

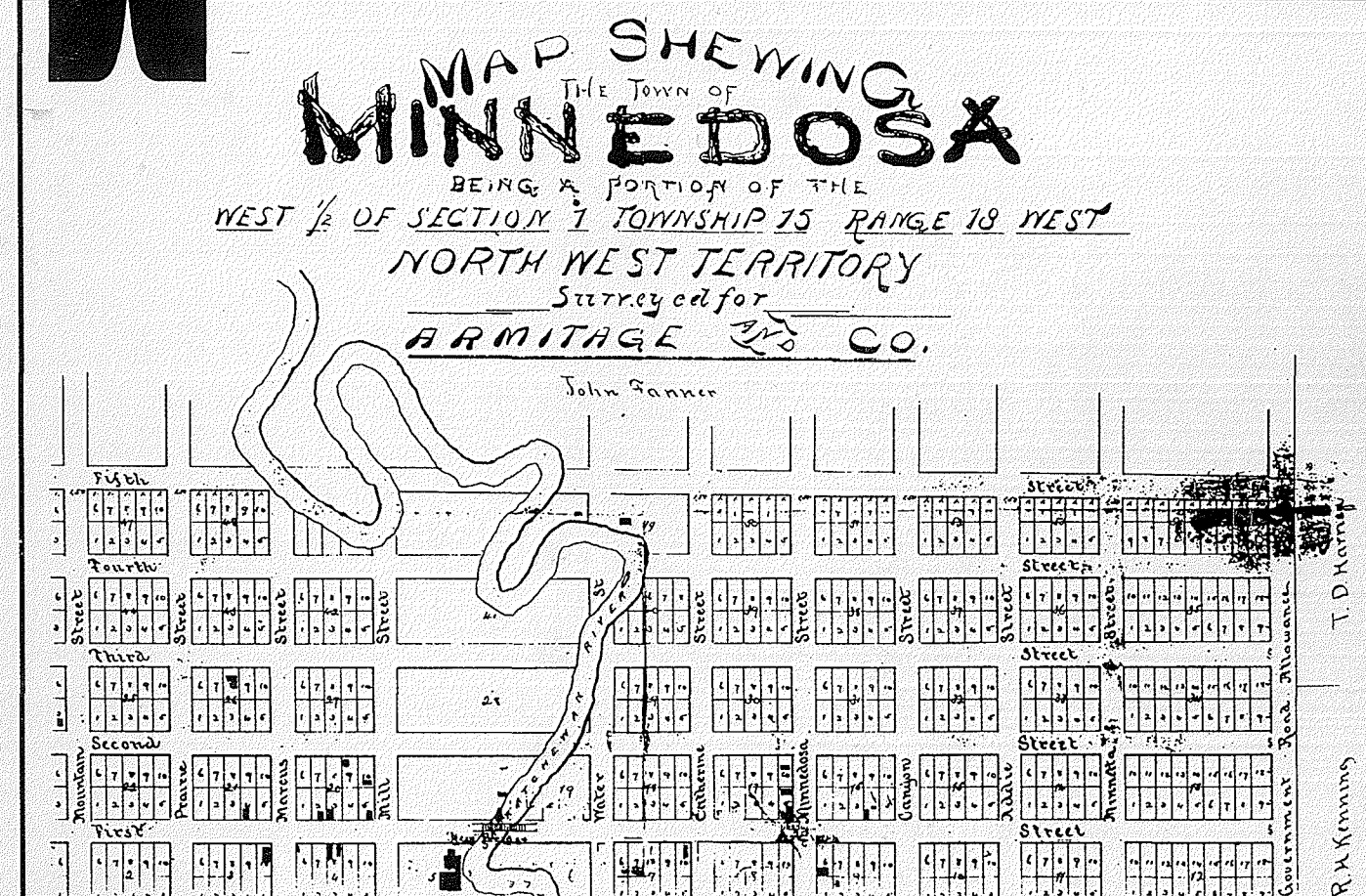
There would be a titanic struggle between a number of syndicates and loosely formed associations of landowners in the valley of the Little Saskatchewan River between the years 1878 and 1883. Eventually that struggle would result in a town that would not only survive, but prosper. One man, however, would be shoved aside and left out of the mix - the man who first saw this crossing on the Carlton Trail in 1848 and in 1869, returned to make his home here because of its strategic location, natural beauty and bountiful resources. His name was John Tanner, first a farmer and then volunteer in the Plains Indian Wars of Minnesota and the U.S. Civil War, who would later become a trader, frontiersman and the first permanent settler of Tanner's Crossing - Minnedosa.

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Printed In Canada

TANNER'S CROSSING THE EARLY HISTORY OF MINNEDOSA

By Robert M. (Bob)

TANNER'S CROSSING



Town Survey commissioned by J.S. Armitage in 1879

THE EARLY HISTORY OF MINNEDOSA

The struggle to build a frontier town on the Little Saskatchewan River

LITTLE SASKATCHEWAN
N.W.T.
1877

PRAIRIE CITY
N.W.T.
1879

HALLSFORD
N.W.T.
1879

MINNEDOSA
N.W.T.
1879

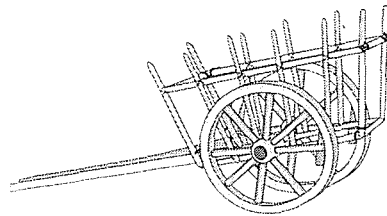
By R.M. (Bob) Mummery
Published by The Minnedosa Tribune



TANNER'S CROSSING

THE EARLY HISTORY OF MINNEDOSA TO 1885

*The struggle to build a frontier town
on the Little Saskatchewan River*



By
Robert M. (Bob) Mummery

Published by
The Minnedosa Tribune Ltd.

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Minnedosa District Heritage Foundation

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This book is the result of thousands of hours of dedicated research and writing by all those who have come before me. Much has been written about the early history of Minnedosa and through the decades, several books and articles published. This book is an attempt to condense portions of those writings into a single volume that tells the story of why this town survived while others did not. At the back of this book is a bibliography that will enable future researchers to establish where the information contained within emanated from. The relevance attached to each document used in the research is that attached by the author and may not carry the same significance by the reader.

What is written in this book, or for that matter any book of an historical nature, can never be set in stone. History, rather than being rigid and unchangeable, is in fact, exactly the opposite. Each day, new documents, diaries, photographs, letters and journals come to light and the discovery of each one offers the potential to add another dimension to our history. All that one can do when authoring a book on a historical subject is to take what has been revealed to us at a certain point in time and put that information to paper. History is constantly being re-written and I am of the hope that this book will be re-written many times in the future.

When writing on an historical subject where those who took part in the actual events are no longer with us, there is a definite lure to inject one's own theories upon the evolution of their actions, their meaning and their end result. The theories expressed in this book may not necessarily be agreeable, but are factual to the best of my knowledge at the time of this writing.

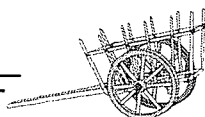
This book is therefore an acknowledgement of the legacy left us by all of our previous, caring historians and to those pioneers who passed on written accounts of what came before, with special thanks to:

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Manitoba Legislative Library
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Minnedosa 75th Anniversary Book Committee 1958
Minnedosa Centennial Book Committee 1983
Mr. & Mrs. Ed. J. Brown
Henry Rose Diaries
Jayne (Cooper) Moore
Harry Harland
Barry Potyondi

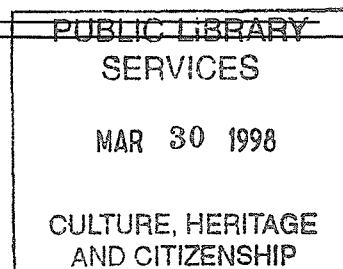
All previous publishers, editors, correspondents and contributing writers to The Minnedosa Tribune

& especially to **Dr. PETER LORENZ NEUFELD** who taught me that uncovering the past was to learn to appreciate it even more.

Robert M. Mummery, 1998



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Bob Mummery is a native of Minnedosa
and has been the owner/publisher of
The Minnedosa Tribune with Joyce Mummery since 1989.

Books previously published by the same author:

The Amazing Oilers - 1982 - Reidmore Publishing
The Snowbirds, Canada's Ambassadors of the Sky - 1983 - Reidmore Publishing
Fuhr on Goaltending - 1986 - Polestar Press
Countdown to the Stanley Cup - 10th Anniversary of the Calgary Flames - 1989 - Polestar Press

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the memory,
the life and the times of John Tanner
who lies forgotten in an unmarked grave
on the windswept shores of Lake Manitoba.

Special thanks to Georgie Willis for her valuable help in the production of this book
and to The Tribune staff for putting up with "The Curmudgeon" while it was being written.

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BEAUTIFUL MINNEDOSA

*Beautiful Minnedosa,
pretty is thy name and
prettier still thy situation,
as thou liest nestled by the cool
Saskatchewan,
with thy pleasant hills
surrounding.*

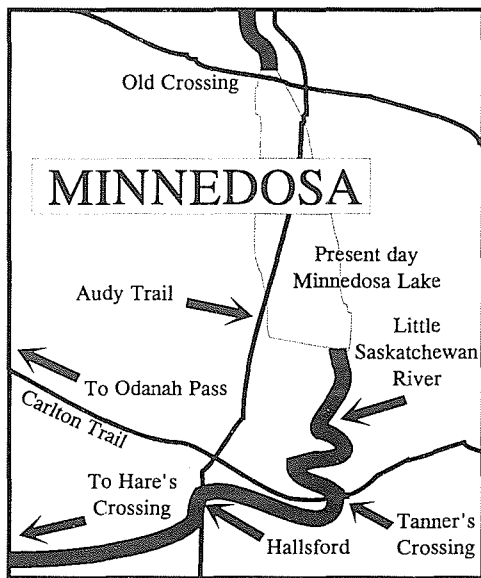
*When I first beheld thee,
I was struck with thy beauty,
and the Psalm description of
Jerusalem came forcibly
to my mind.*

*May Peace and Prosperity
ever be thy potion,
is the humble prayer of one
who loves and admires thee.*

Written by pioneer
Mrs. Benjamin Beddome
1882

INTRODUCTION

The River, The Crossing and the Tanners



The trails that crisscrossed this valley had been used for several thousand years before the coming of the men of the Hudson's Bay Company and its rival, the North West Company. Along these trails we commonly find stone points dating back over five thousand years, and mixed in above we find broken shards of pottery and pieces of rusted metal left in the wake of passing fur traders and settlers.

The Little Saskatchewan Valley played a role, albeit of minor stature, during the two centuries when the fur trade was at its peak. This area did play host to a number of smaller trading posts or small forts during the period from 1810 to 1821 when the war between the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company was at its peak. Brandon House, located 30 miles to the south, was operated by Peter Fidler and became the centre for the H.B.C. during that time and a number of small but competing posts sprang up along the Little Saskatchewan as counter moves to the posts being built by, and carrying the flag of, the North West

Company. At least four of these posts have been identified and their locations mapped as of 1998.

None of these posts operated long after the amalgamation of the two companies in 1821, but this area did see a number of free traders occupy the valley as is evidenced today by stone lined basements, a number of which can be found along the River Road (P.R. 365) just west of Minnedosa and along the hillsides to the east of Minnedosa Lake.

But there was conflict here. Stragglers didn't survive long in this area as one native tribe or another was continually harassing those that came unprepared. One such occurrence is said to have taken place near the north end of present day Minnedosa Lake. Chris Harrison, who presently owns the land in that area, states that as a young boy helping with the harvest, he was told by an old Indian that near the spot where they were standing, that Indian had taken part in a war party slaying of two white men as they crossed the Little Saskatchewan River. That sort of thing was not unknown to happen, nor was the wanton murder of settlers if they strayed too far off the beaten path.

Another tale has been related by one of our pioneers that as they passed down the hillside towards Hare's Crossing five miles west of present day Minnedosa, they spotted a blond scalp hanging from the lance of a passing Indian. There was danger in this area, as there was on the edge of any frontier, but generally, once settlement had progressed to this point in the North West Territories, that aspect came to an end and the native tribes grudgingly accepted the white man's presence.

Our first permanent settler of European descent was a mixed blood, or what was referred to at that time as a half-breed, named John Tanner. His earliest recorded descendant was Joseph Tanner who arrived in Virginia from England in 1662. There are four John Tanners in a direct line of

descendancy to the John Tanner who founded Tanner's Crossing around 1869.

His great-grandfather, the Rev. John Tanner was born in Virginia, and became a Baptist preacher who also was a farmer and mill operator. His preachings landed him in prison on two occasions and resulted in an attempt on his life on another. His three most famous sons were James Tanner who died in the California gold fields in 1851, son Edward Tanner who was captured by Indians in 1790 but escaped and went on to help found the Republic of Texas, and whose son missed the Battle of the Alamo but fought Santa Ana at the battle of San Jacinto. His name is listed on the monument commemorating the beginning of that Republic.

A third son, John Tanner, was also captured by Indians in Kentucky, put into slavery and spent the years from 1796 to 1815 along the Little Saskatchewan River valley and was familiar with the place that would later carry his grandson's name. He would carry the nickname of "Falcon", fought against the Sioux in a number of battles and was credited by Lord Selkirk with having played an instrumental role in the survival of the Selkirk Settlers and the Red River Colony during its early years from 1811 until 1820. The Falcon's

life came to a violent end near Sault St. Marie in 1840. His son, James Tanner, born in 1812, would become a preacher as well as Sioux Indian fighter and trader and would later be murdered at High Bluff, Manitoba in 1870.

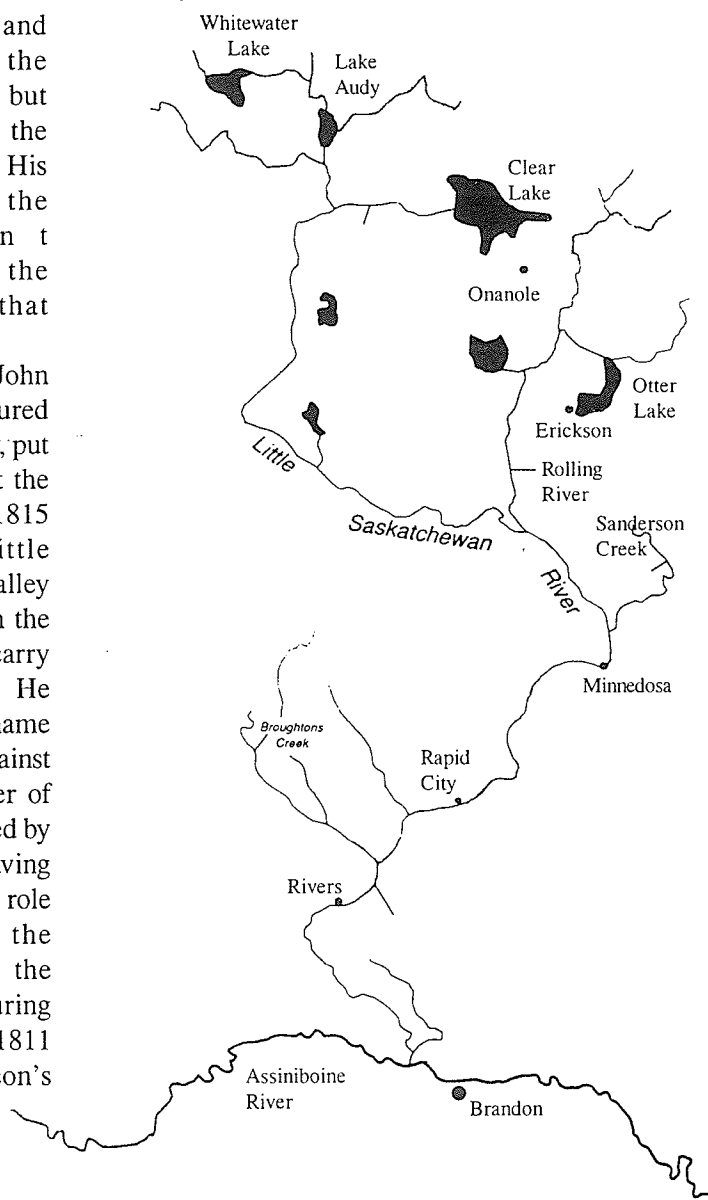
A cousin, also named John Tanner, was a private in Co. M of the 7th Calvary serving under Brvt. General Custer and was one of 261 men killed at the Battle of the Little Bighorn in June of 1876.

John Tanner of the Crossing was born in

1839, would found Tanner's Crossing in 1869 (later to become Minnedosa), and died at Kinosota on Lake Manitoba in 1932. John Tanner would raise one adopted son, named John William Tanner, who died at Prince Albert in 1954. A daughter of John William Tanner is Mrs. Edna Struthers, also of Prince Albert.

It was John Tanner who would found the Crossing on the Little Saskatchewan River. At this point he would build a bridge, build a stopping house and open a post office. This development would focus attention on this area and due to its strategic location on the Carlton Trail, it soon would begin to attract settlement. In particular, Tanner's Crossing attracted one

Little Saskatchewan River



Joseph Samuel Armitage who, in turn, would take Tanner's Crossing and turn it into the Town of Minnedosa with the help of his immediate family as well as brothers and father-in-law.

By 1885, with the conclusion of the Riel Rebellion, Minnedosa had emerged as the hub of commerce for the area. Armitage's plan for his prairie town would be well underway with that same year seeing the departure of John Tanner from the Little Saskatchewan valley.

The Town of Minnedosa owes its start to any number of pioneering families who took up the trail and under extreme difficulty travelled to this valley and made their homes. Many became farmers, others became business owners and still others became community leaders, but none wielded influence equal to that of Tanner and Armitage when it came to the location of the town and how stable and progressive would be its future course.

This book focuses mainly on these two men but does bring into play a few others whose strong character depicts the variety of people whose roles unfolded in harmony with their neighbors in such a way that it would eventually result in our community of today.

Unfortunately, the success of one town in gaining the all important railroad meant the decline of others immediately in their vicinity. Such was the case for both Odanah and the Town of Rapid City. With the rails running through Minnedosa, land values in the neighboring communities plummeted, many land speculators, investors and

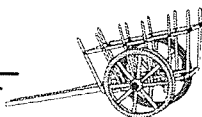
businessmen went broke and many families moved on. In the particular case of Odanah, it meant the end of that community. As for Rapid City, that community suffered greatly with mass depopulation, but the town survived because of the agricultural service center that it had become in its own right and the strength of character of those residents who would remain within its environs.

This book ends at the conclusion of the year 1885, leaving considerable room for a sequel detailing the town's history from 1885 to present, which I very much hope will be written at some future point in time.

As with most Canadian prairie towns, the growth of Minnedosa took on excited proportions with the coming of the railroad. The community had been around for some years before that, but it was the arrival of those ribbons of steel in 1883 that turned Minnedosa into a central hub of activity and thereby sealed the fate of other towns in the area that were suddenly left out of the mix.

The history of Minnedosa is inextricably linked with the Little Saskatchewan River and the valley within which it makes its 160 kilometer run from the pristine waters of Lake Audy in the Riding Mountains in the north to its southern most point where it empties into the Assiniboine River approximately five miles west of the City of Brandon.

It is with the formation of this valley and its resident river that the story of Minnedosa really begins.



CHAPTER ONE

THE ICE

The massive ice front snuck up on the land, imperceptible and unceasing. Its giant front worked much as a plow pushing mountains of rubble and refuse ahead and up onto itself as it moved ever southward from its birthplace near Hudson's Bay. At its peak, the ice sheet towered two kilometres over the ground below with its great mass and force forever changing the Manitoba landscape.

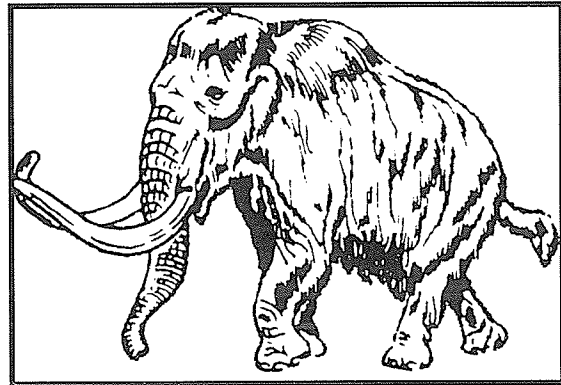
For 75,000 years the glaciers dominated over this land. Earth piled up on its top and began to grow forests that sustained its own life forms. Then those same glaciers began to recede leaving the exposed land rubble-strewn and gutted. As the ice front began to retreat, the earth that had been pushed up on top of the glacier began to fall and cover the land below. The earth began its slow recovery from its 25,000 year sleep. The vegetation regenerated, and back to this land came a variety of species of mega fauna, closely pursued by human hunters.

By 13,000 years ago, this part of Manitoba had begun to reveal itself. Slowly, as its icy cover melted, rushing rivers began to flow from under the ice cap. One such river born of that time was the Little Saskatchewan.

In this particular area, one large unstable area of ice began to melt before the rest. It formed a keyhole shape in the glacier that took in all that land from Rapid City northward to encircle the Riding Mountains. The waters draining from that area cut deep into the landscape below at times flowing with such quantity that the glacial river ran a mile wide and over one hundred feet deep. Its very path carved the valley that stretches from Lake Audy in the north to the Assiniboine River west of Brandon.

Along with the retreating ice front came mammoths and mastodons, sabre tooth tigers and giant bears. As well came the bison with horns that stretched six feet across at their tips. These huge animals presented the Paleo-Indian hunters and their hunting parties with a smorgasbord of delights and they feasted. This interaction between one species

and the other led to the demise of the mega fauna and today, all that remains are a few scattered bones. Most of the larger animals disappeared while others adapted, grew smaller and plentiful. Before long, smaller bison of the type we are familiar with today



multiplied into the millions and dominated the landscape.

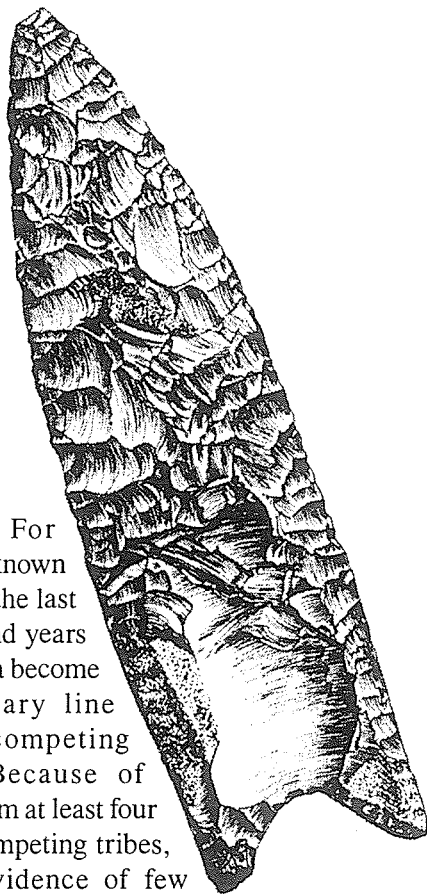
The pleasures of the Little Saskatchewan River valley presented themselves to the native peoples. The valley offered protection from harsh winters, provided water which in turn attracted wildlife and became a crucial point of both collection and confrontation for man and his many tribes.

In the fields and along the river banks adjacent to the Little Saskatchewan River, thousands of artifacts have been gathered and collected over the past 120 years that reveal the variety of occurrences of human intervention since the melting of the glaciers. The earliest of finds was a fluted spear point found fifteen miles north of Minnedosa near Otter Lake. This Clovis Point dates to 12,000 years ago and was the spear point of choice for North America's earliest known mammoth hunters.

Immediately south of Minnedosa near the hamlet of Moore Park was found a Folsom Point, indicative of the people generally believed to have replaced the Clovis Culture about 10,000 years ago.

The elevation of the bottom of the valley in the proximity of Minnedosa is marked at our Court House as being 1674 feet above sea level. This

elevation was substantial enough to leave the entire area above the level of the waters of Lake Agassiz, which was formed from the meltwater of the receding glacier. The closest the shoreline of the lake came to this immediate area was in the proximity of Franklin, some eight miles east of Minnedosa. Performing the duty of a shoreline, this area attracted the attention of roving bands of hunters and consequently produces many artifacts not found in the areas lying below the lake elevation.



For reasons unknown to this day, the last few thousand years saw this area become the boundary line between competing tribes. Because of pressure from at least four of those competing tribes, we find evidence of few permanent or even semi-permanent settlements in the immediate area - it being better described as a "no-man's land" and performed its function as more of a battleground and occasional meeting place than anything else.

For many hundreds of years and at least up until the mid 1800's, this area witnessed conflicts between the Cree, Assiniboiné, Sioux and Ojibwa as they shuffled position in retreat of the encroaching pioneer settlements. By the late 1700's, the area mainly hosted the transplanted Saukteaux who had arrived from the area of the

Great Lakes.

This area was also attractive to human habitation because it was directly on the migratory path of the bison who used this valley on their way to the mountain regions in the north for wintering and again in the spring as the bison made their way southward towards the vast open plains.

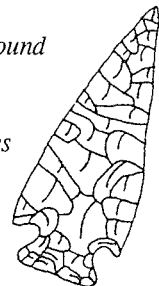
Our first permanent settler, John Tanner, was quoted as saying that around 1850, as a young boy he stood at this site (Tanner's Crossing) and watched the buffalo as they made their way through this area. "It took the herd three days to cross the river in the fall and three days to cross it again on their way south in the spring".

It has been estimated that around the year 1600, the bison herd of the plains numbered close to 60 million. By 1830, it has been estimated that the herds had shrunk to 40 million animals and by 1865, it was down to 15 million with only one million bison left by 1875. In 1910, there were only 766 bison in existence in North America. In 1878, it was reported at Cadurcis, 8 miles west of Minnedosa, that a single bison bull was spotted and described as wandering alone through the Little Saskatchewan River valley just west of Minnedosa in search of his herd that no longer existed.

