “The Bandits.” The orchestra began as a teen band at Portage Collegiate Institute. Its members are Tony Showchuk (clarinet and saxophone), Derwin Grantham (guitar), Boyd Copeland (drums), Des Despiens (piano) and Bill Dawes (trumpet and accordion).”

6 August 1953

“The Delta Waterfowl Research Station was this year’s recipient of the Outdoor Life Conservation Award. The presentation was made to the North American Wildlife Foundation which owns the station. At the ceremony in Washington, DC, Douglas McKay, Secretary of Outdoor Life presented the award to Max McGraw, President of the N.A.W.F. The award was based on the story “The Gilded Duckling” by James Trefethen, director of publications of the Wildlife Management Institute which appeared in the July 1953 issue of Outdoor Life. The story was based on the author’s work at Delta.”

18 August 1953

“The Council of the RM of Portage has applied to the provincial government for financial assistance in constructing a secondary road on West Beach, Delta. The council has received many complaints of dust and traffic due to the 3000 vehicles visiting the beach each Sunday. Problems of traffic control have also led to the RCMP being called in to assist. Dr. Kettlewell, President of the Delta Beach Association brought these problems to the attention of council.”

27 August 1953

“The Manitoba Power Commission extended its service to Delta area customers.”

22 October 1953

“Robert Taylor, film star, was the guest of Jimmy Robinson at Sports Afield Lodge this week. Mr. Taylor heard about shooting at Delta Marsh from Clark Gable. When the two stars met in

France recently Gable said: “I envy you, I’ve never seen anything like it”. Of his first trip to the marsh Taylor who was guided by Wesley St. Goddard and Jimmy Robinson said: “We had a wonderful shoot”. The party got its limit of canvasbacks. Commenting further on the shoot Taylor said the last flight of ducks had given a “perfect ending” to his first day in the marshes.”

17 June 1954

“This year 18,000 muskrat pelts came from the Delta Preserve. A grand total of 262,076 muskrat pelts came from all the government preserves. All the pelts will be auctioned at the Marlborough Hotel in Winnipeg on June 18.”

7 October 1954

“A storm lashed Delta with winds reaching 60-70 mph. The storm sank Bill Trimble’s boat and severely damaged the breakwater. Floodwater reached the second step of the store managed by Bill Hutchinson. Several cottages have been damaged.”

18 November 1954

“A Civic Reception for Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, was held in Ottawa yesterday. Charlotte Whitton, Mayor of Ottawa, hosted the event which featured a menu of Manitoba mallard. The birds were from the Delta Marsh and supplied for the event by Peter Ward and Al Hochbaum. After this reception held in the Chateau Laurier Hotel Ballroom, Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, stated that she enjoyed the birds immensely and wished she could have more.”

13 January 1955

“Fishing is in full swing at Delta. The boys are setting nets as much as 12 miles out on the lake. Axel Magnusson of Selkirk has brought his family out. They will spend the fishing season at Delta. Mr. Chiponski of Portage and his crew have been at Delta this week filling up the ice houses for the coming year. The lake ice is now 19" thick.”

You can help!

- provide photographs, reminiscences, family stories, or any other information pertaining to Delta Marsh
- let us know about people you know who have information about Delta Marsh
- contribute your time to help collect and organize information, contact people, and prepare the book
- make a tax-deductible donation to help with costs of the project

Delta Marsh History Initiative

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