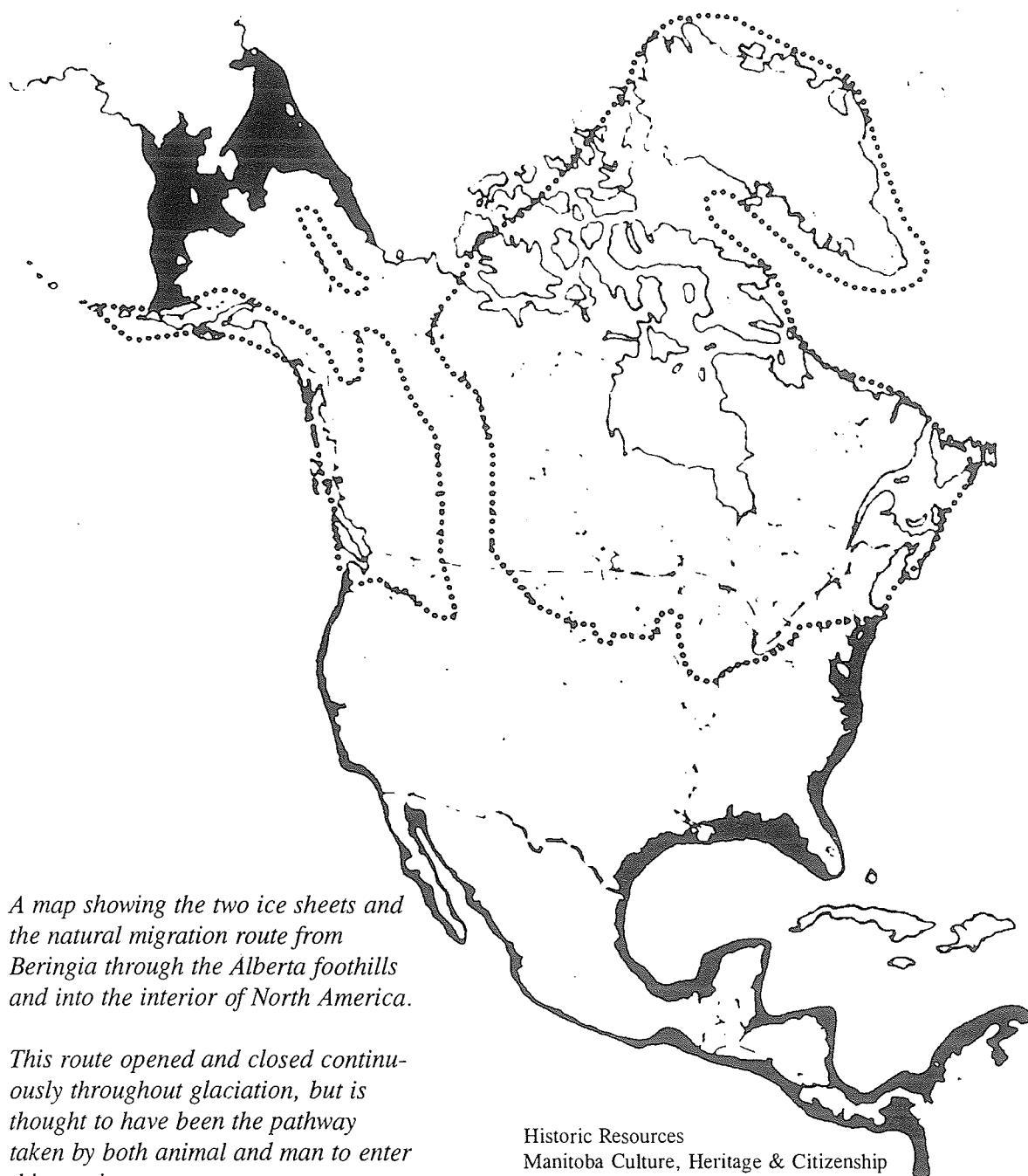
As the great glaciers melted, they left large stagnant areas of ice dotted over the landscape. Some of these isolated ice patches took hundreds of years to finally melt. As they slowly disappeared, dirt and rocks that had been pushed up on top of them settled off to the sides. Continuing its melting, the ice would finally leave a depression or pothole to mark its passing. Today, Minnedosa and area is known as "Pothole" country and is world renowned as excellent breeding areas for waterfowl such as ducks and geese. Located on the eastern edge of Canada's "duck factory", the Minnedosa area sports

PELICAN LAKE DARTPOINTS

Perhaps the most common points found in the Minnedosa area are those attributed to the Pelican Lake Culture. Radiocarbon dating places these points in use from 3200 to 1500 years ago. A 1995 excavation at the Minnedosa Beach site recovered several of these points.



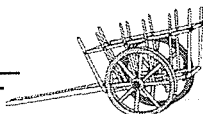
the largest remaining concentrations of Canvasback ducks on the continent. Both the Atlantic and Mississippi flyways bring great quantities of Canvasback, Mallard and Pintail ducks back to the Minnedosa pothole country each spring where they breed, nest and raise their young as they have for thousands of years.



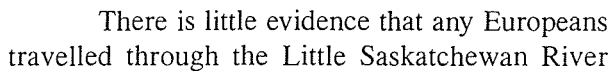
A map showing the two ice sheets and the natural migration route from Beringia through the Alberta foothills and into the interior of North America.

This route opened and closed continuously throughout glaciation, but is thought to have been the pathway taken by both animal and man to enter this continent.

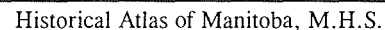
Historic Resources
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CHAPTER TWO



Maps published by Jean-Baptiste Franquelin in 1699 show the Mississippi River source as being somewhere in the area of the Riding Mountains. Obviously, Mr. Franquelin had never visited this area and was making some wild assumptions. Another map published in 1702 by Guillaume De L'Isles shows the Assiniboine River as draining into Lake Superior and the source of the Mississippi River had been relocated to an area south of Brandon. By 1730, Guillaume's map showed the Riviere d'Ouest, the Assiniboine, flowing at approximately the correct latitude but the



13

longitudinal co-ordinates put Minnedosa virtually on the shores of the Pacific Ocean, directly above California.

With the granting of a charter to Prince Rupert which led to the formation of the Hudson's Bay Company on October 1, 1670, the fur trade in the interior and particularly in this area became a viable entity. The purpose of the Hudson's Bay Company, however, was not exploratory but merely to erect forts or trading posts on the shores of Hudson's Bay and let the fur gathering Indian populations convey the furs to them rather than the Hudson's Bay men travelling out into the interior. It was as if North America ended on the shores of the Hudson's Bay and beyond that, in the tradition of map makers from before, all that was marked was "Here Be Dragons". It is therefore doubtful that any men of European decent wandered through this valley until the French traders out of Montreal discovered its riches. It was their policy to go to where the furs were harvested to make their trades and through this strategy, by necessity explored much of the interior of what is now western Canada. It was only after the North West Company, formed in 1783, had made significant inroads into the Hudson's Bay Company's traditional trade that the Company was finally forced to step up its exploration and penetration inland.

In 1734, the *Seur de la Verendrye Expedition* travelled the length of the Assiniboine River system and their party included a short trek up the *Riviere St. Pierre* which would eventually be called the Little Saskatchewan River. This was the first time this valley and river appeared on any map and it is shown quite correctly on *La Verendrye's* including the major traverse in direction taken by the river where Minnedosa now stands today.

It is unknown precisely who this river was originally named after. *LaVerendrye* had a son who was named *Pierre* and who was reportedly on this particular expedition with his father. The other possibility is as a favor to *Repentigny Legardeur de Saint-Pierre*, who had been *Pierre La Verendrye's* superior during some recent hostilities and who had also held the important command at *Michilimackinac*.

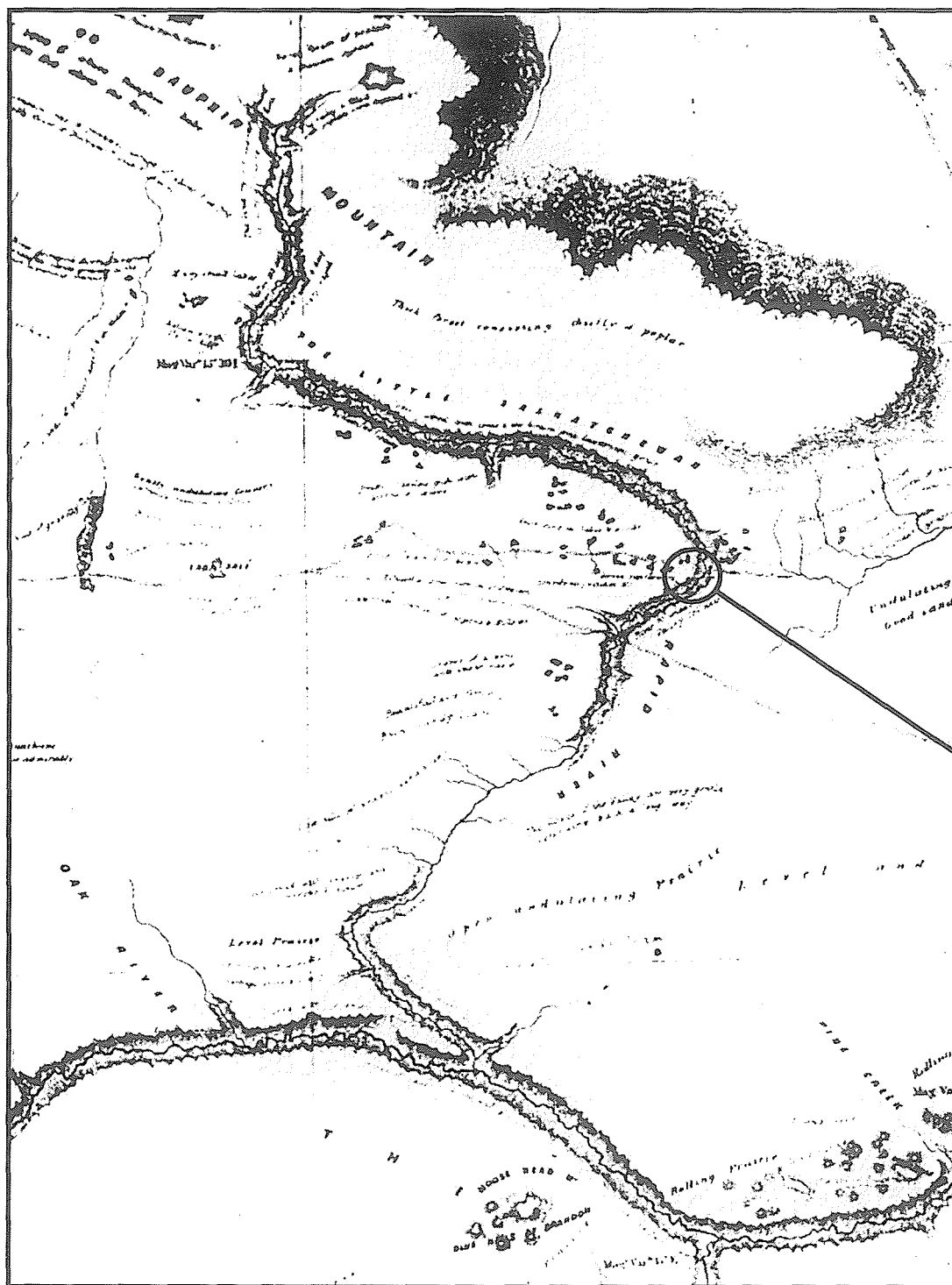
During the 1740's, *Saint-Pierre's* first command in this area was to be placed in charge of *Fort St. Pierre*. Later, we find him in charge of *Ft.*

La Reine which was situated near present day *Portage la Prairie*. *Saint-Pierre* was a brave man, at least as it has been written in journals of the time. On one occasion the Assiniboine Indians invaded *Ft. La Reine* with the intention of plundering its provisions. *Saint-Pierre* is said to have stood at the door of the powder magazine, a blazing brand in his hand, and threatened to blow them all up, himself with them. The intruders made their exit and *Saint-Pierre* is said to have quietly closed the gates behind them. As soon as *Saint-Pierre* and his men left the fort to convey the season's furs to *Grand Portage*, the Assiniboines returned and burned the fort to the ground. *Grand Portage* was the western headquarters for the North West Company and was located at the extreme western end of *Lake Superior*. *Saint-Pierre* spent the next winter - the last of his command - on the *Red River* at the *Forks* where he was kept busy rebuilding the previously destroyed *Fort Rouge*. At another time during the year 1751, *Saint-Pierre* was reported to have left *Fort La Reine* on the 14th of November with the blizzards of winter ready to break upon the treeless plains, to travel on foot across unknown territory and among tribes till recently bitterly hostile to one another, a distance of some five hundred and fifty miles. *Saint-Pierre* was an extraordinary man.

In 1762 the area was re-mapped by one *Thomas Jeffery*. The Englishman anglicized the name *Riviere St. Pierre* to *St. Peter's River*.

In a map produced in 1768, *Andrew Graham*, Factor at *Fort York* shows the *Riding Mountains* as being the "*Mantouapau Hills*". Interesting to note is that in the area around the *Riding Mountains*, he has added the phrase, "*Buffalo around in summer*". Below the *Riding Mountains* where *Minnedosa* is now situated, he notes, "*Buffalo plenty in winter*". He also describes this particular area as "*Barren Ground*". Mr. *Graham's* purpose, of course, was to delineate the areas where good breeding grounds for beaver and other fur bearing animals might be found with its potential for agriculture not being one of his priorities.

By 1814, *Arron Arrowsmith's* map had suddenly affixed a new name to our river, now calling it *Riviere Rapide* with the anglicized version being *Rapid River*. *David Thompson's* map of 1814 called it *Rapid River* as well and showed it as



Future location of Minnedosa

Historical Atlas of Manitoba - Manitoba Historical Society

A section of A.Y. Hind's topographic map of the Assiniboine and Little Saskatchewan Rivers, northward to and including the Riding Mountains (which on Hind's map are referred to as the Dauphin Mountains). The map was drawn during his expedition in 1858.

emanating from Lake Audy in the "Dauphin Mountains".

Another map drawn in 1819 by Peter Fidler, factor for the Hudson's Bay post at Brandon House, shows the Rapid River as having a tributary which he named the "Curling River". That tributary whose entrance into the Little Saskatchewan River is located some eight miles northwest of Minnedosa is now called the Rolling River.

A book published in the 1830's and detailing the life and times of John Falcon Tanner tells in part of the time he spent along this very river and the Riding Mountain area between 1791 and 1815. Throughout his book, Tanner refers to the river as the Saskawjewun meaning in the Cree language "fast running water". Since 1911, the river was officially called the "Minnedosa River". The word Minnedosa comes from the Assiniboiné words "Minne-duza" meaning fast running water. The name was officially changed back to Little Saskatchewan River in the 1970's.

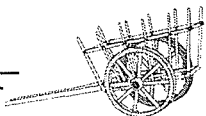
The Palliser and Hind expeditions mapped natural features and evaluated the potential of the interior for settlement. Palliser's maps were of a very general nature compared to the detailed mapping techniques exhibited by Hind in his maps of this area drawn in 1859 and 1860. Hind's map shows the location of the Riding Mountains and uses that name for the first time. His map shows the expedition traveling up the Little Saskatchewan River to approximately the Strathclair area where they are reported to have struck out overland to Fort Ellice. Hind did an extensive survey of this valley and marked such things as cart trails, geologic formations and "Oak Orchards". This map is the first time that the valley and the river are referred to as "The Little Saskatchewan". There is much confusion in the historical records of both the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company journals as a river draining into Dauphin Lake was also named "The Little Saskatchewan". For that reason, Hind not only marked the river as The Little Saskatchewan, but he also added the name Rapid River to avoid any further confusion. At the time

this map was drawn, only two cart trails are shown as traversing the valley in the area of Minnedosa, one being Old Crossing at approximately the north end of Minnedosa Lake and the other being at Hare's Crossing located five miles west of Minnedosa where the river makes its broad sweep southward towards Rapid City. Hind's surveys of the river and its environs was so extensive that it shows the locations of many sloughs and potholes as well as normally dry runoff creeks as they enter the river. Of particular note, however, is the fact that he completely misses the Rolling River, leading one to believe that he left the river at a point previous to that and proceeded overland in a westward direction towards Ft. Ellice.

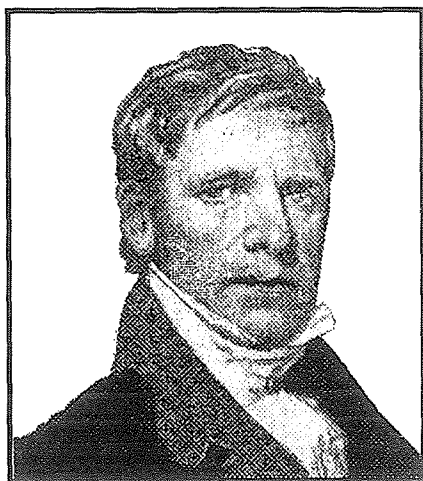
At approximately the same time as the Hind Expedition came another mapping expedition led by S. J. Dawson. His rendition of the area of the Assiniboiné shows by its lack of detail and mistakes that he travelled little to the south of the Assiniboiné but restricted his time and efforts for the most part to the area around the Riding and Duck Mountains. His maps, while lacking in accurate detail for the southerly areas, do show the Rolling River and the Rapid River beginning at a lake in the Riding Mountains. He also shows another tributary of Rapid River which doesn't exist today as flowing from what he termed Lac des Iles. This lake could possibly be Otter Lake.

These expeditions effectively ended formal explorations in this part of the country. Cart trails crisscrossed the area whose potential was by now fully known and fairly well settled with trappers and free traders. It would not be until 1872 and 1873 when the government survey crews arrived in the area that any further significant mapping would take place. At this time, the land was divided up into sections, townships and ranges and the doors would be thrown open for settlement.

Of all the explorers of the Little Saskatchewan River, one is of the greatest importance. He was John Falcon Tanner who gave the first written account of the Little Saskatchewan River and his exploits in this area from the years 1796 to 1815.



JOHN "FALCON" TANNER



"Place of the Two Dead Men"

John "Falcon" Tanner was kidnapped from his farm home in Kentucky in 1789 at the age of nine by a roving band of Shawnee Indians. He was transported to the area of present-day Detroit where he was sold to a band of Ottawas and adopted by a women named Netnowka. The price for the young John Tanner? Ten gallons of whiskey, some blankets, tobacco and other articles. That band normally travelled to the Riding Mountain area of Manitoba, and in 1799 we can accurately place John Falcon Tanner as being resident on the shores of Clear Lake.

In 1830, after conducting several interviews with The Falcon, Edwin James wrote a book about his exploits entitled "Thirty Years Indian Captivity of John Tanner". It's subtitle was "A Narrative of The Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner, U.S. Interpreter at the Sault De Ste. Marie".

Tanner relates many stories about this area which include travelling on the Sas-kaw-je-wun River (Little Saskatchewan) to Sah-kee-gun (Audy) Lake. He describes the resident Cree: "*The Cree are tattooed with two blue lines from mouth to ears, with one blue line down the center of the chin. Men wear skin jackets with leggings reaching to the hips,*

held in place with belts fastened to breechcloths. Their hair is parted in the middle and braided in tails down the back. Young men have side braids with the hair on top cut short, decorated with feathers, quills and ermine tails. Women braid their hair and roll it in buns with a rounded beaded piece of leather".

As part of his narrative, he describes his trips down the river.

"We descended the Little Saskawjewun for several days. On this river we found a village of Assiniboines, with whom we stopped a short time."

"I made a pack of beaver and started by myself in a small buffalo skin canoe, only large enough to carry me and my pack, and descended the Little Saskawjewun. There is, on the bank of that river, a place which looks like one the Indians would always choose to encamp at. In a bend of the river is a beautiful landing place, behind it a little plain, a thick wood, and a small hill rising abruptly in the rear. But with that spot is connected a story of fratricide, a crime so uncommon that the spot where it happened is held in detestation, and regarded with terror. No Indian will land his canoe, much less encamp, at "The Place of the Two Dead Men". They relate that many years ago the Indians were encamped here, when a quarrel arose between two brothers having she-she gwi for totems. One drew his knife and slew the other, but those of the band who were present looked upon the crime as so horrid that without hesitation or delay, they killed the murderer and buried them together."

The Falcon then goes on to describe his encounter with the spirits of these two dead men and their vision, describing him finding a horse in the morning. In his narrative, he goes on to say, "I went to the top of the hill where I discovered tracks and other signs and following a little distance found a horse which I knew belonged to the trader I was going to see. As several miles travel might be saved by crossing from this point on the Little Saskawjewun to the Assiniboine, I left the canoe, and having caught the horse, and put my load upon him, led him towards the trading house (Brandon House) where I arrived next day."

THE FUR TRADE

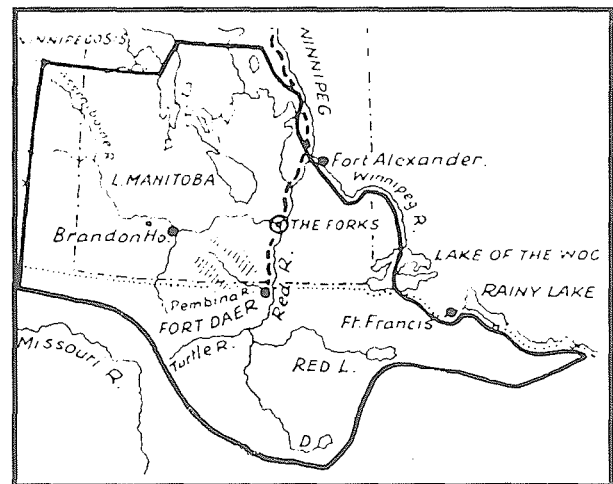
The granting of the 1670 charter which created the Hudson's Bay Company also roughly defined what would come to be known as "Rupert'sland". The Hudson's Bay Company today holds the honorable title of being the oldest continuously operating capitalist corporation in the world and and often times during the past, the initials H.B.C. have more then once been referred to as representing the phrase, "Here Before Christ". As for western Canada, that phrase has a ring of truth to it as they in fact were here before Jesuit Priests or missionaries had ventured much past the tip of Lake Superior.

It is the Hudson's Bay Company who are credited with introducing Dandelions to this continent as they imported them to their posts along Hudson's Bay for use in making wine for their employees and for trade with the resident Indians. Another of their marks of entrepreneurship was to export ice to Californians during the Gold Rush of 1850.

Strict company policy, however, deterred any exploration from being conducted in the interior until a rival fur trade company was formed and began trading out of Montreal. The strategy of this upstart company was to take the trade to the Indians of the interior and cut them off before they could carry their furs to the forts and posts along the shores of the Hudson's Bay. In 1800, the XY Company emerged out of Montreal and offered a third option to the fur trading Indians. The North West Company and the XY Company quickly joined forces and in 1804, merged. The strategy worked extremely well, so well that from 1809 until 1815, business had dropped off to the point where the H.B.C. was unable to pay their shareholders any dividends whatsoever. Within a few years of the inception of the North West Fur Company, the Hudson's Bay Company was forced to, albeit grudgingly, meet fire with fire and expand their own network of forts out into the interior.

Until that time, all exploration in this area was conducted entirely by the Metis who unfortunately left little in the form of a written record. They did, however, open the land and by their very existence here, forced Lord Selkirk and the Hudson's Bay Company to establish a small colony at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers to help counteract the Metis intrusion into territory considered to be owned outright by the H.B.C.. Selkirk, through acquiring control of the H.B.C., was able to purchase more than 74 million acres from that company for his colony. The area covered by the Little Saskatchewan River valley was land included in that purchase.

During the time from 1783 until their amalgamation in 1821, competition and resulting hostilities between the two companies continued to escalate. Murders were committed by both sides, property seized, posts raided and burned to the ground and eventually the increasingly ill feelings



*Selkirk Land Grant of 1811 which included
The Little Saskatchewan River district.*

led to the Massacre at Seven Oaks where Governor Semple and 20 of Lord Selkirk's settlers were killed in a fifteen minute battle with the Metis led by Cuthbert Grant.

Throughout the interior, as one company would put up a hastily built post or fort, the other

directly across the river or at the very least, within shouting distance. The competition led to ever increasing hostility. One such area of confrontation was the Little Saskatchewan River watershed. Where no posts had existed for the first 140 years of the fur trade, suddenly by 1818, three and possibly four posts dotted the hills and valley of the Little Saskatchewan. Being the major drainage river out of the heavy fur producing area of the Riding Mountains, the river was of particular importance to both sides.

In the fall of 1817, Peter Fidler quickly sent his son Charles to erect an H.B.C. post at Curling River. In an entry from his Brandon House Post journal dated the 20th of October, 1817, Peter Fidler writes:

"A few Indians came here 2 days ago and went away. They very much wish us to build near their hunting ground where we may expect to get Martens, Foxes and a few Beaver, and I have promised them we will send soon there to build - I have also prevailed on some others who generally keep in the open ground to go there. The place is NNW from this about 50 miles. Our Smith began to work in the shop. 4 Men getting ready to go away to build to the NWward at Curling River."

His entry for 23 October, 1817 reads:

"Sent away Charles Fidler as Master to build about 50 miles off to the Northwards and 4 men with him. John Lyons a freeman went with him, and carries part of our goods, he is to hunt in that quarter."

The outpost would be referred to as either "Charles Fidler's House", or the "Curling River Post". The Curling River he spoke of and marked in on his map of this area is undoubtedly the Rolling River.

His journal dated November 2, 1817 reads:

"One Mandan Indian boy came with a horse and cart from where Charles Fidler is building about 50 miles off. They have taken some provisions and the Indians are assisting them to cut down wood to build. (They) are hunting beaver over there but I

am afraid that they will kill very few as they are both so very insolent".

Entry for November 5t, 1817:

"The Indian Boy went back to Charles Fidler's house who accompanied our man here from there. Paid the boy for guiding our man here."

Entry for November 23, 1817:

"Sent some cooper's tools to Charles Fidler's House that he may learn one of his men to make kegs and then send him here to work at that business here."

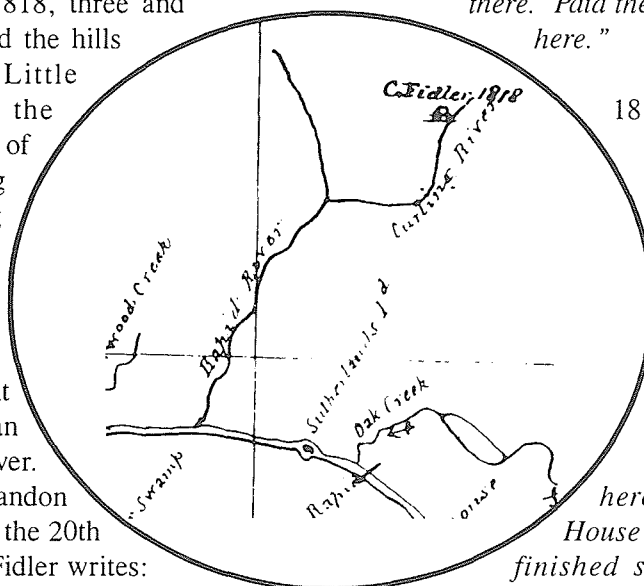
Thursday, November 27, 1817:

"James Rufs came here from Charles Fidler's House at 50 miles off. All is finished some time ago and the Indians fitted out and all gone to their Hunting Grounds. No snow on the ground. He has come here for sleds but no snow yet to take them away. They have traded near one pack of good furs already and the pair have killed them near 20 animals which will last the 5 men as well as their dogs. John Lyon who accompanied them there is also (gone) away to hunt. Humphrey and Tom Naved and Harvey are gone away southward in search of Buffalo. Men here variously employed about sleds, doors and gates."

Entry for November 29, 1817:

"Very fine warm weather still. Francis Hoole, a Brule Canadian passed Charles Fidler's house some time ago. He is going to Fort Dauphin and has left his cart at our House to be brought along by Mr. Lyons".

The North West Company quickly countered Fidler's move by building a post which was located near the river in the area of present day Minnedosa Beach. Remains of this post are referred to in survey notes written in 1873. Another post was soon erected about five miles further downstream where the river turns southward towards Rapid City and another called Desjarlais House which was located very close to the Curling River Post on the land above the valley near the present day Rolling



River Reserve. It is entirely possible that the Curling River Post or Charles Fidler's House is one-and-the-same with Desjarlais House, it being renamed at a later date.

Scattered along the riverbank and also doing a booming business were a number of free traders who built small houses with stone lined basements and conducted businesses wherever and whenever they could. A number of these basement depressions still dot the landscape in this immediate area.

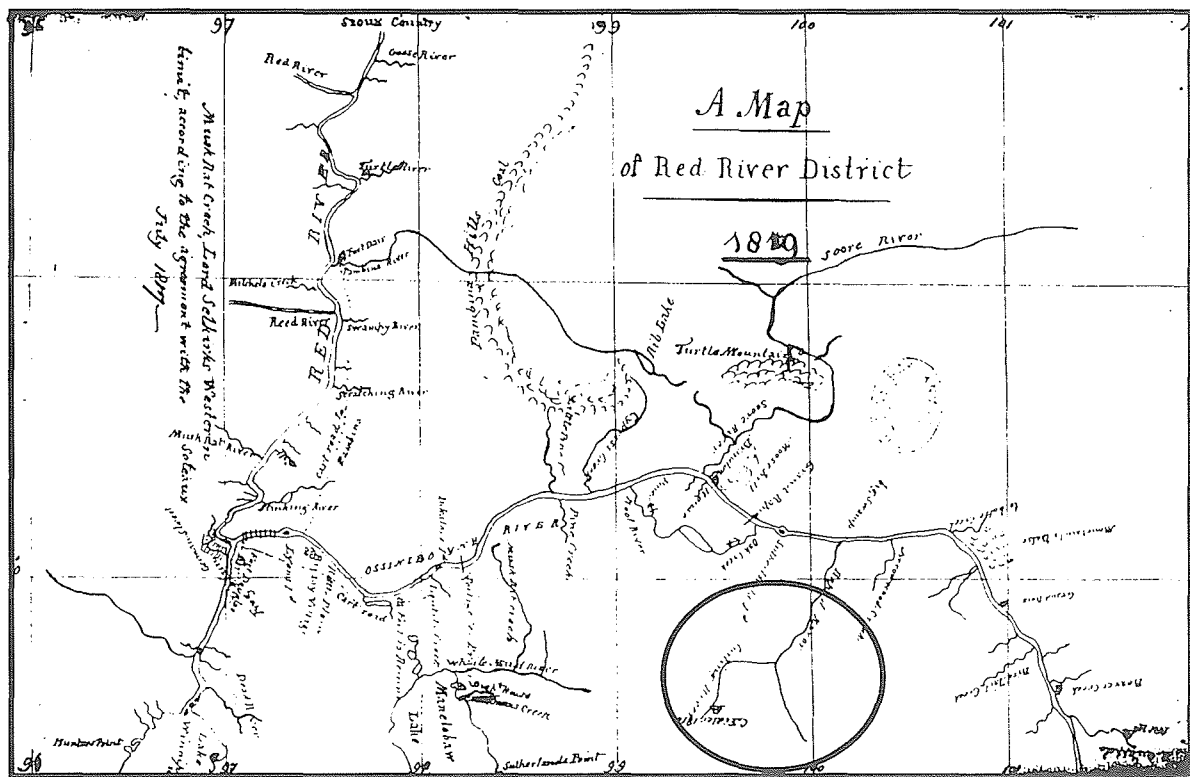
The flurry of activity that had been born out of the rivalry between the two companies came quickly to an end with their amalgamation in 1821, and with that amalgamation, all of the above mentioned posts with the exception of Desjarlais

House and Riding Mountain House located in the vicinity of Elphinstone, quickly disappeared.

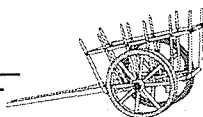
To put a stop to the incursion of American fur traders into the area, Fort Ellice was built in 1831. It was located on the Assiniboine River some 70 miles west of the Little Saskatchewan.

Between the years 1835 to 1837, a Small Pox epidemic ravaged the continent and it is estimated that fully three-quarters of the Plains Indian population perished from this disease.

Soon, however, a new mode of transportation would come to the forefront - the Red River Cart - and once again, the Little Saskatchewan River and valley would play a pivotal role in the fur trade and ultimately in the transportation of settlers and their effects out onto the western prairie.

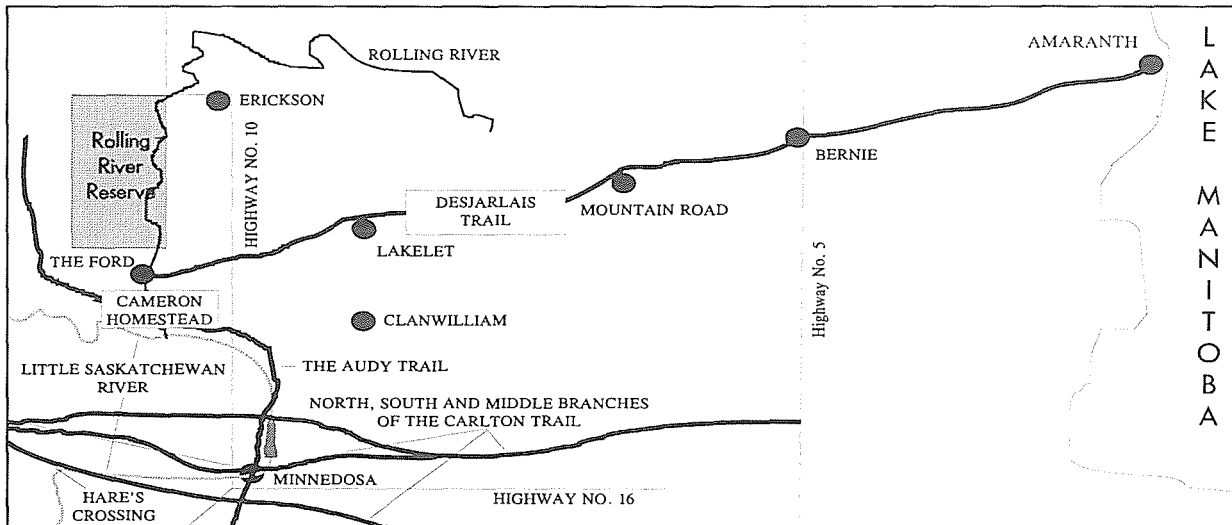


Peter Fidler's map drawn in 1819. The map was drawn with north at the bottom. The circled area, shown larger on the previous page, depicts the Rapid River (Little Saskatchewan) along with the Curling River (Rolling River) and Charles Fidler's Post in conjunction with Brandon House on the Assiniboine.



CHAPTER FIVE

THE TRAILS



Many trails crisscrossed the Little Saskatchewan district. The trail that traversed from the Rolling River area to Lake Manitoba was called the Desjarlais Trail. Also shown in the above map is the Audy Trail and the three branches of the Carlton Trail.

The fur trade was undergoing change, and one of the major changes involved the mode of transportation used for the movement of beaver pelts, buffalo hides and pemmican to eastern markets. Probably the most crucial invention to take place on the prairies during this period of the early 1800's was the Red River Cart. A rudimentary form of transportation at best, it was cheap and easy to build and repair along the roadside and could be pulled by oxen or horses. Several carts in a train could be handled by only a few men and this afforded inexpensive transportation for the rapidly increased trade in furs, hides and provisions for the settlements.

For thousands of years previous, the natives had laid down an intricate network of trails that connected the great plains hunting grounds with all of the major river systems and lakes. These trails were little more than footpaths, but they were there, easy to traverse and usually the most direct route between forts, trading posts and the hub of the activity, Fort Garry and Fort Pembina.

An employee of the American Fur Company set the tone for the change that was to come. In 1843, Norman Wolfred Kittson opened a trading post at Pembina located about 70 miles south of Fort Garry. His objective was to capture as much

of the fur trade from the Hudson's Bay Company as he could and in so doing, collected a number of heretofore free traders under the flag of his company. The move so upset colony Governor Simpson that he pleaded with his London Committee to persuade the British government to dispatch soldiers to Fort Garry to "maintain the peace". The arrival of the soldiers did quell the activities of these intruders at Pembina post for a while but general disinterest in the area and the boredom of their posting quieted the soldiers and Kittson, along with his compatriots, soon dominated over the fur trade on the plains once again.

During his dominance and with his army of Red River Carts, Kittson went on to gain great wealth, and his cart trains by the hundreds crisscrossed the prairies both to the south and the north of the border. One such partner in his enterprise who also amassed great wealth was Chief Picheito Tanner of the Portage district who was an uncle of the John Tanner who would later co-found the Town of Minnedosa. At one time it was reported that Picheito and later his son owned over 200 carts.

These carts, sometimes several abreast, spread across the plains creating wide trails of ruts as they went. One such trail that passed through

this area was the Carlton Trail.

The Carlton Trail was a route with many names, each depending on what your destination was and which direction you were going. If you were heading west, it could be called the Ellice Trail, the Saskatchewan Trail, Carlton Trail or Edmonton Trail. If you were heading east, it was called the Fort Garry Trail.

If one didn't see the carts coming, they could certainly be heard as much mention has been made of the horrendous screech and squeal created by the ungreased wheels working against the wooden axles. Wheels that were greased would collect the dust and sand of the prairie and render the cart useless within a few miles. Leaving the wheels ungreased prevented this problem but a frightening sound was the result.

The cart trains would proceed for a full day's travel and then form a camp in the evening. It was not very long before these camps were given names and fixed on the various maps of the time. When

the settlers began to arrive on the scene at the conclusion of the surveys in the early 1870's, most of these camps that had turned into stopping houses now became small settlements. High Bluff, Totogan, White Mud now Westbourne, Third Crossing, later Palestine and then Gladstone and Tanner's Crossing. Years later when the rail was being laid across that same country, it loosely followed the cart trails and some communities were forced to pull up stakes and shift over a few miles so that their location would coincide with the Manitoba and North Western Railroad water tanks. The location of those early M & N.W. water tanks determined the location of towns and grain elevators along the line. Basswood, Newdale, Strathclair and Shoal Lake are all within nine to twelve miles of each other due to the distance an early locomotive could run before taking on water. Alongside each water tank would be built a platform which in many cases was followed by storage sheds and perhaps a station. From those beginnings would spring another prairie town.

THE CARLTON TRAIL

This particular river and valley was criss-crossed at several points by trails with varying degrees of use. The Desjarlais Trail took the traveller to the shores of Lake Manitoba. The Audy Trail went in a north-south direction taking travellers from the Assiniboine area of Brandon into the Riding Mountains and beyond. Another trail through the Strathclair area provided access to the Fort Pelly area northwest of the Riding Mountains. How much cart traffic occurred on these trails is unknown, but none were considered to be near the importance of the main east-west highway - The Carlton Trail.

The Carlton Trail played the role of the main transportation route across the vast open plains of the North West Territories for nearly five decades from 1830's into the mid 1880's with the peak in traffic coming after the discontinuance of the York Boats. Millions of buffalo hides and thousands of tons of pemmican and other commodities were transported over this trail. It also became the popular choice of access into the interior for mapmakers, fur traders and frontiersmen.

The original route used by the Hudson's Bay Company between Carlton House and Red River came into being with the amalgamation of the companies in 1821. It was Governor Simpson who established the course of the Carlton Trail while on the return trip of his journey to the Columbia District in 1824-25. His intention to cross more than 550 miles of open country from Carlton to Fort Garry was considered *"a plan the boldness of which induced the people to believe my senses had taken leave of me"*, stated Simpson. Accompanied by Chief Trader Manes McMilland and eight employees of the H.B.C, Simpson set out in the afternoon of May 12th, 1825 and arrived at the gates of Fort Garry on May 28th. This is the first documented traverse over what became the Carlton Trail.

The trail's beginnings could be found at the front gates of Fort Garry located at the forks of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers with its end located at the gates to Fort Edmonton. The trail left the area along what is now Portage Avenue and swept outward past Headingley and across the White Horse Plains.

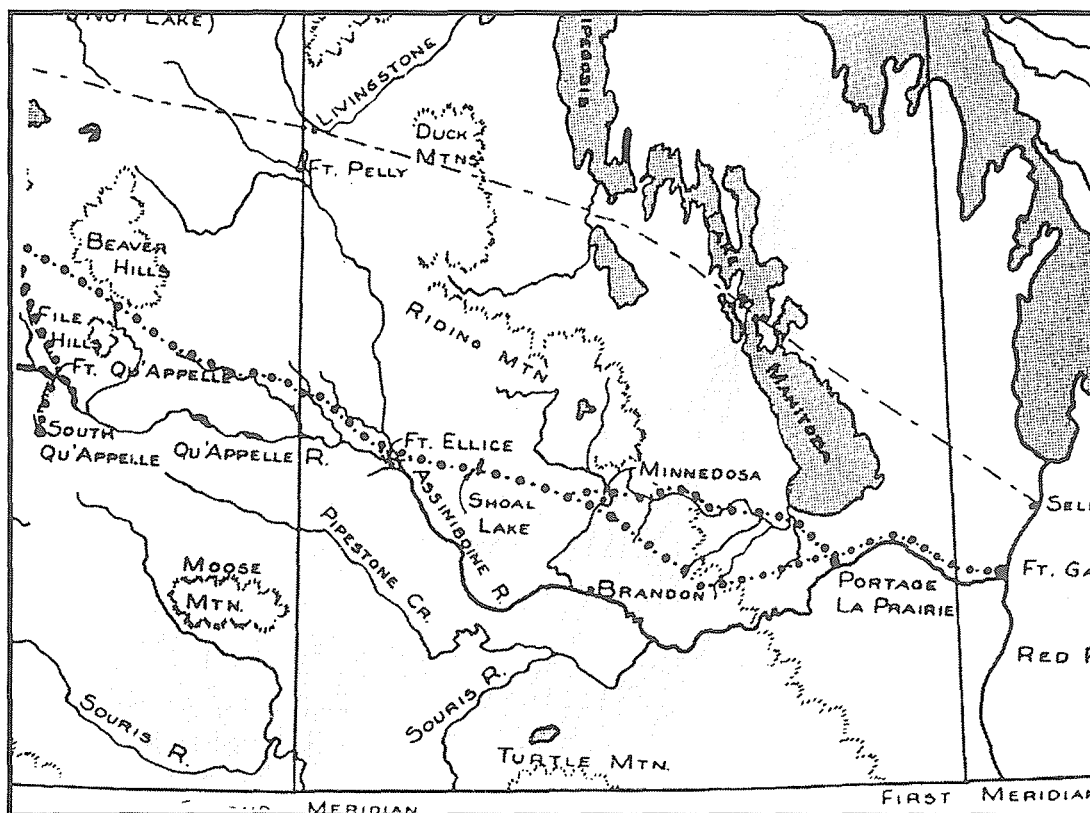
In the area of Portage la Prairie it split in two with the southerly trail passing near Carberry before turning north-westward and on to the Little Saskatchewan Valley where it made its ford at what became known as Hare's Crossing located approximately five miles west of Minnedosa. At this point, the river makes its broad sweeping turn towards Riverdale and Rapid City. Here as well, Archibald Hare and his family operated a stopping house where he ferried settlers across the river. This ford had a solid gravel bottom and offered easy access to Mr. Hare's establishments located on the northwest side of the river. Here he built his home, a stopping house, a barn and a lime kiln. Bits of crockery, glass and metal along with the willow filled stone basements still survive in the low lying scrub of the area and attest to its previous existence.

From Hare's Crossing, the Carlton Trail sprang up the neighboring hillside, cutting still visible trenches into the landscape and all at once emerged out onto the open plain at its top. The trail proceeded in its general north and westerly direction to a point west of Basswood where it merged with its counterpart, the north branch of

the trail.

The north branch of the Carlton Trail worked its way across the prairie along the same general lines as does the present day Yellowhead Highway. Through Whitemud and First, Second and Third Crossing, Palestine and onward to the Little Saskatchewan Valley, it made its way down towards the river near the north end of present day Minnedosa Lake. Evidence of the trail is still obvious on the Delgaty farms along the east side of Minnedosa Lake.

On the present day Chris Harrison farm located at the extreme north west corner of Minnedosa Lake, there may still be evidence of a post or stopping house. Exactly how long this little piece of commerce lasted in that location is entirely unknown but the crossing was commonly referred to as "Old Crossing" in many diaries and journals of the day. At this point the main trail moved up the hills to the flat lands above and crossed in the vicinity of present day Cameron School and eventually linked itself with the southern branch west of Basswood. A third, and probably seldom used trail, may have branched out from Old Crossing and skirted the valley wall to a point later referred to as Cameron



Crossing located near the Rolling River.

At some point in the 1860's, the trail took another new turn and passed down into the Little Saskatchewan Valley in the area of present day Minnedosa Cemetery. This middle branch and crossing would later become known as Tanner's Crossing and afforded the traveller with a large dry area in which to camp. This campsite was called the Odanah (Meeting Place) by natives living in the area. From the Odanah it was a short hop up the pass to the top of the prairie and once again on to the junction west of Basswood.

Once either the Hudson's Bay Company or from 1783 to 1821, the North West Company, built

In 1879, 1,871 carts, 227 wagons and 35 buckboards, a total of 2,133 vehicles, passed the Shoal Lake Post of the North West Mounted Police on their way west.

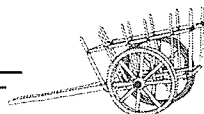
a fort or trading post, it wasn't long before the network of trails in the area became connected with this central point of commerce. One such trail was named the Desjarlais Trail and carried the traveller from Desjarlais House to the shores of Lake Manitoba and the Dog Lake Post located near present day Kinosota. Desjarlais House was located on NW 30-16-18 near Hunt Lake or what is locally called Munro Lake and is known to have been operating under that name by 1832. The Bill Munro family bought the quarter in 1900 and it had been

homesteaded earlier. In their garden near the house they found a huge iron key which came from this post. Desjarlais House was still operating as a small post in 1880. Desjarlais Trail crossed through the R.M.'s of Minto and Clanwilliam, and as it continued eastward followed much the same route as does the present day Mountain Road Highway, crossing No. 5 Highway south of Birnie before it continued on to Lake Manitoba.

During the Riel Rebellion of 1885, pioneer families living near the often used Indian trail were fearful enough that they banded together to fortify one of the local houses within which the women and children from the area could be sent for protection in case of trouble. The fort was the home of Sidney and Fred Baker and was located on the SW 1/4 of 30-16-17. Fortunately, its use was never needed.

After the fur trade diminished and the settlers and pioneers began to make their way to the homestead areas, these same trails were used for access into the remote areas. Later still, they would in some cases be adjusted to conform with the boundary lines of the newly surveyed townships and become municipal or provincial roads and then paved highways.

Today, Highway #83 #16, #10 and #5 all roughly follow the original configuration of these major trail systems that have existed in this area for much of the last ten thousand years.



THE RIVER CROSSINGS

The Carlton Trail crossings on the Little Saskatchewan River were well known and very much feared. In order for cart trains to reach Fort Edmonton and return to Fort Garry before fall, it was necessary for them to cross the Little Saskatchewan in early spring, usually when it was in flood. It was dangerous, full of rapids, filled to overflowing in the spring and literally untamed and during its days before permanent bridges were built, is recorded to have taken many lives and much valuable property. An expedition in 1859 reported crossing the Little Saskatchewan River near its entrance into the Assiniboine and indicated that the river was in high flood and that its members could have crossed the river by stepping on the backs of the hundreds of dead buffalo that the river had swallowed somewhere upstream.

An account years later by Charles Alloway, who was enroute to Battle River near Edmonton, depicts another such crossing. His account relates that he was forced to cross the Little Saskatchewan River during spring break-up. He reported that this crossing was the most difficult in his entire trip, and related that at the time he spent several hours on heaving, crunching ice floes while attempting to cross the 800 foot wide torrent using a cod line fastened to a tree on the other side so his party could ferry their supplies across.

Another account was made during the transportation of the so-called Confederation Table from Fort Garry to Saskatchewan. It was rumoured that at this table the Fathers of Confederation met at the Charlottown Conference in 1864, meetings that would signal the birth of this nation three years later in 1867. In fact a table was moved through this area and was so large and heavy that it required being lashed to two carts for the trip to the Battlefords and the only incident of the entire trip occurred when the entire works were upset into the Little Saskatchewan River. The huge oak table was rescued and continued on its way and sits on display in the Legislative Library Reading Room in Regina to this day. It is still referred to as the "Confederation Table", but has since been proven that it is in fact not, but may be the table that was used by the

Father's of Confederation at the Quebec Conference in 1864. It is certain that the table was used by the Privy Council at Ottawa after the government moved there in 1865. It was moved out to Saskatchewan and used in the offices of the Indian Commissioner for Manitoba and the North West Territories until 1896. When transported, the table measured 16 feet in length, however, it was too long for the limited quarters in the Saskatchewan Legislature and a six foot section of the table was subsequently removed.

That the Little Saskatchewan River drains a watershed nearly 4500 square kilometres in size including most of the Riding Mountains, attests to the state which it can be found in at an inopportune time.

The actions of the glacial river Saskatchewan left a large area of its bottom covered in gravel. When the water is low, the river can be easily crossed by oxcart or on foot. There was little trouble for prehistoric man or pioneer to find any number of places to cross during these times. In high water, however, it became a major obstacle that would tax the efforts of even the most experienced traveller and trader. For this reason, John Tanner, Archibald Hare and countless others found commerce could be done by pitching their tent near a good ford along the trail and operating a stopping house and crossing.

When Tanner arrived at the Little Saskatchewan River, he knew that good business would follow. The provincial survey crews had begun to work their way westward from Headingley in 1869. In fact, their survey is credited with spawning the first Riel Rebellion when resident Metis believed they were going to lose their traditional river frontage lots to these seemingly unnecessary squares called sections, townships and ranges that the English surveyors were intent on delineating.

As for the Minnedosa area, the survey crews began to arrive in the spring of 1873 and throughout the next year completed their surveys of this area before moving on towards the Assiniboine River to the west. Having been previously located at Westbourne when the survey crews passed through, Tanner knew that close on their heels came the

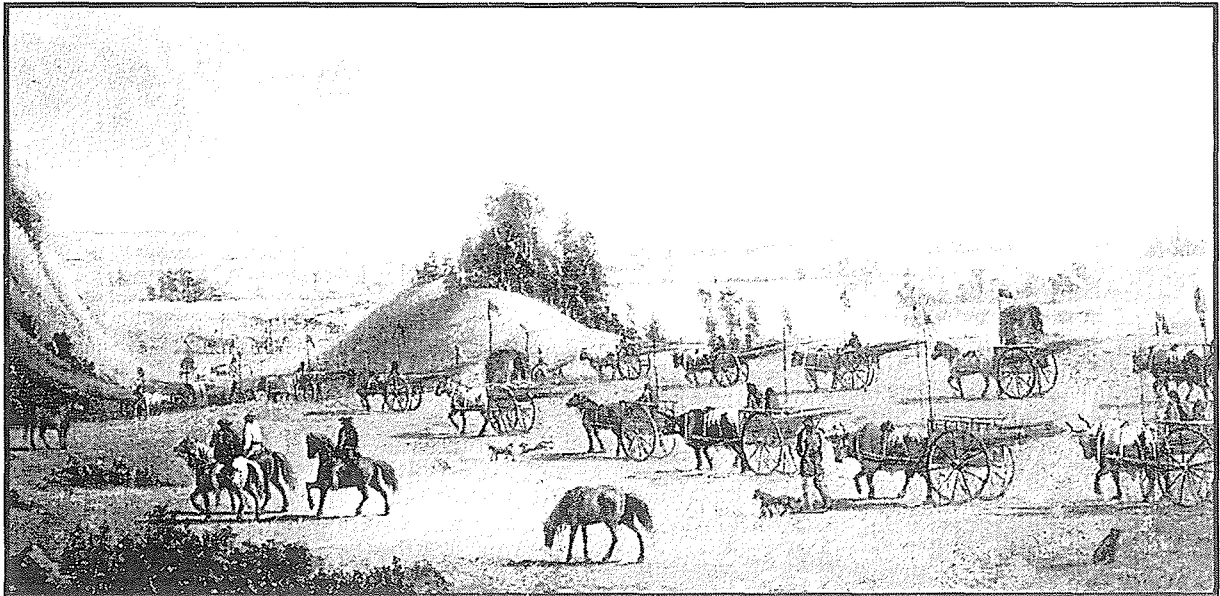
settlers and that a stopping house and a toll bridge could bring a good living.

As well, locating at a main river crossing on the Carlton Trail would put him in a good position to trade with the resident Indians as pelts and skins were still somewhat of a lucrative commodity. Rent for a nights lodging in his stopping house would also provide an income during the much travelled summer months.

What Tanner probably hadn't perceived at the time was the arrival of one Joseph S. Armitage in 1877. Armitage's arrival at Tanner's Crossing and the influence he somehow mysteriously wielded, would make Tanner a relatively wealthy man, not

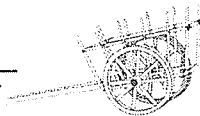
from the income his crossing or his toll bridge or his trade in furs would generate, but from the sale of his two quarters of land at the crossing that would eventually become the heart of the Town of Minnedosa.

For Archibald Hare and his crossing located five miles to the west, Armitage would hold out no such glimmer of hope. The railroad would eventually lead right through Tanner's Crossing and the small town springing up from the valley floor. Hare's Crossing would be by-passed. His crossing, his buildings and he and his family would soon disappear from the landscape of the Little Saskatchewan.



Royal Ontario Museum

The most treacherous point on any journey that involved one cart or one hundred carts was the river crossings. In the spring or after heavy rains, the swollen rivers could and did take many human lives and resulted in the loss of considerable amounts of property and trade goods. Crossings were carefully chosen and often trips would be timed to reach the worst rivers when the water was thought to be at its lowest levels.



CHAPTER SIX

JOHN TANNER

INDIAN FIGHTER & CIVIL WAR UNION ARMY SCOUT

The Early Years 1839 - 1865

John Tanner, later of Tanner's Crossing, was a mixed blood being three-quarters Saulteaux and one-quarter Anglo Saxon. He was born at Torch Lake (formerly known as Lac de Flambeau) in Wisconsin on August 17, 1839 to James and Louise Tanner. He was the first born of five children being sister Cecilia, born on December 6, 1846 to James' second wife Louise Ishicwekami, Elijah born in 1841, also born in Wisconsin, Maggie whose birth date is unknown and James, a foster son who was kidnapped by Indians and later found and adopted by James. He was to later claim he was the celebrated Charlie Ross who was left a sizeable estate by his natural parents. This claim was never proven. His sister Maggie would later marry Peter Sinclair and with him join her brother John Tanner, the Norquays and Sandisons, to become the first known settlers in the Minnedosa area around 1869.

Little is known about John's early years other than through the travels of his father James, and it is assumed that John along with his family went along on most of these trips as was a common practice during those times. James and Louise and family were living at L'Anse, Michigan in 1846. James is reported to have rescued a Methodist missionary by the name of John Pitezal from hostile Indians at that place and time and James was listed as having three children with him. Another report from February 1847 listed James and wife being baptized into the Methodist faith.

We can place John Tanner at the Little Saskatchewan River and in close proximity to his crossing as early as 1848 when he was age nine, but by August of 1849, they were living at Cass Lake in Minnesota and father James is reported to have joined the Presbyterian Mission at Lake Winnibigoshish in Minnesota about that time.

By 1850, James and family had moved to Pembina and during the years 1851 and 1852 is listed as being a buffalo hunter and trader for Norman Kittson at Pembina and no doubt working with his half brother Picheito Tanner in that business.

Records indicate that James visited the Red River Colony in the fall of 1851 as well as working in the area of Netley Creek at the southern tip of Lake Winnipeg and returning to Pembina.

In 1852, James asks for permission to open a Presbyterian Mission at the White Horse Plains but was refused and later that year did participate in building a mission at St. Joseph in the Dakota Territories. His partner in that venture was Elijah Terry who was later killed by the Sioux and buried by James.

On November 4, 1853 we can place the family once again at the Red River Colony and then they are reported to have moved onto St. Paul, Minnesota where James was baptized as a Baptist. By January 26, 1854 he was reportedly back at Pembina and heading for St. Joseph. In 1855 he, along with five Chippewa Indians from Oak Point, Minnesota, went on a lecture tour of the eastern states including one such lecture in Boston. It is unknown as to whether his family accompanied him on this trip.

After this point in 1855, the records are few as to their whereabouts until the outbreak of hostilities by the Sioux in Minnesota when we find John and his brother Elijah farming in the St. Cloud area in southern Minnesota. Father James joins his two sons at Fort Abercrombie in August of 1862. Due to the proliferous record keeping of the U.S. Army during the Civil War, we can easily pick up the trail of John Tanner and virtually on a day to day basis follow his footsteps throughout his service

for that cause.

It was the summer of 1862 and John Tanner was 23 years old. The spring and summer of that year had been an unsettled one in both Minnesota and the Dakota Territories. The Sioux nations were becoming more and more dissatisfied with their treatment at the hands of the U.S. government Indian agents. In August, that dissatisfaction would culminate in the Plains Indian Wars beginning with the Minnesota Massacre at New Ulm.

A series of Indian hostilities had been reported. Raiding Sioux war parties went on a rampage of killing, with reports of over 500 settlers being slaughtered in and around the area.

Situated at the centre of the activity was lonely and forgotten Ft. Abercrombie. The site of Ft. Abercrombie is some 20 miles south of present day Fargo, North Dakota, and is situated on the west bank of the Red River.

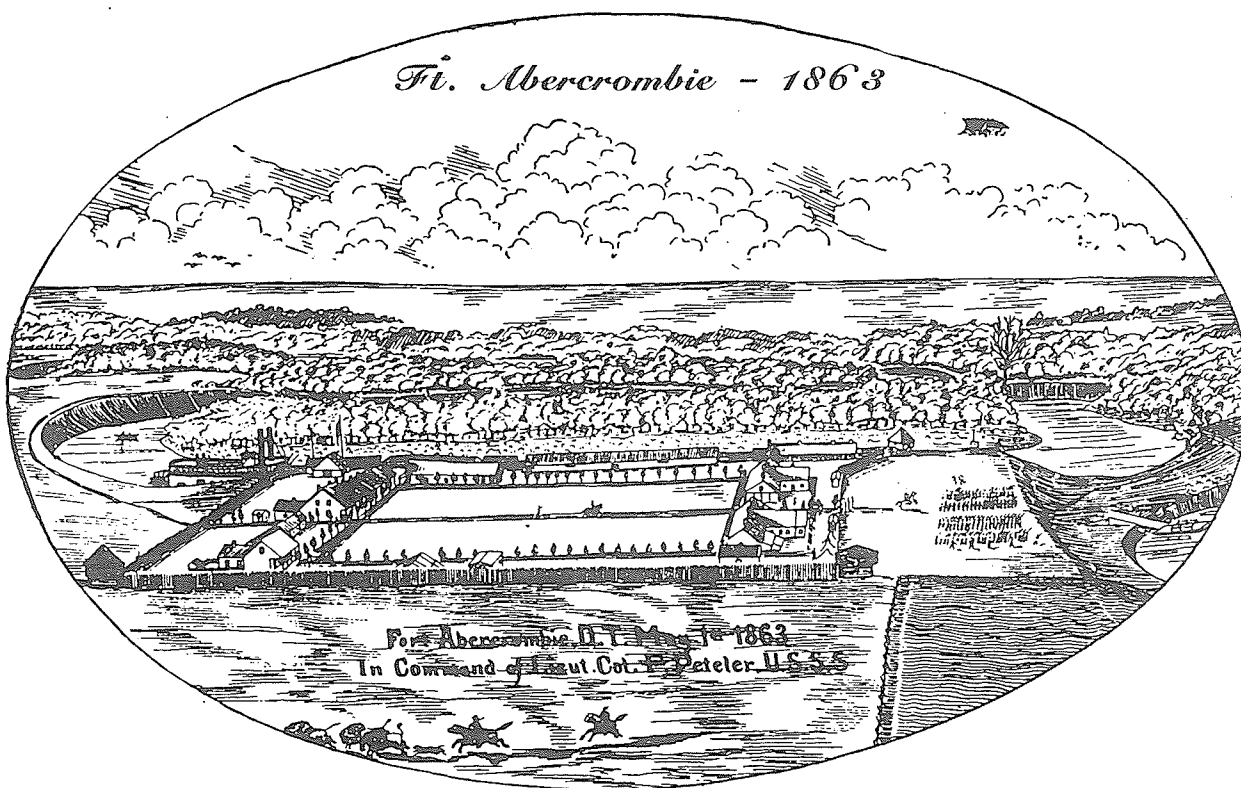
As part of the hostilities, the Sioux besieged the fort. A rag-tag group of volunteers and scared civilians manned the outpost. A call had gone out for immediate help. At St. Cloud, John Tanner, his brother Elijah and his father James had heard the call and they, along with 98 other local men, dropped

their plows, picked up what armaments they had and headed for nearby Ft. Snelling to sign up. By August 23, 1862, Company G of the 9th Regiment of the Minnesota Volunteer Infantry had been formed and by September 3rd, had left Ft. Snelling, marching in relief of Ft. Abercrombie located to its west.

One day out of Ft. Snelling, Company G saw its first action. Ambushed by a party of Sioux, a fierce fight ensued with the volunteers able to drive off their attackers. This battle would occasion Tanner's first injury of the war, a severe hernia. No deaths to the volunteers were reported in the short battle.

Upon arrival at Ft. Abercrombie, and no doubt because of their part Indian ancestry, the three Tanners were immediately assigned to scouting duties under chief scout Louis Marlowe. Their first duty was to help the survivors of the siege to rebuild the walls of the fort. Each passing day saw the arrival of more fleeing settlers as well as soldiers recruited from throughout Minnesota.

During this time a number of skirmishes were reported and soldiers were constantly under sniper fire from the trees along the east side of the Red



River. Written into the history of Ft. Abercrombie is the following report:

“Mr. Tanner and his two sons John and Elijah, seeing two Sioux near the riverbank, fired upon them and both Indians fell into the river. One was killed outright and the other wounded, but both were dragged back onto the bank and taken away by the Indians”.

Elijah, John's brother, would later join Company D of the 4th Regiment of the Minnesota volunteers, and later still he would be listed with the Detroit Volunteers. He was reported killed in 1865.

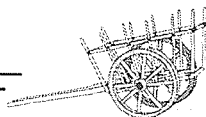
Hundreds of soldiers and civilians had by now gathered at the fort and its roles included such names as Wyatt and Virgil Earp, Bat Masterson, Bill Hickock and others. By October of 1862, the Indian Wars would be concluded with the Sioux in fast retreat across the Canadian border and into the North West Territories. There, the fleeing bands of Sioux would cross paths with James' brother and John's uncle Chief Pichieto who presided over a band of Ojibwa near Portage la Prairie.

Company G. of the 9th Minnesota

Volunteers would remain at Ft. Abercrombie through October of 1862, spending most of their time guarding trains, repairing military stations in the area and general outpost duties.

A year later in October of 1863, Co's G and H were still reported stationed at Ft. Abercrombie with the remainder of the regiment having already left for St. Louis by steamer.

By November 15, 1863, Ft. Abercrombie had become virtually isolated from the Civil War and thusly Co. G was sent to rejoin with the regiment in St. Louis, Missouri. Upon arrival in that city, Tanner's Company was put under the command of Major Markham and assigned there to general guard duty where they spent the winter of 1863 - '64. In March of 1864, the Company was sent on to Franklin, Missouri to protect the railroads which had once again come under severe attack by a group of confederate sympathizers under the command of Major Quantrill. Called Quantrill's Raiders, the gang boasted the membership of such future stars of the wild west as Frank and Jessie James, Cole Younger and others.



THE JESSIE JAMES CONNECTION



Every town in the wild west seems to make some claim to Jessie James. Minnedosa, the Armitages and John Tanner can make their own following claim.

Jessie and Frank James were born to Robert and Zerelda (Cole) James who had come from Kentucky to farm in Missouri in 1842. Jessie's father Robert died in 1855 in the California gold fields and consequently his mother, Zerelda, was later remarried to Dr. Ruben Samuels. Zerelda was an outspoken supporter of the Confederacy and her eldest son Frank James was quick to join in with Quantrill's Raiders early in the conflict. In late 1863, Jessie was sixteen years of age when his home was attacked by Union Soldiers, mainly a patrol of Union Army Scouts, who were in search of Frank James, a known member of Quantrill's gang. The soldiers did not find Frank James at home, but did find young Jessie. They attempted to solicit information as to Quantrill's whereabouts and in so doing, proceeded to beat up Jessie and then hung his step-father Ruben Samuels. John Tanner and Company G were in the area at this time and that company did contain a number of half-breed scouts, John Tanner being one of them. It is not known from which Company the attack on the James farm came from but it is entirely possible that it was Company G of the 5th Minnesota Volunteer Infantry who were assigned to protecting the Union railroads in the area. In fact, one Civil War historian has placed Tanner's Company at the very scene.

Jessie, Frank and the rest of the Quantrill's Raiders never forgave the Union Army for this event and shortly after that, led by Bloody Bill Anderson, Jessie participated in the murder of 20 unarmed Union Soldiers at Centralia, Missouri. The soldiers were being transported on a train at the time and were reportedly viciously slaughtered. After the war, Zerelda married Jessie's first cousin and moved on to Texas and then Tennessee and later back to Missouri. In 1875, a detective from Chicago named Allan Pinkerton and several men raided the James farm once again. They threw a grenade into the home, killing Jessie's younger brother who was age nine at the time and the explosion also blew Zerelda's arm off. Jessie was later killed by Bob Ford on April 3, 1882.

But the connection doesn't stop there. When Joseph Armitage and family along with five brothers arrived at Tanner's Crossing in 1879, one brother, George Armitage went into the blacksmith business. It was George's wife Annie, maiden name James, who happened to be the sister of Robert James, Jessie and Frank's father. Annie James Armitage and husband George were aunt and uncle to the famous James boys of Missouri as well as being neighbors of Union Army scout John Tanner. Alonzo (Toby) Armitage, born in Minnedosa in 1912, and as of the writing of this book a current resident of Sudbury, Ontario, and son of Joseph E. and Cora Armitage is a grandson of George and Annie's and carries the middle name of "James".

By May of 1864, the Tanner's Regiment had swelled to almost 900 men. On the 29th of that month, it was time for them to join in on the "thick of it". Boarding the river transport "B.M. Runyan", Tanner, along with his comrades, headed for Memphis and then on to La Fayette, Tennessee, where they became part of the 8,000 man force under General Sturgis. Small bands of Rebels were met along the way but for the most part, the travel was reported as easy and without danger.

That was until June 10, 1864, when they reached a small corner of Mississippi called Guntown.

Tanner, along with the rest of the scouting parties in the Regiment, was constantly out in front and in continuous danger from sniper fire. Early in the morning of June 10th, they spotted a small force of Confederate soldiers camped at what was called "Brice's Crossroads", which was cut through by

Tishomingo Creek. The relatively untested force under General Sturgis quickly realized that the small force was larger than first anticipated. The raging battle went on from 10 a.m. until past 5 p.m.. It was a rout in favor of the rebels and the Union soldiers were in fast retreat and hotly pursued. As luck would have it, Co. G., along with the rest of the 9th Regiment, was sent to the rear of the retreating column with orders to delay the rebels long enough for the army to reorganize.

For two days, the 11th and 12th, the rebels pursued the Blue Coats with credit going to Tanner's Regiment for saving the entire army during its retreat to the railroad at Colierville where they quickly boarded a waiting train and headed for Memphis, soundly defeated.

Hundreds had been killed and hundreds more had been taken prisoner, many from Tanner's own Co. G.. From the 9th Minnesota Infantry Regiment alone, 286 were killed or wounded and 233 captured

Write nothing above this line.

VOLUNTEER SERVICE.
(Civil War or War with Spain.)

John Tanner,
Co. *G*, *9* Reg't Minn. Inf.,
age *25*, height *5* feet, *7* inches,
complexion *light*,
eyes *blue*, hair *sandy*,
place of birth *Forest Lake, Minn.*,
occupation *Farmer*,
was enrolled *Aug. 21, 1862*,
and *mustered out* *Aug. 24, 1865*

From *M. I.*, *18*, to *M. I.*, *18*,
he held the rank of *Private*.

and the rolls on file for that period show him
present except as follows:

The medical records show him treated as
follows: *Sept. 27 to Oct. 13, 62*
Inflamm. Scroti (diagnosed also shown as)
Orchitis: Nov. 25 to 27, 62

(670)

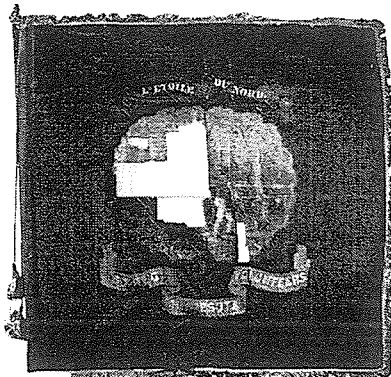
Orchitis: Oct. 4 to 7, 63
Blenorrhagia: Dec. 2
+ 3, 64. Epi. Catarrh:
May 5 to 10, 65. Hydro-
cele.

No additional record
of disability found.

THE MILITARY SECRETARY'S OFFICE
WAR DEPT.
SEP 27 1904
To Bureau of Pensions

The two documents above detail the injuries suffered by John Tanner during his duty with Co. G of the 9th Minnesota Volunteers. The documents were generated in 1904 by the U.S. Bureau of Pensions in response to Tanner's application for disability. His application of 1912 was ultimately successful.

and transported to the dreaded Andersonville prison. In all, the Union command had lost 2,240 of their 8,000 men in a seven hour battle.



Regimental Flag of the 5th Minnesota Volunteers

June 22nd, 1864 found the regiment rested and once again ready for action. They boarded a train in Memphis and headed south until they ran out of track. They then set out on foot until they reached Tupelo, Mississippi on July 12th where they came under attack by a rebel force. After three hours, the rebels fell back. Col. Wilkin of the 9th was killed as were two other soldiers in Tanner's Company G..

Early on the 14th, another attack by the rebels was repulsed. It would be called the Battle of Harrisburg and was the first victory Tanner and his Company were involved in.

By this time, roll call produced a total of 488 men of the original 879 that had collected at Ft. Abercrombie less than two years before.

August of 1864 saw the regiment report to a small town in Mississippi called Tallahatchie where they were assigned, unlikely enough, to build a bridge. On to Oxford where they were ordered to "fire the town". In September, they boarded the steamer "John Rain" and arrived at Devall's Bluff in Arkansas, then marched to Brownsville and Pochontas and on to Missouri, all the way facing fierce fighting. By the end of September, only 244 men were left in the regiments ranks, most being left along the way suffering from injuries and wounds.

October of 1864 saw them back in St. Louis and then to Jefferson city. At this point began the hardest march in the history of Company G. On orders to pursue retreating Confederate General Price and his army, the 9th Regiment took to the

roads travelling through Lexington, Kentucky; Independence, Missouri and then arriving at Harrisburg, having marched a distance of 125 miles in 7 days, all carrying up to 100 pounds of provisions on their backs. The October report shows the Regiment down to 12 officers and only 165 enlisted men left from the original 879.

In a report to command dated November 21, 1864, Col. Malmros stated that during the past year, the regiment had travelled 4,000 miles, 1,500 of that on foot. On November 30th, the Regiment was ordered into their biggest battle of the war, the Battle of Nashville.

The Battles of Franklin and Nashville occurred in November of 1864. General Sherman leading the northern forces was in pursuit of the southern forces under General Hood. The battle would be the last of the South's lost cause, a last desperate battle.

At age 33, the south's youngest general, Hood, wanted to liberate Nashville from the Union Army occupation which had begun in February of 1862.

Under General Sherman was Generals Thomas and Scofield. Severely beaten at Springhill, Tennessee, Scofield had escaped to Franklin, Missouri and dug in. At 4 p.m., the rebel forces had caught up to Scofield and the battle had begun. The scene is described as being calm, the air was hazy and to the west could be seen the red glow of sunset.

Secured behind hastily dug trenches, Tanner along with the rest of the force awaited the attack. Before them was a force of 20,000 rebels that stretched in a line 2 miles wide. During the five hour battle, 17 charges were made by the confederates. The Union forces each time let out a sheet of fire at each charge. It was a disaster for the south. 54 Regimental commanders fell along with 6 generals and thousands of troops.

Tanner's 9th Regiment took 450 prisoners during one such charge. At another point in the battle, with bayonets fixed, the 9th charged across an open field at the rebel lines, putting the enemy into retreat. In pursuit, the retreat became a rout. Late that evening, the 9th was ordered to bivouac, and were so close to the enemy lines that one brave young member of Company I, Thomas Kennedy, was instantly killed by a bullet while cooking his

coffee.

The Union army retreated into Nashville, not losing, but choosing to continue the battle there.

During the fight, General Hood had lost an arm and was reported to be out of control but refused to give up command. Instead of escaping with his remaining forces, he laid siege to Nashville, playing into the hands of the Union Army. Night patrols and constant cannon fire depleted his ranks until on December 15th at a place called Shy's Hill, his army was finally routed.

On December 16th, 1864, the 9th was ordered to advance to within a half mile of Cheatham's confederate corps fortifications. In the face of severe fire, the 9th moved forward to within 300 yards of enemy lines. After a fierce volley of cannon fire, the regiment was ordered to charge. The reports indicated that men rose from the ground and charged across the cornfield against a most withering fire. The 9th was first to reach the enemy works and plant their flag. During that battle, the 9th captured two battle flags and took 550 prisoners.

The battles of Nashville and Franklin were decisive defeats for the confederacy. John Tanner and the 9th Minnesota had been at both battles and played a pivotal role in their conclusions. General Hood's losses during the battles were reported at 3,500 dead and 9,000 taken prisoner.

January of 1865 saw the 9th Regiment arrive at Clifton on the Tennessee River where they embarked on the river transport "Tyrone". They reached Eastport, Mississippi where they took ten days rest and for those ten days, subsisted entirely on corn.

On February 6th, they embarked on the steamer "Atlantic" and headed for New Orleans. Aboard the "Guiding Star", they sailed into the Gulf of Mexico and then into Mobile Bay on the Alabama coast. While in the area, it was not uncommon to see four or five thousand men up to their waists in the water gathering oysters for food.

March of 1865 saw them head up the Fish River to a place called Spanish Fort where a skirmish with rebel forces saw the confederates fall back. Upon reaching Spanish Fort, they laid siege. Rifle pits were dug, gradually moving the force closer and closer to the enemy fortifications until they were so close, conversations could be overheard. After Union batteries shelled the fort, it was abandoned

by the rebels.

The 9th then marched in the direction of Montgomery, Alabama. On April 19th, rumors began circulating up and down the column that Lee had surrendered. Soon, a messenger riding the length yelled "The war is over", and all became delirious with joy. On April 30th while at Montgomery, news reached Tanner and the rest of the men that President Lincoln had been assassinated by John Wilkes Booth, a rebel sympathizer.

The month of May, 1865 saw the regiment march from Montgomery to Selma and on to Marion where they were ordered to seize all the cotton and ship it north by rail.

J 9 Minn.	
John Tanner	
Co. 1, 9 Reg't Minnesota Infantry.	
Age 25 years.	
Appears on Co. Muster-out Roll, dated	
H. S. Mulling Minn. Aug 24, 1865	
Muster-out to date Aug 24, 1865	
Last paid to Oct. 31, 1864	
Clothing account:	
Last settled.....186 ; drawn since \$.....100	
Due soldier \$.....15.75; due U. S. \$.....100	
Am't for cloth'g in kind or money adv'd \$.....100	
Due U. S. for arms, equipments, &c., \$.....6.00	
Bounty paid \$.....25.00; due \$.....75.00	
Remarks: Knapsack, harness, recreation obtained by self.	
H. S. Mulling, Co. 1, 9 Reg't.	
Book mark:	
H. S. Mulling	

In June, orders finally arrived that the

regiment was to make for home. They marched to Vicksburg and boarded the "Henry Ames" for transport to St. Louis. From St. Louis aboard "Burlington", they sailed to St. Paul where they received a royal reception. What little remained of the 9th Minnesota Volunteers gathered on the Parade grounds at Fort Snelling and were mustered out - almost three years to the day of their inception.

John Tanner was now 25 years old. On the day he mustered out, he was ordered to return his clothing supplied him by the U.S. Army. For its return, he was allowed and paid \$15.75. He was allowed to purchase his knapsack, haversack and canteen for the sum of \$25.00, and his rifle and ammunition for \$6.00. He also received his remaining pay of \$75.00. With these items and a grand total of \$84.75 in his pocket, he walked out

of Ft. Snelling and returned to what was left of his farm near St. Cloud in the southern end of Minnesota. The date was August 24th, 1865.

On his arrival at St. Cloud he learned of the death of his brother Elijah, as well as the death at the Second Battle of Monassas of his uncle, John J. Tanner. His father James was reported to have left the U.S. and moved closer to his half-brother Picheito near the Portage Plains in the North West Territories.

There was nothing to keep John Tanner in St. Cloud. Selling what he could, he simply left the rest and headed north to join his father and his uncle who were jointly conducting a lucrative trading and freighting business along the Carlton Trail in the North West Territories



Provincial Archives of Manitoba

The above photograph was taken around 1872 and shows travelling families of Metis traders on the plains near Fort Garry.

JOHN TANNER *of the* CROSSING

The story of Minnedosa really begins with the arrival of John Tanner at what would almost immediately become known as Tanner's Crossing. The precise date of his arrival at the crossing is unknown but can be established as around 1869. There is confusion as to the exact date as a result of Tanner's signature appearing on petitions emanating from the Westbourne area as late as May 21, 1873 but dual residences would not be uncommon at this time and it is entirely possible that he had in fact taken up temporary residence at the crossing while still being listed as a resident of the Westbourne area; perhaps spending the winters there. His name also appears on the voters list for 1874 for that area but the original voters lists had been prepared in 1870 and were still being used four years later.

He is reported to have moved to the Westbourne area from Portage in 1871 and is also reported to have been a resident of that community for three years, meaning 1874, but there are also historical references indicating that Tanner's Crossing was so named by mid 1870 and Tanner himself has stated he was living, at least for part of the year, at the crossing by 1869.

After his release from the Union Army at the conclusion of the Civil War, he removed himself from Minnesota and came to join with his father James, in the Portage la Prairie district. It is thought that he spent some time between 1865 and 1868 in and around the Red River Valley trading in furs and on occasion helping his uncle, Picheito with his freighting business. He may well have seen the potential for a future crossing on the Little Saskatchewan River during one of these trips, but he had certainly been familiar with this area as early as the 1850's when he had accompanied his father here on missionary and trading forays.

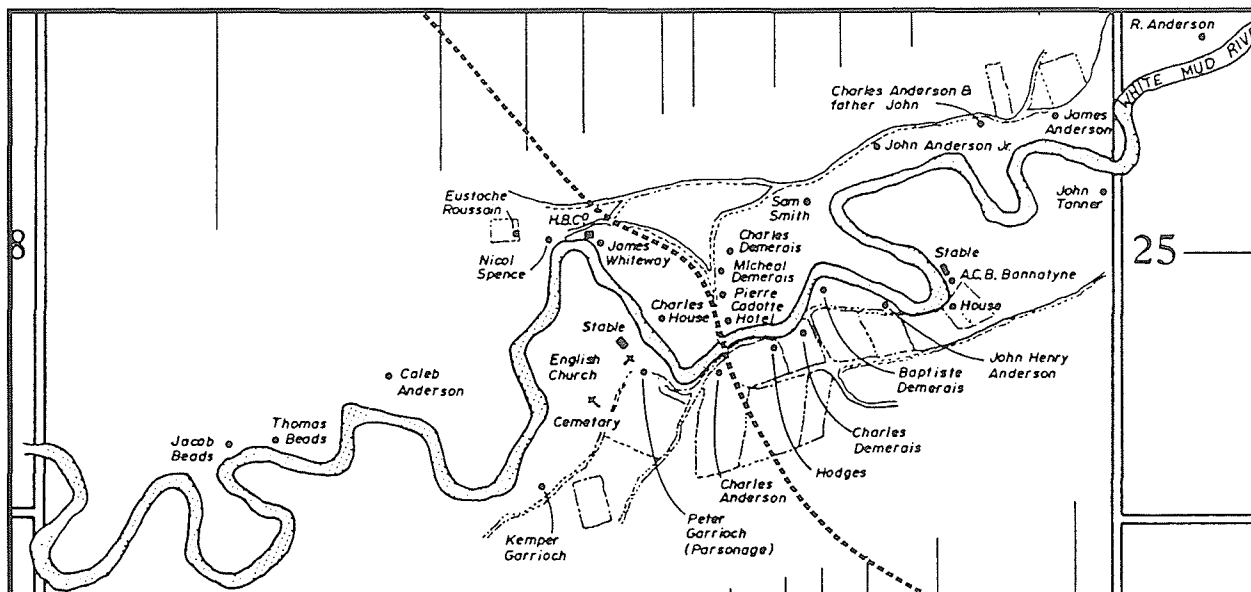
His uncle, Chief Piecheto Tanner, also known as Little Pheasant, was a powerful man in that territory with his house being described as the best in the area, it being the first shingled house west of Winnipeg. Picheito was described as a wealthy, shrewd and scheming man and was recognized as a

leader among the Ojibway Indians, though socially, it is said, he mixed very little with them except when on trading excursions. However, during ensuing treaty negotiations with the newly formed provincial government in the early 1870's, Picheito was chosen as spokesman for the group.

The conclusion of the Plains Indian Wars between the U.S. Army and the Sioux Indians came about with the mass hanging of several Indian leaders at Mankato, Minnesota in 1862. The scattered tribes took shelter across the border in the North West Territories and particularly near the Red River Colony. It had been part of their traditional lands and in 1812, King George III had extended them promises of protection in exchange for a military alliance with the British to fight the Americans. These promises they took seriously as evidenced by their actions early in the uprising. They had descended on the small community near Mankato and slaughtered all inhabitants; the only survivor being a single white man who had the foresight to raise the Union Jack above his head and wave it furiously. The Sioux, recognizing the significance of the flag and having no rancor with the British to the north, spared the man's life.

After hostilities ceased, for the most part, the scattered remnants of the once powerful Sioux were starving and without a homeland. Bounties had been put on their scalps by the U.S. Army and the Indians were being pursued relentlessly. Consequently, in 1862 and 1863 they found themselves occupying a portion of the Portage Plain, a thin stretch of land between Lake Manitoba and the Assiniboine River, well out of reach of the U.S. Cavalry. In this area they tended to fishing the waters of the lake during the winter and breaking up into hunting parties to scour the plains in the summer. They were soon to find out that their presence was not welcomed by everyone in the area.

During the first week of May in 1864, their camp was attacked by a war party of Chippewa (a branch of the Ojibwa) who may have been bounty hunters believed to have come from the Red Lake,



Early map of the White Mud Settlement (Westbourne). Tanner's residence is shown at the extreme right side of the above map near the river. The dotted line depicts the Carlton Trail.

Minnesota area. The Sioux were convinced that Chief Picheito of the Portage Plain was at the root of the attack, but they were unable to prove their claim.

The Sioux camp involved was described as being located approximately 25 km north of High Bluff, an area which would later be named Flee Island, due to the quick flight from the camp by the Sioux during the attack. The attackers surrounded the village and fired into the Sioux tents while all the men were sleeping. Thirteen Sioux were reported killed with several others wounded. This battle led the Sioux, when they returned later, to build an entrenchment camp at the site for protection from further attacks. The entrenchment works can still be seen today.

As late as 1869, there were more attacks and jousting from both sides. The Sioux were reported to have snuck into the Portage village and stole six horses. A small party of Saulteaux tracked the Sioux to Two Hills which is northwest of Lavenham where they saw a campfire in a bush and surrounded it. One of the six warriors was a sharpshooter called "Moose". Apparently he lined two men up and killed them both with a single shot from his muzzleloader. The party of Saulteaux retrieved their horses but the rest of the Sioux escaped. Picheito again was thought to have been

involved, but once again the allegations were never proven. It is during one of these raids on a Sioux encampment that John Tanner, still hating the Sioux for their massacres of settlers in Minnesota in the early 60's, joined with his uncle Picheito in at least one of the attacks. It is here that John Tanner may have lost his right arm; it being amputated just above the elbow.

Later in his life, Tanner made application to the United States government for a Civil War pension. On one of his applications, he stated that he deserved the pension because he had lost his right arm while serving his duty. He was denied this pension and later applied listing other lifelong disabilities due to injuries suffered during his service; these injuries involving a hernia as well as other complications. These injuries would render him unable to father any children of his own, and is the reason he has no direct descendants today. He was successful in this pension application and in fact did receive a pension of \$100 per month which was paid throughout the remainder of his life.

As for Picheto, 1870 would see him, along with nephew John, become involved with an armed force which marched from Portage to Fort Garry against Riel and his provisional government. Riel and his men had previously captured Fort Garry and had taken prisoners. Once they had arrived in the area of Fort Garry, they were told that hostilities

had lessened and that their presence wasn't required. Storing their weapons in the bottom of a wagon, the party which numbered about 38 men, turned and began their march back to Portage. Riel and his men saw this happening and seized the moment as the party had let down their guard. They rushed out of the Fort and intercepted the party as they were passing Headingley, arrested the entire works and imprisoned them. Some of the men were released shortly after their capture but others were kept imprisoned for up to four months and would later claim compensation from the government for their troubles. One, Thomas Scott, would be executed by Riel.

Shortly after the rebellion was put down with the arrival of the Red River Expedition under Colonel Wolseley on August 23, 1870, Picheito would represent his people at treaty negotiations in Manitoba before eventually removing himself to the Qu'Appelle Valley in the area of Binscarth where he was reported to have died around 1872. The reserve the family settled on would be named the Silver Creek Reserve and later changed to Gambler Reserve when only Picheito Tanner's family

remained on it.

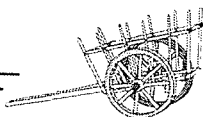
During his lifetime, he had amassed a small fortune through his ownership of a number of carts which he used to haul freight in conjunction with the famous Norman Kittson. After Picheito's death, his eldest son named Kaseaway (Christian name Joseph) Tanner was reported to have had over two hundred carts and had proved himself to be as successful a trader as was his father and in fact was importing goods directly from England.

Besides being imprisoned by Riel, the year 1870 would bring grief into John's life that he had thusfar not experienced since the death of his uncle and brother in the Civil War.

The execution of Thomas Scott by Riel's provisional government on March 4, 1870 focused public opinion in the immediate area as well as down east firmly against Riel. One of those who came out strongly against Riel's actions was John's father James Tanner. With the arrival of Wolseley and the quick departure of Riel to safety south of the border, elections were called for Canada's newest province. They would be held in December of 1870 and James Tanner was going to be involved.

At some point early in his life, John Tanner suffered the loss of his right arm just above the elbow. In one of his pension applications, he noted the loss of his arm as relating to the Civil War. His claim on these grounds was denied by the Pensions Bureau, but his pension application was later allowed based on other injuries. Tanner is reported to have told a number of pioneers that he in fact lost his arm in the war but that fact has been unsubstantiated. The theory expressed by Peter Neufeld was that he may well have lost his arm during one of the Flee Island raids against the Sioux, and another theory has him losing it during a hunting expedition. The true cause of the loss of his arm is, in fact, unknown. There is one Minnedosa account that has Tanner at one point attaching a hook to a home-made prosthesis.

Tanner was a mysterious and elusive man who shunned the prying camera. There is no photograph known to exist of him taken at any stage of his life of 92 years.



3-447.

Western Division. *H. L. E.* Ex'r.

Orig. Div. No. 1324.063 Department of the Interior,
John Tanner
 Co. 9 Reg't Minn. Vol. Inf. BUREAU OF PENSIONS,
 Washington, D. C., Sept. 23, 1904

SIR: To aid this Bureau in preventing any one falsely personating you, or otherwise committing fraud in your name, or on account of your service, you are required to answer fully the questions enumerated below.

You will please return this circular under cover of the inclosed envelope which requires no postage. Very respectfully,

Mr. John Tanner,
Kirkpatrick
Canada.

Commissioner.

1. When were you born? Answer. *August 17th 1839*
2. Where were you born? Answer. *Josh Lake, Wisconsin*
3. When did you enlist? Answer. *August 8, 1862*
4. Where did you enlist? Answer. *St. Cloud, Minn.*
5. Where had you lived before you enlisted? Answer. *Stems Co., Minn.*
6. What was your post-office address at enlistment? Answer. *St. Joseph, Minn.*
7. What was your occupation at enlistment? Answer. *Farmer*
8. When were you discharged? Answer. *August 1865*
9. Where were you discharged? Answer. *St. Cloud, Minn.*
10. Where have you lived since discharge? Give dates, as nearly as possible, of any changes of residence.
Minneapolis, Minn. - 1868-1880,
Parish, Ark. - 1880-1904
11. What is your present occupation? Answer. *Farmer*
12. What is your height? Answer. *5* feet. *5* inches. Your weight? *130*
 The color of your eyes? *Grey* The color of your hair? *Black* Your complexion?
Dark Are there any permanent marks or scars on your person? If so, describe them.
Right arm amputated at shoulder above elbow.
13. What is your full name? Please write it on the line below, in ink, in the manner in which you are accustomed to sign it, in the presence of two witnesses who can write.

John Tanner

John Tanner

WITNESSES: { 1. *C. M. Mair*
 2. *Chas. B. Mair*
 [Witnesses who can write sign here.]

Date: *Oct. 5th* 1904

One of three pension applications submitted by John Tanner to the U.S. Government. The third application was successful and Tanner was granted a \$100 per month pension for the remainder of his life.

THE DEATH OF JAMES TANNER

James Tanner was 60 years old, having been born on the east side of the Red River across from the Pembina Post in 1810 and had wandered this part of the North West Territories since a child. He was well acquainted with the ways of the Indians and spoke several of their languages. James was a man of strong faith and had preached that faith to the Indians on the plains and been involved in at least two missions. He is reported to have had a good education being enrolled in the mission schools at Mackinac Island in Michigan and Cape Girardeau county in Missouri as well as the mission school of Reverend Bingham in Sault Ste. Marie in 1828. After that, he became heavily involved as a missionary in the west and in 1852 had applied to Eden Colville of the Hudson's Bay Company for land at White Horse Plain upon which to open a mission. His request was denied and later that year helped Elijah Terry start a mission at St. Joseph in North Dakota. While there, Elijah Terry and family were murdered by the Sioux; Tanner only escaping a similar fate due to luck.

In general he was not a man of violence and on many occasions interceded between warring Indians and traders and trappers to keep the peace. He was described as a huge man with immense physical strength, fluent in Ojibwa, French and English, a persuasive speaker and preacher, but capable of terrible violence when drunk. He is credited with being the first Protestant missionary in North Dakota. His one digression from this life long pursuit of keeping the peace with the Indians was his involvement, as a civilian, with the Union Army and their fight against the Sioux. This involvement came about probably in part because of his experience at St. Joseph and again because of the ongoing Sioux massacres of settlers in and around the area of Minnesota.

The last week of the November of 1870 found James Tanner listed as a keynote speaker at a candidates' meeting in Poplar Point. After the meeting concluded, at which Tanner's speech was described as "able", he was driving home on the back of a buckboard along with two close friends, John Tait and David MacKenzie. Only 300 yards

from the meeting place, two or three men jumped out from behind cover and threw some unknown objects at the horse. The commotion caused the horse to bolt and James Tanner was thrown from the wagon, his head reportedly being run over by the back wheel.

Living nearby, Dr. Lynch, who had led the local resistance against Riel during the days of his provisional government and was a compatriot and friend to James Tanner, quickly responded to the scene where he arranged for Mr. Tanner to be transported to a nearby house. There he was pronounced dead due to a "*broken skull and fearful lacerations of the face*". Tanner's remains were removed shortly after to the home of Mr. John Tate where it was later claimed by his brother, Chief Picheito, and buried in an unknown and unmarked grave.

As reported later in *The Manitoban*, the correspondent described the pitiful wailing and grief expressed by Tanner's poor widow as she met the wagon carrying her husband's body. Only a couple of hours earlier her beloved husband and companion of 35 years had left her in the best of health and spirits, stating that he hoped to accomplish some good that night for his countrymen.

In his obituary, James Tanner was described as, "*being a retired missionary who, in his time, laboured diligently among the brethren of this country. He was a man of rare talents, both as a speaker and a thinker. His character was unsullied and his name will long live as a benefactor to his countrymen. He leaves a widow and a grown-up son in poor circumstances. A subscription list is in circulation for their benefit, and we hope there will be a large amount collected*".

It is obvious from this last comment that his son, John Tanner, was not doing well on his farm, perhaps because of the recent loss of his right arm. At any rate, the entire episode made John think about removing himself from his immediate surroundings and making a permanent home elsewhere. That elsewhere would be Tanner's Crossing, located some sixty miles westward along the famed Carlton Trail.

The sale of his land and subsequent

relocation wouldn't be a spur of the moment move as in 1871 John Tanner was listed on surveyors' notes as being a resident of the Whitemud River Settlement, later Westbourne, and owning a small acreage and living in a house measuring 16' by 16'. On this land he continued to operate a small farm and raised a few cattle. He had purchased this land, being Parish Lot 1, from John Anderson, Sr. and is recorded as having sold it to Murdoch McLeod in 1874 after moving west.

The first absolute indication of his presence in the Westbourne-Portage area comes on July 14, 1869, at which time he marries Catherine Sinclair. The Marriage Certificate is from The Anglican Church of Canada, Synod of the Diocese of Rupert's Land and attests to the marriage taking place at St. Mary's la Prairie. The marriage was performed by Reverend Henry George and witnessed by John Jas.

Setter and attended by his father James Tanner.

Catherine's maiden name is listed as Trottier, she being the daughter of Joseph Trottier. She was also the widow of a Hudson's Bay clerk named James Sinclair, son of an important H.B.C. factor and consequently raised in the area of the Hudson's Bay. In 1861, he was listed as being in charge of a trading post on the Saskatchewan Trail located on 18 Street N.W. in present day Portage. He was reportedly murdered by an admirer of Catherine's who thought the deed would result in her marrying him. She instead chose to marry John Tanner.

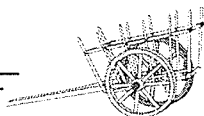
As a result of this marriage, John found himself the instant father of four adopted children being John Sinclair, born around 1853; William born about 1854; Verbain, born about 1862 and Flora, born about 1864.



Public Archives of Canada

Louis Riel

Although it was clearly a case of manslaughter at the very least, and there were several very good witnesses, no one was ever named or charged in the matter of the death of James Tanner. He had spoken out clearly against Riel and his provisional government during its occupation of Fort Garry, but the only rumours which persisted after his death was those responsible were possibly soldiers belonging to the Red River Expedition.



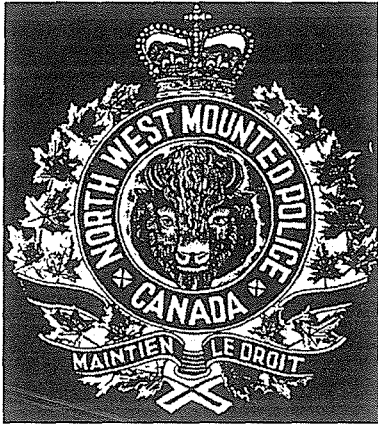
CHAPTER EIGHT

TANNER'S CROSSING

Tanner's Crossing quickly became the major crossroads of the Carlton Trail and the Little Saskatchewan River. References to it are numerous in journals of the day kept by the men who took the giant cart trains across the open plains.

As mentioned in the earlier chapter, the exact date of Tanner's move to the crossing is unknown. There are no journals known to exist that were kept by Tanner and probably he could barely write as his disability pension applications were filled out in someone else's hand and only signed by Tanner, obviously with his left hand. On one such application, Tanner listed his first year of occupancy at The Crossing as 1869.

As recorded in his Civil War records, John Tanner was relatively small in stature, unlike his father James and his grandfather John Falcon Tanner. He stood about five and a half feet tall with medium complexion, steel-blue eyes and sandy colored hair.



Tanner's Crossing was on the edge of the frontier in 1869. With most of the traffic over the trail kept to the summer months, it is highly probable that Tanner manned his crossing during those months only and returned to his family at White Mud Crossing during winters. Trappers and rum trading ruffians coursed the plains and generally kept out of the way of encroaching civilization. The liquor traffic over the Carlton Trail was large in volume as well as being illegal, but there was no police force in place to uphold the law until the arrival of the North West Mounted Police to the crossing in 1875.

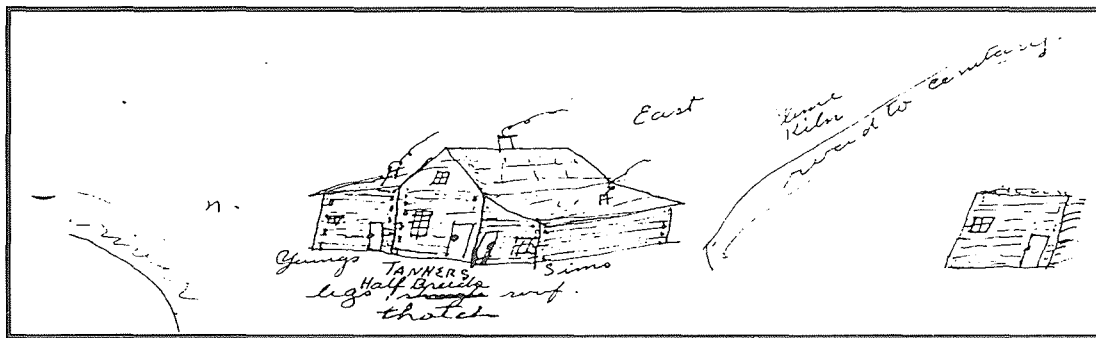
In all probability, John Tanner may have been involved in the trade himself at some point. With the price of the watered down liquor being so cheap and easily attainable and the Indians being so accustomed to its acceptance in exchange for furs and hides, there is little doubt that Tanner was able to make a good living. So good in fact that at the inception of the North West Mounted Police and their ride to Fort Whoop-Up near the Rocky Mountains and return later that fall, it would be Tanner's Crossing that would be named as one of the first locations for a post manned by the N.W.M.P..

They chose Tanner's Crossing for two reasons. This crossing effectively funneled the majority of the traffic along the trail into one easily controlled crossing with the other two within easy ride. The liquor trade could be effectively controlled and checked at this point. As well, they were available to forward dispatches between Fort Dufferin on the Red River and Fort Livingston on the Swan River. Upon his arrival at the crossing in 1877, R.A. Cowan tells of two mounted policemen living in "a small shack near Tanner House".



Minnedosa Archives

The two men who would build and operate the Tanner's Crossing North West Mounted Police Post were Aschel (Ace) Scouten (above) and his brother Sydney Scouten.



A sketch of Tanner's Stopping House situated along the Little Saskatchewan River with the present Cemetery Hill road between the Stopping House and Henderson's Store.

The sketch was done by Maggie (Young) Moore who stayed in the left lean-to with her family when they arrived at Tanner's Crossing in 1879. At right is Henderson's Store.

The crossing at first is described as a rudimentary affair where Tanner could ferry passengers across in what was called a Bull Boat. This contraption consisted of a well tanned buffalo skin fastened around with hoops. These boats were common at the river crossings along the trail and a charge or toll of around 25 cents was usually charged per trip. Tanner would later construct a log raft that was capable of carrying a fully loaded ox cart and then later a bridge.

Member of Parliament and Chairman of the Immigration and Colonization Committee, James Trow, travelled through the crossing and described it this way:

"We proceeded down grade for nearly two miles, and arrived at Tanner's Bridge, which we crossed after paying a fee of 25 cents each for the horses and a similar fee for the carriages".

Trow described the bridge as follows:

"The bridge is a rickety, corduroy, rough structure. The river is about 100 feet wide at the bridge and from 6 to 10 feet deep. The flats on the west side had been flooded, and were in a dangerous state".

One of the best descriptions of the crossing was told by Mr. Henry Rose, a pioneer who wrote in his diary, *"On the afternoon of April, 1879, I first looked up and down the Valley of the Little Saskatchewan River at what was known as 'Tanner's Crossing'. As I approached the stream I found the water very low, about thirty feet wide and two feet deep. At that place there was a good ford, most of the season, but for convenience in higher water, quite an original bridge had been stretched across,*

which was made of stringers of poles, quite roughly covered with material of the same sort. At my right hand a few rods away stood the most conspicuous dwelling, and adjoining it the only real Government Building there - Her Majesty's Post Office".

Another description of Tanner's House is given by Mrs. Elezibeth Turner McKay. *"The doors were so low you had to stoop to enter. It was of logs, in sections for the families, with thatch or sod for the roof".*

The treaties signed with a number of tribes in the area from 1871 and the arrival of the survey crews in 1873 and 1874, blazed the trail for the huge influx of settlers that would begin to arrive around 1877. The first of the settlers, however, were relatives and close friends of the Tanner's, and all were Metis.

Sometime before 1874, Tanner had made ready his wife Catherine and her four children to join him permanently at his crossing. Following close behind came the John Norquays, George Sandisons and Henry Sinclairs who moved to the area as well. Sinclair's wife was Maggie, John's sister. The Sinclairs moved to where the north end of Minnedosa Lake now is near the Old Crossing. The Norquays lived in the area of Minnedosa Beach and the Sandisons took up residence about a half mile east of the crossing.

Pioneer and Methodist lay preacher Henry Rose also included in his writings the following description of Tanner's Stopping House.

"Built of logs, about 18' by 24' and covered with thatch, the lean-to at the end of the dwelling

built of the same material and used as the Post Office".

The stopping house became the first home for many pioneers as they would use Tanner's to live in while they constructed or had constructed their own homes. A Tribune article of 1881 reveals, *"Reverend Mr. Dawson preached in part of Tanner's house occupied by Mr. Edmonton Sims as boarding house. There were 27 of us stopping there"*.

In 1878, the arrival of H.G. Henderson at Tanner's Crossing would mark the construction of its first store. Maggie Young Moore gives the location of this store as being near Tanner House just south of the cemetery road and being a dig in the hill. The roof was poles, straw, then sods, one small window, one door. When she and her family arrived at The Crossing in 1879, they boarded with Tanner for a while along with the George Young family, shoemaker Leslie and host Edmonton Sims.

It is thought that one year earlier, J.D. Gillies had built a store, but it is believed to have been located about one-quarter of a mile south of the crossing.

The Manitoba Daily Free Press reported that the year from mid 1879 to mid 1880 would see in excess of 1,000 settlers descend on the Little Saskatchewan area. Settlers embarking for the area from Fort Garry had two routes they could follow. The first was overland via the Carlton Trail. This would usually involve the purchase of a yoke of oxen and a cart with the trip taking about ten days. The alternative was to board a riverboat at Fort Garry and land at Grand Valley, just west of present day Brandon, and from there travel overland to the area. Both options were used equally.

The distinction of being the area's first farmer is held by two men, George Sandison and John Norquay. Before their arrival at The Crossing, both had led very interesting lives.

First Religious Service on the Little Saskatchewan

In a letter written on July 23, 1861, Reverend Henry George of the Westbourne or White Mud area wrote a report to Reverend J. Chapman of London, England. In that report, he writes of his recent Mission tour, accompanied by the Reverend T. Cochrane with two servants, one cart, two oxen and three horses.

On arriving at the Rapid River (Little Saskatchewan) we found it in a flooded state, and here for the first time we fell upon some French half-breed Roman Catholics. We quickly made ourselves at home with them. We assisted each other in the perilous task of crossing the intrepid stream, with a small willow frame wrapped in an oil cloth we succeeded. With one narrow escape of losing my best horse the sun set without much event.

But now is my opportunity; I suggested how reasonable to unite in prayer before retiring to rest. A little bashful at first, all things were arranged, and for the first time this poor people heard the words of the Gospel in their own tongue. We now became fellow travellers and at their own request we continued our evening readings and prayer in the Cree.

July 23, 1861

There is little doubt that this service was performed at Old Crossing near the north end of present day Minnedosa Lake as the fork to the south trail and Hare's Crossing was east of Portage La Prairie.

George Sandison (Sanderson)

George William Sandison was born on September 29, 1846 at or near Port Nelson on the Hudson's Bay. His grandfather had come to the Bay with the company as a young man and his father, in turn, also later became an employee of the H.B.C.. Sometime after 1846, the Sandisons moved to the Red River Settlement and then into the Westbourne district where they became acquainted with both James and son John Tanner and John Norquay.

As a young boy, George was sent out on at least one buffalo hunt where he reportedly witnessed a bull hooking a young Indian boy off his horse by plunging his horn under his rib cage. The bull ran off with the boy hanging from his horns, never to be seen again.

When he reached manhood, Sandison began trading in earnest with the Indians and acquired a few ponies and carts along the way, although he attests that throughout this time he refused to enter into the liquor trade, choosing instead to acquire his trade goods from either McDermott or Bannatyne, two prominent Fort Garry businessmen. He temporarily ceased his trading business during the Red River Rebellion of 1869-70 but resumed the business after its settlement and shortly thereafter made enough money to start a good farm at the Little Saskatchewan near present day Minnedosa. He too took up a position against Riel and his provisional government, along with friends James Sinclair, John Norquay and John Tanner.

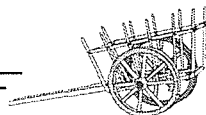
Because of encroaching civilization, Sandison is reported to have sold his Minnedosa holdings in 1883 and moved his family to Prince Albert where he bought another farm. It was there that he found himself during the 1885 Riel Rebellion, and was in fact put under arrest by Riel for a short period of time.

In his own words, Sandison offers the following report of one encounter with Plains Indians when he was fifteen years old, around 1861.

"We were out buffalo hunting somewhere near the Qu'Appelle Valley. There were in our outfit about twenty white men, a few Cree Indians, several women and children. One evening we could see five horsemen on a hill in the distance. My father, who was acting foreman of the outfit on that trip, sent two of our men to see who they were. They learned that they were Blackfeet and seemed to be quite friendly. They invited them to their camp for supper. One of the lads did not want to go but the other was quite willing. As the first boy did not want to desert his friend, he went too.

When the supper was over, everyone seemed to be talking at once. A young woman singing to her baby, in French said, "Go away as quickly as you can and warn your people, there is treachery afoot. They intend to murder you all while you are asleep". This girl had been stolen when a child by the Blackfeet and had a habit of singing French songs to herself. One lad said to the other one, "Let us make a rush for our horses". The other said, "There is no danger, I won't go yet", so he stayed and was never seen by his friend again. The other one rushed for his horse, got safely back to camp and gave the warning, so when the Blackfeet came at midnight, they were cut down like grass. Our men were ready for them on all sides. Early next morning we could see what was left, them rolling their dead into the water. They probably thought by doing so we would not take their dirty scalps!"

After moving to Westbourne and becoming acquainted with the Tanners, it wasn't long before Sandison, John Norquay (married to Sandison's sister) and Peter Sinclair (married to John Tanner's sister) all pulled up stakes and moved to The Crossing. By 1885, all had sold their Minnedosa area holdings and had once again relocated to the frontier near present day Prince Albert, staying just ahead of the rapidly advancing railroad.



John Norquay & Family

Friends of the Tanners from the White Mud Settlement and following close behind them to settle at The Crossing were the Norquays. John Norquay was the cousin to the other John Norquay, first Premier of the newly formed province of Manitoba. Norquay, along with George Sandison, had accompanied John Tanner and Chief Picheito Tanner on their foray to Fort Garry during the Red River uprising and had been taken prisoner by Riel. They were released and none were listed as entering any claims for compensation for their incarceration. One of their party, Thomas Scott, was executed after being sentenced to death by Riel's provisional government.

The Norquays were devout Methodists and soon after their arrival at Tanner's Crossing, Mrs. Norquay began to host church services as well as Sunday school classes in her home which was located near present-day Minnedosa Beach on the quarter homesteaded by her husband. The rapids which were located approximately where Minnedosa Dam is situated, were referred to as the Norquay Rapids.

One historian wrote, "*Mrs. Norquay gathered her own and other Metis children on Sunday and taught them to read English and the Bible*". The other early children would have been those of the Sandison's and John Tanner's four adopted children from his marriage to Catherine.

The Minnedosa United Church history reveals that Mrs. Norquay "*had lived for a time in one of the Western Missionary's homes and so had the knowledge she needed. Her oldest daughter, Polly, gathered wild flower seeds which the superintendent of the Mission here traded in Eastern Canada for books for them to use*".

Henry and Francis Rose attended services at the Norquay home the first Sunday after their arrival. In his diary, Henry Rose tells of his arrival at The Crossing and purchasing a few bushels of wheat from Norquays. The first Sunday after their arrival, Henry and Francis Rose attended Sunday services at the home of the Norquays. Henry's diary explains it this way.

"We had a time to get to church the following Sunday. Every pond was full of water

and the little creeks to the overflow through the cuts of the old beaver dams which were the only place we could cross. Service was at Mr. John Norquay's house by the river and we went out to the old trail, up that and across over the hills coming into the valley near Mr. Norquay's house. We got there and home again. Sunday was the one bright day of the week and many times that was not very much so".

From 1878 onward, Miss Fanny Ditch assisted Mrs. Norquay, and even after 1879, services and Sunday School was frequently held in the Norquay home by Reverend Thomas Lawson of the Neepawa district.

Norquay and George Sandison were brothers-in-law and were Minnedosa's first farmers. John Norquay tells of one grasshopper plague at Tanner's Crossing in 1873.

"One afternoon as we were going to make hay, southeast from the bend in the river where the town of Minnedosa now stands, we saw in the west, apparently 30 or 40 miles away, a great cloud arising as from a very large fire, and one remarked the peculiarity of it, as it was not the time of year for prairie fires. As we went to our work we did not pay any attention to the cloud or its movements, but as we returned home in the evening could see the country was alive with grasshoppers. It was remarked that the further prospects for hay were pretty small if they stayed around a few days. We went home with very gloomy prospects. A gentle breeze sprang up from the northwest and that was the last we ever saw of them.

When we returned to our hay making, for a long distance and as wide as we could see, the country was as black as if a fire had run over it. Not a vestige of green vegetation was in sight. Such was the work of that swarm of grasshoppers in so few hours".

The last indication of the Norquay's presence in Minnedosa came in 1882. The local museum holds a copy of John Tanner's draft instructing J.S. Armitage to "Please pay Mr. Norquay for four tons hay \$16 and charge the sum to my account".

The Norquays, descendants of Selkirk's Settlers, moved on to the Prince Albert area in 1884.

MAY 1

SCALE OF CHAINS

DOMINION LANDS OFFICE,
OTTAWA.

Surveyed by Deputy Surveyor
Homer M. D. Leaty
June 22nd 1877
Field Book No.

1st January 1875
Approved and confirmed
J. S. Dennis.
Surveyor General.

Nett Area	22974.13	Acres
Roads	8708.0	"
Water		"
Total Area	23844.95	"

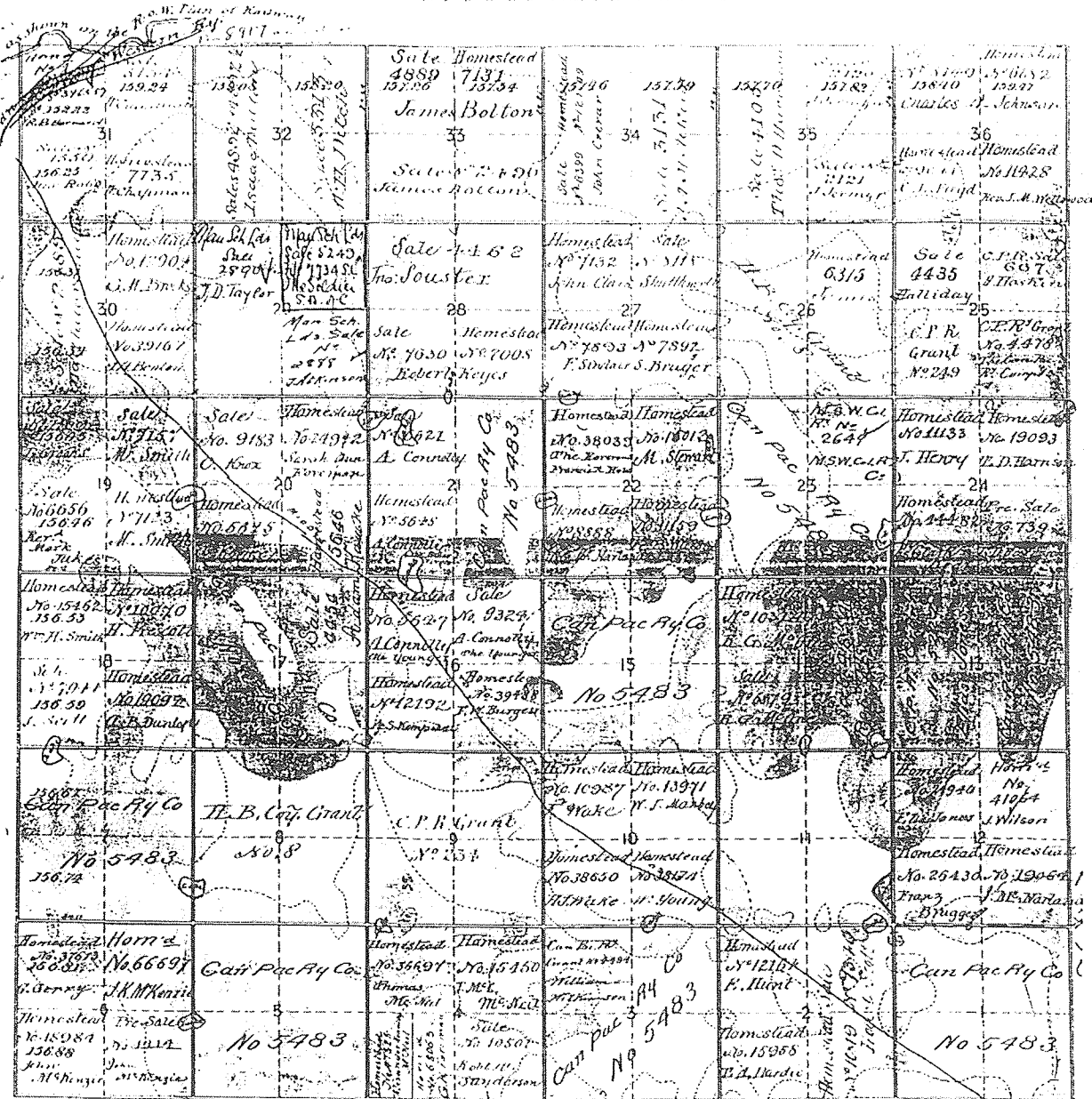
Provincial
Archives of
Manitoba

TOWNSHIP N^o 14.

RANGE 18 WEST OF PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN.

Deposited in the Office of the Registrar of Lands, at Ottawa, on the 10th day of March, 1873.

SCALE OF CHAINS



DOMINION LANDS OFFICE,
OTTAWA.

Contents.

Surveyed by Deputy Surveyor
August - September 1873
Field Book No.

20th March 1873
Approved and confirmed
Surveyor General

Net Area 22970.93
Roads 870.80
Water
Total Area 23841.73

The diagonal line drawn from the bottom right to the top left is marked on the survey "Middle Trail to Trading". The Little Saskatchewan River can be seen entering Township 14 at the top left-hand corner.

Provincial
Archives of
Manitoba

TOWNSHIP NO 13

RANGE 17 WEST OF PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN

SCALE OF CHAINS



DOMINION LANDS OFFICE,
OTTAWA.

Contents.

Surveyed by Deputy Surveyor
(Signed) D. D. L. L. L.
June 27, 1877
Field Book No.

Approved and confirmed

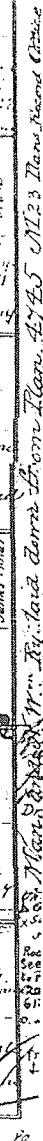
Surveyor General.

Nett Area	23091.12	Acres
Roads	573.13	"
Water		"
Total Area	23664.25	"

The line across the bottom was later added to show the course of the Manitoba & North-Western Railway. Entering the Township in Section 13 is marked "Fort Ellice Road".

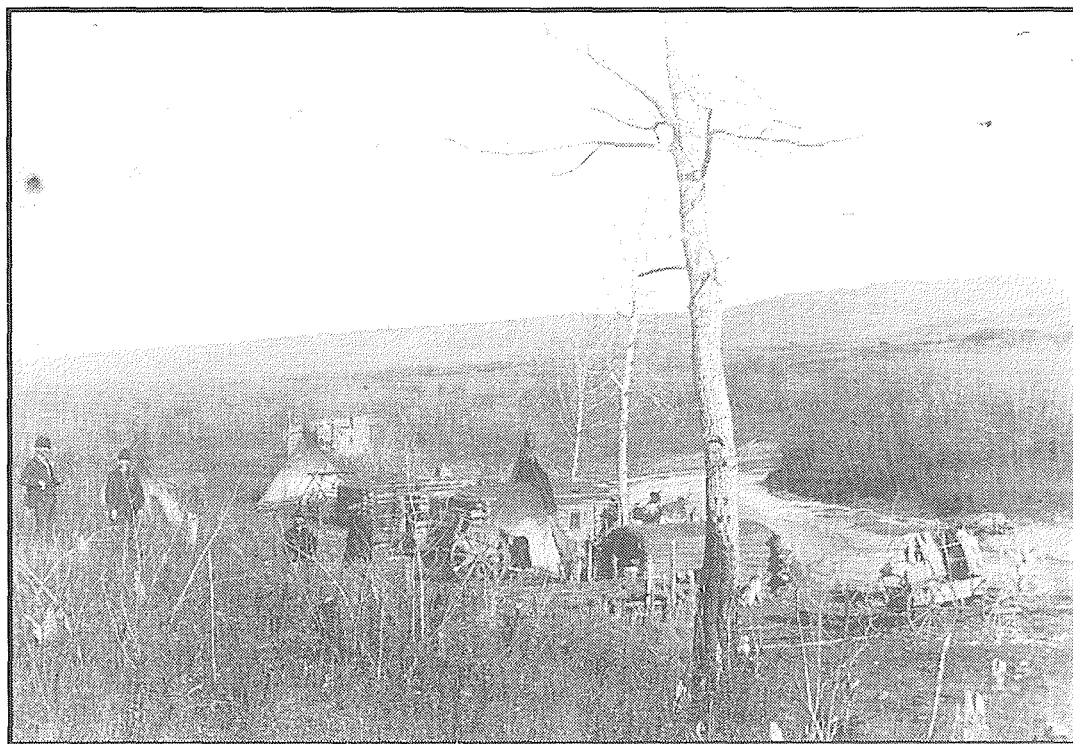
Provincial
Archives of
Manitoba

SCALE OF CHAINS



49

TANNER'S CROSSING

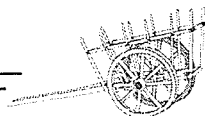


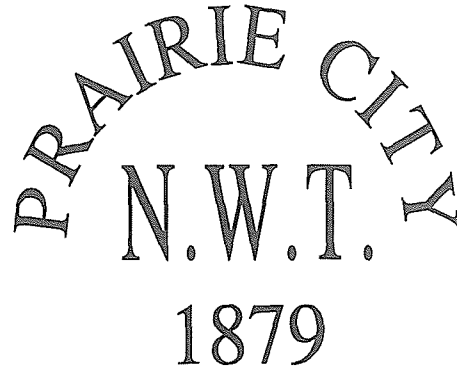
One photo exists of the original Tanner's Crossing and is credited to the second publisher of The Minnedosa Tribune, David Cannon. The photo is of an era much too early (about 1875) for Cannon to have taken it, it probably being one of North West Mounted Policeman Ashel Scouten's who was a well known photographer of the time.

The photo shows a number of smaller log structures as well as three teepees, some carts and a dog. To the left of the photographer and out of the picture is the actual stopping place built by Tanner and described by a number of pioneers. One of the

buildings in the photograph and most likely the one farthest away was the N.W.M.P. post. It commanded a view of several miles of valley in both directions and from here the officers could be made aware of any travellers passing through.

The site is located on Hwy #262 between the Town of Minnedosa and Minnedosa Lake and was marked with a stone cairn and plaque in 1995. Until the early 1890's, the road was referred to as "Tanner's Trail" and connected Minnedosa with Clanwilliam and Bethany to the north.





With the settlers arriving in the district, it wasn't long before a Post Office was needed and Tanner was ready and able to provide that service.

On the 1st of February, 1877, under the name of Little Saskatchewan, N.W.T., John Tanner's house became the post office for the district. It operated until 1879 when the name was mysteriously changed to Hall's Ford and then to Minnedosa by December 11, 1879. Tanner was postmaster from its inception until June 1st, 1880 when Mr. De Manby took over the duties.

In late 1877 and 1878, a small settlement called Odanah began to spring up one mile west of the crossing. At that time, Tanner's Crossing was referred to as "the half-breed settlement at the crossing". Odanah was a settlement intended to house the English settlers and hence the Dominion Land Titles office was built there.

It was the arrival of one man in particular in 1877 that would determine the fate of these two rival communities located within one mile of each other and change John Tanner's life forever. Joseph Samuel Armitage had arrived at the Little Saskatchewan to investigate the future business potential of this area that had been spoken of so highly by friends back in Ontario.

At the time of Armitage's arrival back at the crossing in 1878, the homesteads that now form the core of the Town of Minnedosa were held by John Tanner, T.D. Harrison, Dr. R. Kenning, James Jermyn and John McLellan. They had already given a name to their hopes and dreams of a town, "Prairie City", but seemed to be unable to launch a scheme that would advance their townsite above and beyond that which had been created at Odanah. With few options left, and seeing that Armitage had the funds

and the entrepreneurship to help them tremendously with their goals, they quickly put their support behind Armitage and in fact Tanner and Kenning both agreed to sell a portion of their lands to Armitage, if he would agree and be bound by forfeiture of \$5,000, to build his mills by a certain pre-determined date. This is the only theory that explains why Armitage seemed to carry so much influence upon his arrival at the crossing. It was as if he had inside information about the future path of the railroad and was able to back that claim up; that everyone seemed to so quickly partner with him to the exclusion of Odanah.

Odanah, to that point, was held in favourable view as a potential host for the railroad yards and station if it in fact went through the valley. Almost overnight they had competition one mile upstream on the river. The former "half-breed community" had suddenly taken on two mills along with several other businesses and posed a serious threat. That competitive atmosphere would spill over onto the pages of newspapers from Winnipeg to Ottawa.

In the end, Jermyn, Gillies, Kenning, McLellan, Tanner and the others all benefited financially from their Armitage partnership, with all, except Tanner, becoming very prosperous and ascending to the role of community leader. Why Tanner was the exception is unknown. Most likely his lack of education and his frontiersman type character was no match for the cunning and skill of his business partners, and although he took a stab at investing in the community - at one time building a tenement house in the townsite - he floundered in this atmosphere, eventually being left to the sidelines.

(Supplement.)

HURRAH FOR MANITOBA

FREE GRANT LANDS.

If you desire Free Homesteads for yourself and for each of your boys where you can live independent, and where you can buy for a mere trifle a farm for each of your children that will make them wealthy men and women, we recommend you to go to the Little Saskatchewan, because all the good land is settled between Winnipeg and this point.

The Little Saskatchewan River takes its rise in the heavily timbered slopes of the Riding Mountains, flows south-east through a beautiful and very fertile prairie country into the Assiniboine, about one hundred and fifty miles west of Winnipeg. It is a stream of from 100 to 200 yards in width, and an average depth of about 6 feet. There are a number of excellent Mill sites on the River, and timber can easily be floated down it to them. Having forests to draw from that will last for hundreds of years, and having fifty miles of prairie country on each side of the River to supply with lumber, Saw Mills must here be very profitable. And as there is no other stream for over 150 miles to the east, and about 100 to the west which supplies water power, the Little Saskatchewan must become the centre of manufacturing for all that fertile section.

To this splendid country we invite you and offer to each man over 18, 160 acres on payment of only Ten Dollars, on condition of living on it for only three years. At the end of that time you get a Dominion Patent for your land.

Crops on the Little Saskatchewan this year are, Wheat 50 bushels per acre—Oats 75 bushels—Barley 65—Peas 50—Also roots, some of which weigh 50 lbs. It is unsurpassed as an Agricultural District. The climate is very healthy, much healthier than Ontario, and though the winters are colder they are not felt to be so because the weather is steady and the air dry.

Settlement is now going on there very rapidly, and all who wish to avail themselves of the present great chance of getting an excellent farm, in this choice portion of our magnificent North-West, must move quickly.

R. W. Prittie will be leaving Toronto about the 10th of April next, with a large party for the Little Saskatchewan. Those who go with him will save greatly, under the favourable arrangements we have made.

The route will be all rail from Toronto to Fisher's Landing, thence by the first Boat on the Red River to Winnipeg. The fare will not exceed \$26.30, and we hope to make it still less; we are certain that a family will save from \$20 to \$75, by going with Robert W. Prittie. If you desire to share in the benefits of our arrangements and location, send us a letter stating you will go with us, giving your name and age, and the name and age of each of those who are going with you, and we will enter the name of each male over 18 years for 160 acres, to be selected by himself on arrival on the ground.

We purpose to go early so as to get on the land before the roads break up, and in time to do spring work. Of course rather cheaper rates could be made at a later season of the year with the Lake Ports, but those who wait to go with them will lose this year's crop. As it will be necessary to travel quickly, to avoid bad roads between Winnipeg and the Colony, we have, to prevent delay and expense at Winnipeg, arranged for the supply there of oxen, waggons, plows and harrows, and we are prepared to arrange for any other articles any of the party may desire. As we are in direct communication with all parties concerned, we can work to your advantage. The prices will be: for oxen, \$7 to \$100; waggon, \$85; breaking plow, \$26; harrow, (we believe) \$20.

Parties who have made up their minds to go to Manitoba with R. W. Prittie, should send to our address, stating they want an application form. The ten dollars mentioned above, must be paid before entering on land, as Deed cannot be secured, till three years after the date of said payment. We do not exact said payment before seeing land.

All those who can afford it, should order a Yoke of Oxen and waggon to be ready for them in Winnipeg, because Oxen are better than Horses for breaking up, a waggon is always needed, and by getting Oxen and waggon at Winnipeg, all expense (except the feed of the Oxen) is saved on the journey from Winnipeg to the Colony.

Pamphlets describing the North West generally, will be sent free on receipt of postage stamp, and a map of all the surveyed lands in Manitoba and the North-West for 50c.

If you are in Toronto, call on us at Exchange Alley, near 37 Colborne Street, and we will give you any information—or write us and we will answer all your questions.

Think!—whoever owns a 100 acre farm here worth \$50 an acre, can, in the North-West get 5000 acres for its price, and in a few years that will be worth \$50 per acre too. Look at the fortunes to be made there by the mere rise in the value of land. See what Ontario is to-day! yet thirty years ago there was nothing of Ontario west of Hamilton,—and remember that country is settling twenty times faster than Ontario settled. A family should have at least \$500, but an unmarried man could manage on half that sum after paying passage.

Improved farms and wild lands for sale in the Province of Manitoba. When writing to us, please state how you came by this circular. We have also made arrangements to carry parties over the Collingwood and Sarnia Steamboat Lines at reduced rates.

✂ Please send and hand to your neighbor, or post in a conspicuous place

R. W. PRITTIE.

ARCHIBALD YOUNG.

MANITOBA LAND OFFICE, 37 COLBORNE ST., TORONTO.

Provincial Archives of Manitoba

There were many settlement schemes alive in the area of the North West Territories. In 1878, Archibald Young and R. W. Prittie of Toronto reached an agreement with the government of Alexander MacKenzie whereby they were allowed to promote settlement in the Little Saskatchewan and receive land grants back as payment for their services. They printed 200,000 of the above flyers and distributed them throughout eastern Canada and the U.S.. By the end of the year, Young and Prittie claimed that they had settled more than 4,000 people throughout Manitoba and the North West Territories through their scheme. The government, however, questioned their claim and denied the previous agreement. Later, the agreement was upheld but too late for either of the partners to benefit.

CHAPTER NINE

THE ARMITAGES

The family name of Armitage has been dated back to the 1300's as having come from the area of Huddersfield of Almondbury in the West Riding of the County of Yorkshire. As far as their history in North America is concerned, it is thought that the first Armitage to land on the shores of this continent came with William Penn from England in 1682 who brought with him a colony of Quakers from Yorkshire. The land upon which they settled was later named Pennsylvania and the next year Penn founded the city of Philadelphia. The first direct descendant of the Minnedosa Armitages to land on the shores of North America has thus far been traced back to Samuel Armitage Jr. who arrived in Pennsylvania in 1739. There he soon had a grist mill on a stream crossing his 200 acre tract located on the near north side of the fledgling city of Philadelphia. He also taught school; a primary occupation among Quakers. This Samuel Jr. was J.S. Armitage's great-great-grandfather.

Two generations later, Job Armitage married Hannah Siddons in 1840 near Newmarket and from this marriage, five sons and three daughters were born, with a son Lewis being born to first wife Phoebe. They were George, Joseph S., Barclay (Bert), James Isaac, Amos, Phoebe, Ellen and Mary Elizabeth. These were the Armitages that would, from 1877 through to 1879, leave their homes in Ontario and travel to Tanner's Crossing.



Minnedosa Archives

Mary and Joseph Armitage

Joseph Samuel Armitage was born in 1849. In 1876, he married Mary Minetta Boyd and they lived in Port Colborne, Ontario where he owned and operated a flour mill. He had served his apprenticeship in the Henderson Mill which he would later buy. In 1877, at age 28, Joseph S. Armitage would come west in search of a suitable place upon which to build new mills and start a town. He apparently found what he was looking for when he reached the Little Saskatchewan River valley.

MINNEDOSA

BUILDING A TOWN

The first man Armitage met upon arriving at the crossing was John Tanner. Tanner owned the crossing and had claim to two quarter sections along the river valley, approximately from 9th Avenue South to where Minnedosa Dam is now located and from the R.M. of Minto boundary in the east to Main Street. It is probable that a deal was discussed at this point for the sale of Tanner's holdings, but it is also quite probable that nothing was expected to come out of it by Armitage because on June 22,

1877, he is listed as having made entry for a homestead on 21-16-20, some miles north of Minnedosa. J.S. Armitage certainly returned to Port Colborne for the winter as a son, Harvey Boyd Armitage was born to he and wife Mary Minetta and his birthplace is listed as Ontario.

J.S., and this time accompanied by wife Mary, returned to the Little Saskatchewan in the summer of 1878 as Mary Minetta Armitage is listed as having entered a homestead on June 11, 1878 on

Section 3-17-19. It was later that summer that a gentlemen's agreement between Armitage and Tanner was probably made on a future land sale because J.S. and wife returned to Port Colborne that winter and sold the mill and began preparations to move the two children, Mary Adelia and Harvey Boyd Armitage, to the frontier.

When the Armitages arrived back at The Crossing in 1878, the pace of settlement as far west as this point in the North West Territories had begun to pick up speed. Land was being taken up everywhere; often sight unseen. Armitage took the time to show his wife the valley and journeyed northward to the land he had filed on the year previous, but both knew that Tanner's spot on the Little Saskatchewan was ideal for the location of his future mills and his town. There was a slight problem though, that Armitage had not envisioned a year earlier and that was a small cluster of buildings that were going up on the Odanah, within eyesight of The Crossing. He knew that two towns that close to each other could not both survive, let alone prosper. He began to realize that he was not the only one who had hopes of getting a fledgling community to the point where it could hold out hope of attracting the coming railroad - an industry that was critical to future survival.

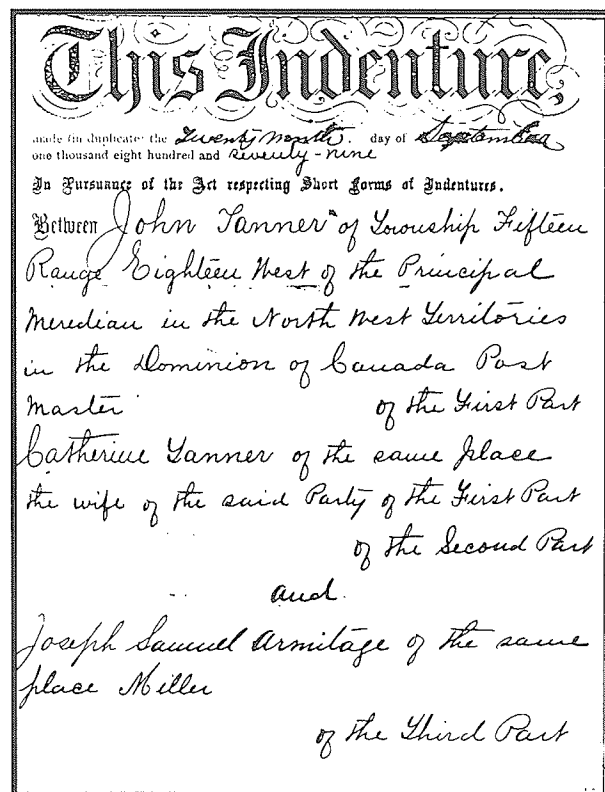
When he had journeyed here in 1877, H.G. Henderson was busy building a small general store at The Crossing. Now, one year later there was yet another general store in the area, this one at Odanah where Dennison & Griffith were in operation. As well, a government land registry office, a photographers office and a post office had also opened there and rumours were about that a competing saw mill might also be in the works.

Things were moving quickly and Armitage would need to speed up his plans for his townsite if he were to get in on the coming land boom which would be the result of the trans-continental railroad that was being built eastward from Ontario. He quickened his pace, taking just a little extra time to scout out timber tracts on the southern slopes of the nearby Riding Mountains before he and Mary headed back to Port Colborne where there was a mill and home to sell; use the fall to ready his family, make arrangements for the equipment needed for his two new mills and head back to The Crossing.

When Armitage, this time accompanied by

his family, arrived back at Tanner's Crossing in late November of 1879, the rumours of the saw mill at Odanah proved to be all too true. Two men by the name of McFadden & Bolton had staked out a spot on the river south of Odanah and were getting ready for construction. That was not all. Odanah wasn't the only alternative being held out to the railroad in the immediate area.

Creasy J. Whellams had been successful in gaining a grant from the Department of the Interior involving two townships along the Little Saskatchewan River where he would start his town of Rapid City. He established and settled 124 homesteads, and laid out a town which included a brickworks, foundry and machine shops. In addition, the Canadian Pacific Railroad had sent a survey crew right through that area creating much speculation and an immediate land boom. Soon the population of Rapid City had grown to 1100 people and all were certain the railroad would go



through their community.

Earlier in the winter of 1879, Armitage had hired the firm of Goldie & McCulloch of Galt with supervisor William Herriott to bring the necessary machinery to Tanner's Crossing and install it in his

mills. The equipment arrived around January of 1880, pulled from Winnipeg by oxen, and was "dumped off the sleighs into the snowdrifts".

Construction of his mills commenced at a rapid pace and much expense was incurred hiring logging crews to work northward in the mountains where they would fell logs during the winter of 1880, stack them on the river ice and await the spring thaw to begin their trip down the Little Saskatchewan to his mill at The Crossing.

In order for Armitage to build his town, he needed help and that help came, in large part, in the form of family. He was joined at Tanner's Crossing shortly after his arrival by four of his five brothers who were also trained in milling, carpentry and farming. They were George, Barclay, James Isaac and Lewis who was a half-brother. James Isaac was probably the last of the brothers to arrive. While working at his sister and brother-in-law's mills in Flower Creek, Michigan, he had met Barbara Thayer. They were married on October 19, 1880 and immediately departed for Joseph and Mary's project at Tanner's Crossing in the North West Territories. The one remaining brother of the six Armitages, Amos, remained at Flower Creek to continue helping to run the mills there.

Land Titles records indicate that when the time came to purchase the land, Tanner gave J.S. Armitage extra time in which to buy the full amount of acreage needed. He allowed Joseph to buy the acreage in three steps - spaced three months apart - beginning with a deed dated 29 September, 1879; and refrained from making sales to others, with the exception of Dr. Kenning.

While John Tanner did not yet legally own the two quarter sections at the time of the arrival of the Armitages who were now ready to begin construction of their mill, he clearly had rights to it as he had lived on the land for at least the required three years, and with his stopping house and post office and crossing, he had certainly done what improvements were required for title.

Officially, on December 23, 1879, the two quarters of land were transferred to John Tanner from the Crown. This was obviously done at the urging of Armitage because in fact Armitage and Tanner had already agreed to the transfer of a large portion of the land from one to the other, Tanner

already having been paid the sum of \$405.00 earlier in September for two separate but small parcels of land with Tanner selling off another small parcel to Dr. Richard Kenning.

Two additional sales from Tanner to Armitage would have to be made before Armitage had what he needed, the perfect site along the river on which to build his grist and saw mills and enough land in the valley within which to build a town. We aren't sure of the association between Richard Kenning and Armitage but they did share a half interest in some of the purchased Tanner land that would later make up the townsite.

In the third deed for sale of lands between Armitage and Tanner, the name of George McCulloch, a draftsman, was registered along with that of Armitage. This plot of land would be sufficient to add three streets, namely Third, Fourth and Fifth Streets to the eastern edge of Minnedosa. This partnership may well have been conceived as a repayment from Armitage to his friend McCulloch for coming from Ontario to help develop his townsite and his mills with professional drawings as well as his expertise. When these sales were registered with Land Titles, ownership of present day Minnedosa looked like the map on the following page.

There would be other sales of lands between Armitage and Tanner, the last being registered in December of 1881, leaving Tanner with a few remaining homestead acres in the area of his crossing and buildings. In total, Tanner had realized a little over \$3,000 from Armitage for his townsite acreages, and three years later, on October 15, 1884, Tanner made his last sale of lands to a James Henry Adams for \$1,000 bringing Tanner's total to slightly over \$4,000 for his 320 acre homestead. Shortly thereafter in 1885, Tanner moved on to the Prince Albert area along with the Norquays, Sandisons and his sister Maggie.

J.S. Armitage now had what he needed. He owned most of the two homestead quarters initially granted to John Tanner that included all of present day Minnedosa lying east of the middle of Main Street.

Success in his venture was achieved with the first lumber from the saw mill being turned out on June 21, 1880. The first whistle blew from the mill on July 1st, 1880 and the first grist turned out

			James Jermyn	Hugh Dennis	
	<div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> ODANAH SYNDICATE <div style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; padding: 2px;">10</div> Dissolved by 1884 </div>		J.S. Armitage	J.S. Armitage	Hugh Dennis
			<div style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; padding: 2px;">11</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; padding: 2px;">12</div>	
			John McLellan	J.S. Armitage	John Norquay
James Leslie ↙	Ed Sims	R.A. Cowan	J. Thompson	John McLellan	John Tanner NW 1/4
					Sutherland
W.H. Ditch	<div style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; padding: 2px;">3</div>		<div style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; padding: 2px;">2</div>		<div style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; padding: 2px;">1</div>
	Ed Sims	R.A. Cowan	J.D. Gillies	James Jermyn	John Tanner
					Ben Beddome
			R.H. Kenning	T.D. Harrison	James Jermyn

This homestead map is not correct to any exact day or week in time but merely represents the actual land holdings of all of the players who participated in the formation of the Town of Minnedosa at some point during the critical time period from 1880 to 1883.

The light grey area depicts the limits of the Town of Minnedosa as incorporated in March of 1883. The lands within the town limits changed hands on several occasions with Jermyn and Gillies swapping several packages amongst themselves. A large portion of the two quarters listed under John Tanner were sold to J.S. Armitage with a small parcel to Dr. Kenning. John Crerar also became involved through the later purchase of several blocks of lots from both Gillies and Jermyn.

To the left of the Ditch property was the James Leslie quarter which the two attempted to have surveyed into town lots in order to attract the railway. The Odanah Syndicate also included a portion of the R.A. Cowan property until dissolution. The R.H. Kenning and T.D. Harrison as well as the westerly Jermyn properties were the ones involved in an early attempt at forming the town of Prairie City. It was rumoured but has not been proven that John Tanner was also involved in that attempt.

The actual residential area of the Town of Minnedosa is located on the west half of Section 1 and the east half of Section 2 with Minnedosa Lake occupying parts of Section 12.

The following page contains the Abstract for the north west quarter (noted) showing the number of transactions that took place on the Tanner homestead between Armitage, Kenning, Tanner and others.

NO. OF INSTRUMENT	INSTRUMENT	ITS DATE	DATE OF REGISTRY	GRANTOR
66	Patent	23 Dec 1879	31 Mar 1880	Crown
71	B. S.	29 Sept	29 April 1880	John Tanner & wife (Catherine)
72	B. S.	18 Dec	29 "	John Tanner & wife (")
186	B. S.	29 Sept	4 Jan 1881	John Tanner & wife (")
188	B. S.	4 Mar 1880	4 "	John Tanner & wife (")
284	Mtge	22 Oct	25 May	J. S. Armitage & George M. Culloch & wife
320	B. S.	16 Jan	28 June	J. S. Armitage & wife (Mary M.)
356	Mtge	30 Nov 1881	2 Dec	J. S. Armitage
374	B. S.	7 Dec	21 "	John Tanner
860	Pr of Mtge	17 Jan 1882	27 Feb 1882	J. S. Armitage & John Tanner
1443	Q. C.	15 April	29 April	John W. Douglas
1446	Mtge	13 "	29 "	John W. Douglas
2031	B. S.	5 Aug	8 Aug	Joseph B. Armitage
2191	B. S.	12 Sept	14 Sept	Joseph B. Armitage
2350	Q. C.	18 "	14 Oct	Joseph B. Armitage
2351	Mtge	18 "	14 "	Joseph B. Armitage
2352	Mtge	18 "	14 "	John W. Douglas
2488	B. S.	19 Mar	6 Nov	George M. Culloch
2489	Augt of Mtge	3 Nov	6 "	Joseph B. Armitage
2689	Mtge	21 Dec	26 Dec	John W. Douglas
3135	Mtge	17 April 1882	18 April 1882	J. S. Armitage
3411	Augt of Mtge	15 June	25 June	James Jernyn
3445	B. S.	21 May	6 July	James Jernyn
3466	Mtge	3 July 1882	12 July	John W. Douglas
3575	Augt of Mtge	30 "	1883	14 Aug
3605	Mtge	31 "	10 "	John W. Douglas
C	Plan	20 Nov 1879	31 Mar 1880	
E	Plan	20 April 1880	7 April 1881	
2	Plan		25 Feb 1892	
3920	B. S.	23 Aug 1883	8 Oct 1883	Cather Mary Denison
4017	B. S.	30 Nov	5 Dec	Edwin O. Denison
4018	B. S.	30 "	5 "	Geo. W. Denison
4114	Mtge	29 "	9 Jan 1884	J. S. Armitage
4397	Mtge	12 Mar 1884	18 Mar	W. Douglas
4550	Lo Rindens	9 April	29 April	B. R. in equity to Geo. W. Culloch
4780	Pr. W. M.	11 July	17 July	W. M. Harriot
4762	Mtge	15 "	28 "	Mary Denison & Geo. W. Denison
5138	B. S.	15 Oct	12 Feb 1885	John Tanner
5196	Mtge	1 Feb 1885	4 Mar	James Jernyn
5561	Mtge	15 July	26 Sept	The United States Loan Co. by Geo. W. Denison
5562	Mtge	30 "	26 "	Mary Denison & Geo. W. Denison
5678	Augt of Mtge	9 Dec	12 Dec	J. A. Griffith & Geo. W. Denison
6028	Q. C.	31 Aug	19 July 1886	W. M. Harriot
7321	Q. C.	27 June 1886	29 Jan 1889	Mary Denison
7529	Mtge	4 Jan 1888	20 June	Mary Lattimore

GRANTOR	CONSIDERATION	LAND AND REMARKS
John Tanner	1	All.
J. S. Armitage	375.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
J. S. Armitage	30.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
Richard H. Kenning	120.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
J. S. Armitage & George M. Culloch	530.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
John Lattie & Hugh M. Culloch	4787.21	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
George M. Culloch	1.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
William Harriot	2500.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
Joseph B. Armitage	125.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
John W. Douglas	2000.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
James Jernyn	3200.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
Cather M. Denison	650.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
John W. Douglas	2000.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
John W. Douglas	2000.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
Joseph B. Armitage	3200.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
James Jernyn	1000.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
R. H. Harriot	2400.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
J. A. Griffith & Geo. W. Denison	225.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
The United States Loan Co	1000.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
Joseph B. Armitage	2000.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
John W. Douglas	2000.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
Charles S. Harriot	2000.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
Charles S. Harriot	3325.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
Armitage, Tanner & Kenning		Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
Armitage & Co		Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
J. S. Armitage & Co		Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
Edwin O. Denison	800.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
Geo. W. Denison	800.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
Mary Denison	800.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
The London & Lancashire Insurance Co (Ltd)	6000.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
The Montreal & L. Insurance Co	1000.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
J. S. Armitage	1.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
J. S. Armitage	1.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
The Real Estate Loan Co of Canada (Ltd)	1000.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
James Jernyn	1000.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
The United States Loan Co	1000.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
Mary Denison & Geo. W. Denison	1000.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
Mary Lattimore	1000.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
Thomas Boyd	275.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
Thomas Boyd	400.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
Mary Lattimore	1.00	Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)
Mary Denison		Patent Sec 1 in P. of all other lands (not included in the 5 acres)

WINDMILL
MADE
SHEWING
THE TOWN OF
WOOD
X

BEING A PORTION OF THE

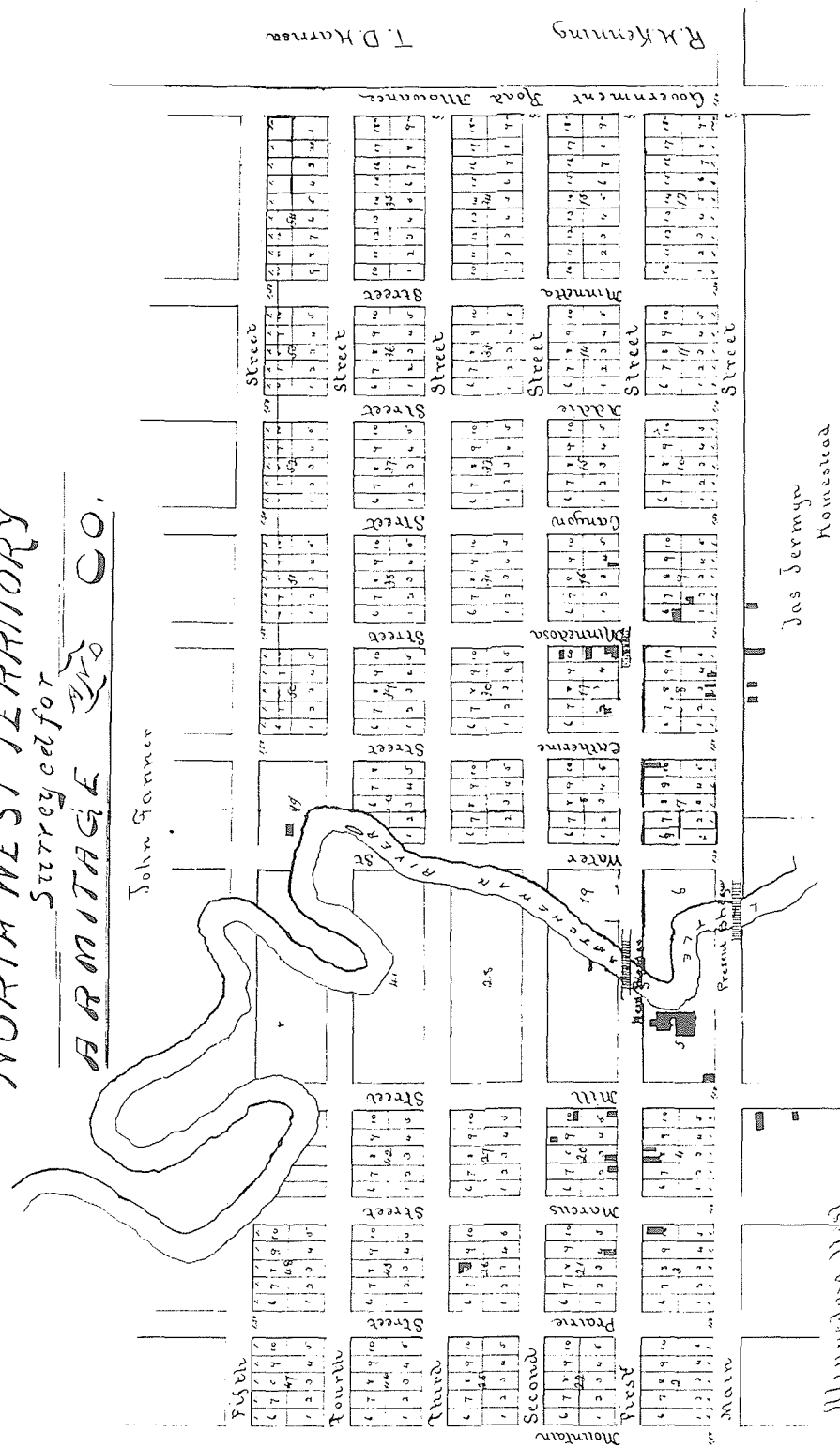
WEST 1/2 OF SECTION 1 TOWNSHIP 75 RANGE 18 WEST

NORTH WEST TERRITORY

Surveyed for

BRIMTHAMPTON AND CO.

John G. Grier



The above map was commissioned by J.S. Armitage & Co. in November of 1879. It was later added to by the placement of the black blocks which depict buildings. As well, the two bridges, Armitage's First Street bridge as well as the Main Street bridge were added at a later date. North is at the bottom.

The above map was computer enhanced by The Tribune for this book illustration.

by October 26th of that same year.

There were few grist mills in the area at that time and Armitage quickly captured his share of the market over an area that included Brandon, Birtle and Fort Ellice. Shifts were working around the clock in both mills and Armitage was soon reported to be profiting to the amount of \$160 per day.

The mills and its income wasn't all that Armitage had to sustain himself and his brothers. He would take over the Post Office from De Manbey and build a new building for it north of the river, hiring his father-in-law, Thomas Boyd, to run it for him. At the same time, his town lots were selling well and he was well ahead of both McLellan and Jermyn whose property was located along the west side of Main Street.

Tanner had lost the Post Office earlier to De Manby due to a number of complaints about the service. One pioneer has noted that when the mail arrived at Tanner's Post Office, it was simply dumped out on the floor and rummaged through by all who were present.

It might have been Armitage's early intention

to cut both of his neighbors to the west out of his business district as he originally developed Minnedosa's business area along First Street North East instead of Main Street. This move allowed Armitage to sell business lots on both sides of his street instead of only one. This move probably brought McLellan and Jermyn quickly into line because Armitage's strategy soon changed with Main Street, being the Section Line, taking over as the main business thoroughfare.

The land he had bought from Tanner had been quickly surveyed into streets and town lots and as a gesture of good faith and friendship to Tanner, Armitage named one "Catherine Street". Another he named after his own wife and daughters, being, south to north, "Minnetta", "Addie", "Canyon", "Minnedosa", "Catherine", and "Water Street". On the north side of the river, the streets were named, "Mill", "Marcus", "Prairie", "Mountain" and "McLellan". All were named as streets, even though they ran in an east-west direction. The streets running parallel with Main Street were simply numbered from First to Fifth. Armitage owned additional property along the north hills, but

due to the rapid rise in elevation this area was not included in the town survey.

To the west of the north end of Main Street, the property was owned by J.K. McLellan. On the south side of the river and to the west of Main Street, the property was owned by Jas. Jermyn. On the south edge of Armitage's surveyed lots, the property was owned by Richard Kenning, and to the immediate east of Kenning was the property owned by T.D. Harrison. It wouldn't be long before both Jermyn and McLellan had their properties surveyed into streets and lots and Minnedosa could expand to the west side of Main Street.

J.S. Armitage's influence grew.

On March 21, 1881 when the provincial boundaries were extended and the County of Minnedosa was formed, Armitage was made Warden. Minnedosa County comprised of what later became the six



Minnedosa Archives

Above, Armitage's new Post Office. Left to right are George Easton, J.F. Boyd, Fred Raper and R.G. McAree with John Tanner's team of horses standing in front of the building.

municipalities of Strathclair, Blanshard, Harrison, Saskatchewan, Odanah and Minto.

In total, Joseph Armitage acquired more than 2,000 acres of land in addition to his 160 acre homestead in and around the present site of Minnedosa. His wife Minetta acquired close to 1,000 acres of land which did not include her 640 acre homestead to the northwest. Between the two, they controlled 3,800 acres of land along the Little Saskatchewan River, a grist and saw mill and a townsite which in conjunction with John Tanner, they would name "Minnedosa".

Minetta must have been a remarkable woman for she not only had two babies to take care of immediately upon her arrival at the crossing, she had a house to build, assisted her husband in his many endeavours and give birth to a third daughter, Minnedosa, born on April 17, 1880. Minnedosa Armitage, nicknamed "Dosa", is recorded as being the first white girl born in the new town. Later they would have a son, Herbert Joseph (Bert), who would be born almost three years later in 1883.

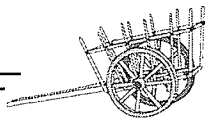
Their town had begun. The mills had

attracted considerable attention to Tanner's Crossing bringing area farmers and their grain to his fledgling community. Settlers were moving in every day and buildings and businesses were opening with wild abandon. What was needed to solidify his holdings and guarantee the longevity of his new town was a railroad.

But businesses were continuing to open less than a mile down the road and a survey had been completed dissecting that land into town lots. They called it "Odanah". Another community to the south, Rapid City, was also making claims that it would host the new rail line that was rumoured to be coming. What Armitage needed to make his dream of a town prosper and grow, was some influential friends who could tip the scales in his favor. He knew exactly what to do next, and as history strongly suggests, a nefarious plot against his opponents would be hatched - it would work to perfection - Minnedosa would get its railroad, Armitage would own a town and soon become the wealthiest man in the territory.

HALLSFORD
N.W.T.
1879

MINNEDOSA
N.W.T.
1879



The Name is the Game ...

The first indication of any name for this area other than "The Little Saskatchewan" was made in 1799 when John 'Falcon' Tanner called it "The Place of the Two Dead Men". By the early 1870's, it was referred to as "Tanner's Crossing". Tanner himself stated that he had arrived here in 1869.

Names were really not deemed to be necessary until a community had grown to the size where it needed a post office and such was the case for Tanner's Crossing in 1877 when John Tanner received permission to open his post office called, "Little Saskatchewan". That name was used interchangeably with Tanner's Crossing until most of the local homesteads had been taken up.

On March 1st of 1879, the following article appeared in the Manitoba Daily Free Press.

"A public meeting was held in the Dominion land office here on the 4th of February for the purpose of choosing a name for the most promising business place in the Little Saskatchewan Valley. Mr. T.D. Harrison was appointed chairman and in a few well-timed remarks showed the importance of a suitable name attached to new western towns merging into existence, and alluded to the fact that as this was well known to all the settlers as the best and most promising business point in the Little Saskatchewan Valley, yet beyond this it was scarcely heard of, as the people here he

supposed, were more modest than those in other new places, and would not blow their trumpets until they had some substantial evidence that the place was going to have a future.

Mr. John Gourlay then moved that the place be known in future by the name of "Sterling" and Mr. James Jermyn moved an amendment that it be called "Prairie City". After

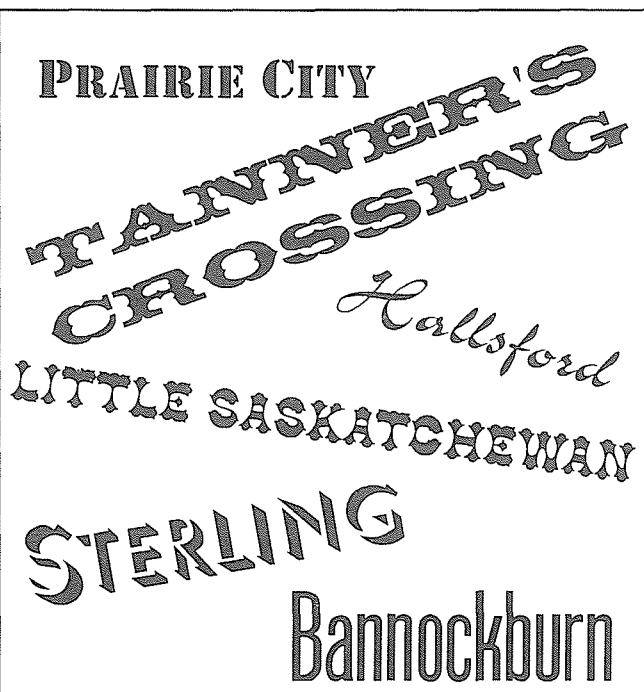
a lively debate, which Messrs. Jermyn, Gourlay, Thompson, McGilvary and others engaged in, the meeting was found to be evenly divided, and the chairman voting for the amendment decided that the future name of what was formerly known as "Tanner's Crossing" shall be Prairie City.

At the close of the meeting, cheers were given for the Queen and for

Prairie City. In the evening the young city was grandly illuminated with fireworks, and the volley after volley that was heard from rifle and shotgun told that Prairie City was pleased with its name.

In response to an invitation, the whole meeting repaired to the dwelling of Messrs. Jermyn and Gillies to a lunch prepared for the occasion by Mrs. Jermyn. Three cheers for Prairie City concluded the programme".

Of particular note above, the name of J.S. Armitage was curiously not marked as present at that meeting. At this time he had already filed on two homesteads north of Minnedosa but was back in Ontario when this meeting took place



and in fact had not become a "player" in the area as yet. The construction of his mills a year later would suddenly thrust him into the spotlight.

In the May 1, 1879 Manitoba Daily Free Press, a column is published under both by-lines, being "The Little Saskatchewan" and "Prairie City" and again, both names are used in identifying this area on September 5, 1879.

By November 13, 1879, things had changed. The name "Prairie City" is no longer referred to as the column carries the heading, "Little Saskatchewan Notes". Within the article itself, mention is made to both "The Little Saskatchewan", and "Tanner's Crossing", but there is no mention of "Prairie City".

Four weeks later, on December 11, 1879, the column is headed, "Saskatchewan Splinters" and states"

"The original Little Saskatchewan land office, now dubbed 'Hallsford' has recently undergone changes that impress very much."

Later, the article states"

"At a meeting held a few evenings ago at Messrs. Jermyn & Gillies place (Tanner's Crossing) it was resolved to call the new town, the plat for which has just been surveyed by Messrs. Armitage and Co., Minnedosa. This is the Sioux word for Little Saskatchewan. It was with considerable reluctance that many of the old settlers here relinquished the name "Little Saskatchewan", but the softer tone, and more easily pronounced Minnedosa, implying the same as Little Saskatchewan - swift flowing

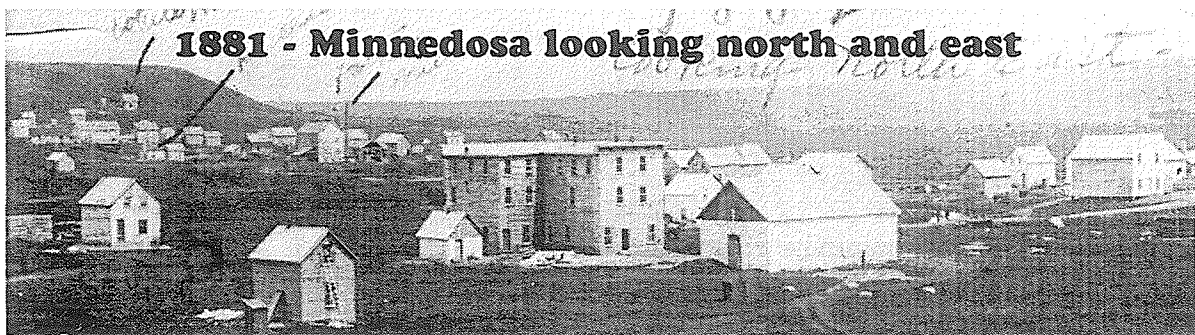
water - was readily adopted. And it is contemplated to take some steps towards having the present very objectionable name of the post office (Hallsford) changed to the same name".

From this article, we can absolutely determine that the name "Minnedosa" was chosen in late November, 1879, which also complies with the fact that Armitage had sent his initial survey of the town to the Land Registry in late 1879 for approval and had marked across the top the name "Minnedosa".

It may well be that Hallsford was the name given to the crossing on the Audy Trail (Brandon Trail) where it crossed the Little Saskatchewan River which was almost exactly at the point where the Main Street bridge is located. This could have given rise to the misconception for many years that Tanner's Crossing was located there when in fact it was located just under one-quarter mile upstream.

In at least one article published in the Free Press of that day, a reference is made to "Farmer's Crossing". There is no other evidence to point to this name ever being used and in all probability was a misprint in the newspaper, in handwriting it being so similar to "Tanner's Crossing".

There was also a later reference made to the consideration of "Bannockburn" as a suitable name instead of Minnedosa. As well, the Indian word "Neepawa" meaning "Plenty" was also considered and rejected; the Town of Neepawa having not come into existence at that time.



The photo shows the Brunswick Hotel in the centre - that lot now occupied by the Court House. The large building to its right is the Armitage Mill. At this point in time, the majority of the town buildings were located on Armitage's land in the north east corner of town.

The Odanah Problem

There were two major obstacles in Armitage's way to successfully building his town. Those two problems came in the form of two competing fledgling towns by the name of Odanah and Rapid City. Rapid City was located some fifteen miles downstream along the river. Odanah was literally at his back door, located a mile to the west in the valley.

J.S. Armitage had taken the gamble of his life, invested over \$50,000 of his own funds to build his two mills and had his newly purchased land surveyed into town lots. Businesses were under construction and his saw mill could barely keep up with the orders. Many pioneer families were forced to live in tents until business orders had been processed through the saw mill and their orders for logs and sawn timber could be filled. Minnedosa was booming.

Earlier in 1879, three pioneers named T.D. Harrison, James Jermyn and J.D. Gillies had christened the town "Prairie City". Later, realizing that their neighboring town of Rapid City was also considering the name and in

fact had named their education facility "Prairie College", they allowed the name to be changed to Hallsford. Armitage didn't like the name, as did few others, and met in November of 1879 and after much discussion and at the suggestion of

Tanner, decided on the name "Minnedosa". It was the Sioux word for "swift running water" and was the Assiniboine

equivalent to "Saskatchewan".

Newly arrived and setting up businesses were P.J. (Paddy) McDermott who would later partner with H.G. Henderson in a general store. Jermyn and Gillies were operating another general store and Tanner was busy constructing a new building to house his post office, which he would soon lose to the newly arrived Wm. De Manby. The surveyors who were searching for a route for the promised trans-continental railroad were in the area and it looked, at worst, that Armitage's town would have a fifty-fifty chance of getting the station.

Immediately to the south of Tanner's and Armitage's land holdings was T.D. Harrison and Dr. R.H. Kenning. Both had expressed much interest in Armitage's plan and at this point were throwing their complete support behind his push for the rail line. Just to the southwest of Armitage, James Jermyn held title to a quarter section and had thrown his support behind Armitage as well.

MINNEDOSA

THE ONLY CITY ON THE SASKATCHEWAN,
(At the crossing of the Canadian Pacific Railway).

First-class grist and saw mill with all the latest improvements.
\$50,000 already invested in buildings and machinery.

Special inducements to parties intending to build. Plenty of good
spruce building lumber will be on hand immediately on opening of the
river.

LOTS FOR SALE. Plan of city with full information to be had from
Messrs. Conklin & Fortune, Real Estate Agents. apl3m

McLellan, who owned the land along the west side of the north end of Main Street had, however, withheld his support and was in fact rumoured to be

involved with some new consortium called the "Odanah Syndicate".

Suddenly Armitage had a competitor who was located immediately on his western flank.

Odanah was already the location for the Land Titles Office and a few other businesses had located in that general direction but the majority of the activity was associated with Armitage and near his mills.

Early in 1880, Rapid City was dropped from the picture when the Dominion Government announced that the rail line would definitely pass through the Little Saskatchewan area of Minnedosa. With this news, the land boom is on in both Odanah and Minnedosa and Armitage immediately places advertisements in the Winnipeg newspapers advertising lots for sale at the "Only City on the Little Saskatchewan".

The announcement of the rail line was not, however, entirely specific as to the exact point where it would cross the Little Saskatchewan River and build the station and yards. This was crucial as it meant that both Odanah and Minnedosa were still in the running. On July 15, 1880, the Manitoba Daily Free Press announced that Odanah would get the nod. A group of local landowners had banded together and formed the Odanah Land Syndicate, led by Mr. Acton Burrows and included Paddy McDermott among others. Quickly they ordered a survey and readied themselves for the coming onslaught. And on it came, moreso than they had anticipated in their wildest dreams.

The twin communities were now at war with fortunes on both sides at stake. The Manitoba Daily Free Press was running columns submitted by correspondents from both Odanah and Minnedosa. It was to this battlefield that the fight would be carried.

July 15, 1880 - By-line "Odanah".

"A well attended meeting of settlers was held at Mr. Bolton's house on Wednesday evening, at which it was decided to turn out en

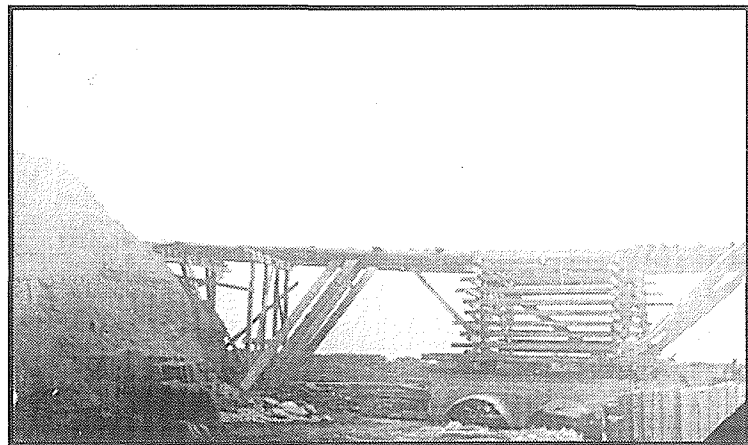
masse and assist in the construction of the approaches to the new bridge, which are to be built of sufficient height to render the stoppage of traffic in spring impossible.

The syndicate has made arrangements with Mr. Hare to superintend the improvements of the trail between his crossing and Odanah, and work has already been commenced".

July 29, 1880 - By-line Minnedosa

"That very industrious "Bee," (Odanah Correspondent) so fond of Odanah flowers, is dormant at present. The bridge approaches are not yet begun. The narrow creek leading to the west is not yet improved. The trail to Hare's Crossing along the valley is still a dangerous sidelong trail, with no sign of pick-ax, or spade, or crow bar there! Mr. Bemister has not arrived to complete the survey. A well attended meeting at Mr. Bolton's consisted of a quorum and no more, to consider the advisability of turning out en masse to erect a bridge across the river, a little north of the supposed railway route. At present, Odanah is sleeping, while her few nurses are weeping. Another saw mill smoke spark is quietly taking its rest amidst prairie flowers, beside the red mill wheel which did duty wool gathering on the Red River for many years".

The gloves were off. Through the summer and early fall of 1880, the Odanah Correspondent would chastise the previous week's Minnedosa article and the following week, the tale would be turned in the other direction. Each columnist would



Minnedosa Archives

The Odanah Bridge was located directly south of the Odanah Pass on the site of the present-day by-pass bridge.

laud the benefits of their chosen community and literally defecate on that of their opposition. Confused landowners were jockeying for position, some aligning themselves with both communities while others would choose a side and cast their fate to the winds.

The announcement in July of 1880 that the C.P.R. had chosen Odanah as their crossing point over the Little Saskatchewan River was actually made by the Odanah Correspondent and repeated by the editor of the Free Press. However, the announcement had the appearance of coming from a higher authority and because of it, overnight, Armitage was in trouble.

Within a few weeks, Odanah had begun construction on a bridge across the river. As well, Armitage was losing his store owners as first Paddy McDermott and then Leslie started to make a move to relocate their businesses to Odanah. A rival saw mill was under construction at Odanah and business lots there were selling fast.

It looked like the end was at hand for Minnedosa until the members of the Odanah Land Syndicate made one fatal error. They had ignored McLellan who held all the land between the two rival towns. Being left out of the Odanah mix, McLellan announces he will throw his land in with Armitage. The Free Press reports, *"There has been general rejoicing today, for Minnedosa has received a valuable wing - a large slice of excellent building ground, which has been hitherto held in reserve by the proprietor, Mr. McLellan. This is a quarter section taking in all that level site so suitable for town lots between the saw and grist mills (Minnedosa) and the lands office (Odanah). This is now being mapped out into town lots, including a site for a market square, presented to the city by Mr. McLellan. So, on the whole, Minnedosa may be considered as going ahead"*.

By August, both towns are anticipating a final and official decision by the C.P.R. as to which town will be chosen as its host.

In September of 1880, pioneer Harriet (Wake) Proven arrives and describes Minnedosa

as having 28 buildings in the town, with several others under construction including a new hall being built by Smith & Smythe.

Then comes the crash. The Canadian Pacific Railroad announces that neither town will host its rail line and that instead, it will traverse this part of the country south of both Minnedosa and still hopeful Rapid City. All three communities are put into disarray with the news.

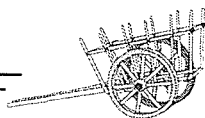
Some modicum of comfort is gained by residents when on March 21st of 1881, it is finally announced that the Province of Manitoba will extend their boundaries to include the Little Saskatchewan. Now, at least, local representation will be had at the provincial level rather than being ruled by a Governor located at Battleford, some five hundred miles to the west.

At Odanah, land prices fall rapidly. People began to abandon their holdings and those that don't relocate to Minnedosa move out of the district or relocate to the Grand Valley area to wait for the arrival of the rails there. In Minnedosa, although it will not have the C.P.R. rail line, the town is still in a building boom as it remains to serve as the agriculture center for the area because of its grist mill. In effect, Minnedosa stays stable or grows slightly while Odanah declines.

Slowly, businesses start to move back to Minnedosa where Armitage's mills continue to attract business from the surrounding rural areas, leaving Minnedosa as the focal point for area commerce.

Soon, news would reach the area of another railroad casting glances in this direction. The Manitoba & Northwestern had laid rails as far as Portage and were looking at both Minnedosa and Rapid City as potential hosts for their yards and station. Now that Odanah was out of the picture, the battle would be joined between Minnedosa and Rapid City for the lifeline that was represented by gaining the all-important railroad.

But this time Armitage and his compatriots had a plan, and it would soon be put in motion.



CHAPTER ELEVEN
1879 - 1880
TWO YEARS OF UNBRIDLED
GROWTH

The following are extracts from weekly articles published in the Winnipeg Daily Free Press and carrying the by-lines of correspondents from Rapid City, Odanah and Minnedosa that depict the tremendous pressure the area was under for settlement, homesteads and quick profits to be made if the railway happened to pass by your "*chosen place*".

April 19, 1879 - Rapid City: Two saw mills and a grist mill will soon be in operation in Rapid City. The machinery for Mr. McIntosh's mill is now at St. Boniface, and will be sent up the Assiniboine to the Portage as soon as possible, from whence it will be freighted to its destination by carts. An indication of the effects of immigration on property is found in the fact that lots in Rapid City, which sold for \$5 last fall now sell at \$50 and many as high as \$75. Mr. McLaren has already sold 120 lots within the "city" limits. Parties from that section report that it is being rapidly filled up by new-comers.

May 1, 1879 - Prairie City: There have been a very large number of homestead entries made at the Little Saskatchewan district lands office. The entries average 25 a day. A large number of scrip entries were also made for a few days. For two days preceding the arrival of the land agent, the land office was completely crowded, and parties arriving at all hours of the night to be in readiness to locate as early as the office was open in the morning.

Some amusing stories are told of persons fording rivers and streams, upsetting their buggies, losing robes, coats, etc. and then riding the horse bare backed the remainder of the distance in order to make the entry before the arrival of the messenger. Fate and fast horses favored some of these, while many were just about half an hour too late in a race of a hundred miles. A blacksmith arrived here a few days ago and is building a smith and

wagon shop.

September 15, 1879 - Prairie City: Following closely after the surveyors for the new railroad west of Winnipeg we have the usual number of speculators and land sharks after the Yankee style. They spend a week or two travelling through the country with servants, carry equipage and other paraphernalia. They pretend to know the exact location of the line of railroad - they received such information confidentially from the engineers in charge, some of the Ministers at Ottawa, Mr. Jones or someone else, which enables them to state exactly the point at which it will strike some river or other place of importance. They usually have a tract of land on that river or other place of importance which they seem extremely anxious to dispose of before the line is definitely located but it may depreciate in value.

July 15, 1880 - Odanah: Mr. Shers, late of the North-West House, Winnipeg, who recently purchased the Canadian Pacific Hotel at Minnedosa has removed it to Odanah where he has erected it on King Street. Mr. Bemister, D.L.S. is expected here in a few days to complete the survey. All the lower portion of the site has been surveyed and it is now intended to survey park lots on the hill side. The syndicate owns 1,280 acres of land here, 320 of which are in the present town lot. Fifty-four blocks have been surveyed into 1,080 lots.

Mr. Tiffany has settled here and has taken contracts for the erection of two stores. A number of men are engaged on the townsite, opening up streets.

July 28, 1880 - Odanah: A number of the settlers south of the river turned out last week and made approaches to the river for the bridge which the syndicate is erecting opposite the centre of the town site. Contractors are Cowan, James and

Bolton. Mr. P.J. McDermott who has carried on a general store at Minnedosa has removed to Odanah, having secured in block 51 a corner lot fronting on King and Sixth Streets.

July 29, 1880 - Minnedosa: On the corner of First and Catherine a town hall is being completed. On the block between First and Main, Mr Kelly is erecting a very large implement store and on the corner of Mill and First, Dennison and Griffith are erecting a large store. Cockburn & Dalton are erecting a splendid ground store on Minetta Street and Mr. Burley is erecting a small building on the corner of Marcus and First Streets. Mr. Wake's building on Second Street is worthy of notice.

A new post office is on the north side of the river where Mr. De Manby, with his usual courtesy, dispenses the duty of postmaster with care and attention.

August 11, 1880 - Odanah: Farm property is fast rising in value in this neighborhood. One farmer adjacent to the town site is said to have been recently offered \$10,000 for his 320 acres. Work on the new bridge at the south side of the town is progressing satisfactorily. McFadden is busy building his mill. Mr. Leslie, who has been carrying on a successful boot and shoe business in Minnedosa for some months past, has decided to remove to Odanah. Mr. F. H. Young of Vittoria, Norfolk County, Ont., made a brief visit here last week, purchasing two lots on King Street on which to erect business premises. Mr. John Morrison of Winnipeg also came up and purchased a valuable corner lot on the same street opposite the Canadian Pacific Hotel. Mr. J.H. Sproull of Winnipeg and Mr. Chas. Stanley of Lucan, Ontario spent most of Thursday here and purchased three lots on King Street on which to erect business premises. Mr. May of the firm of Daniels & May of Bracebridge, Ont., arrived here yesterday and purchased eight lots on King Strand and Fifth Streets. The firm

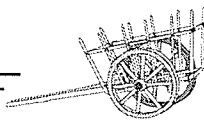
will at once erect a large two storey store in which they will carry on a general hardware and tinware business.

August 16, 1880 - Minnedosa: Affairs in the city are looking remarkably healthy. Store building is carried on with vigor. Mr. McLaren, a recent arrival, having pitched a tent on the east side of Main Street pending the erection of his wholesale grocery store. The Sims House is now in full motion on Main Street. A double house for tenement purposes is being erected by Mr. Tanner on First Street. The McLellan half of the city is now all surveyed into suitable town lots and business has begun in earnest.

September 6, 1880 - Minnedosa: Business in Minnedosa town lots continues very brisk and Mr. Brownlee, the local agent, is daily kept on his mettle. The town hall building is far advanced and the Saskatchewan House will be opened on Monday.

October 20, 1880 - Rapid City: Two and a half years ago we might behold the prairies in this part of the North-West Territories unbroken by the plow, and only a few isolated houses could be seen in the Little Saskatchewan district. Now, we find, on the banks of this valuable stream, two creditable and lively business centres. Our neighbor village, Minnedosa, has, partly owing to rumors regarding the possible adoption of that crossing for the C.P.R., and partly through the untiring energy of its citizens, made excellent progress during the last few months.

Rapid City, on the contrary, has on its merits and the patronage of the many settlers on all sides, been steadily wending its way upwards; and has, as its agricultural show held yesterday proved by the choice stock, grains and roots exhibited, that the country in this vicinity is equal to any part of the globe.



68

build a permanent bridge across the river, again, on 1st Street.

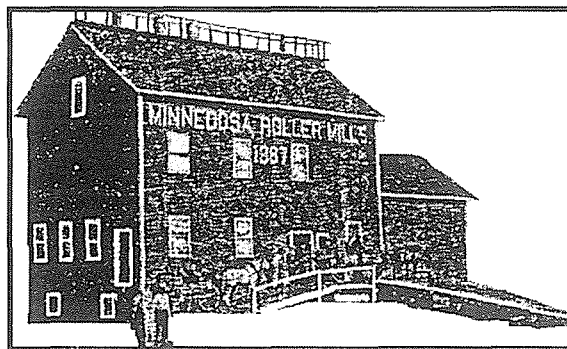
By now, hundreds of pioneer families were arriving in the area of the Little Saskatchewan River valley and most good homesteads were taken up. Armitage was winning the battle. The Little Saskatchewan district, meaning both Minnedosa and Odanah, had lost their bids for the C.P.R. line and as a result, Odanah folded. With Odanah now out of the picture, the land titles office was soon moved to Minnedosa from Odanah, and Paddy McDermott, one of their merchants, seeing the handwriting on the wall, abandoned Odanah, went into partnership with Henderson at Minnedosa, and together they built a new store on Main Street.

But, it was painfully simple. If a town was to really grow and prosper, it must have a railroad. If the railroad went elsewhere, it would mean the death of Minnedosa.

The loss of the C.P.R. did not necessarily mean the loss of a rail line. Armitage was well aware

that the Portage, Westbourne and North Western Railway, originally called the Westbourne and North Western, had received its provincial charter in 1880 and that they were looking at running their line from Portage in a westerly direction. They had encountered financial problems, but had since been absorbed by Sir Hugh Allan and associates of Montreal. By 1882, the rails were laid as far west as Gladstone but their further course was as yet undetermined.

Armitage would need to work full time on the effort of having that course come through his town, even if that meant selling off his mills. So, later in 1882, Armitage did in fact sell his mills for a reported \$160,000 to Major John Douglas, a barrister from Ontario who had recently bought out the McIntosh mill at Rapid City. Douglas was stretching himself thin financially, but he had covered his bets on the two most likely places where the railroad would come through: Rapid City and Minnedosa.



Armitage's Grist Mill would be sold in 1882 and by 1887, be renamed the Minnedosa Roller Mills.

In the August 20, 1880 edition of the Manitoba Daily Free Press, the following account was written by the Minnedosa correspondent.

The usual quiet of Grand Valley district was disturbed last week by one of those individuals styling himself "Captain." Captain Bacon, who has been for some time settled on a farm there, but, like the class already alluded to, doing little on it, got into a habit of paying his debts the wrong way, and when pressed, he gave cheques on a Winnipeg bank, which, on presentation, were dishonored.

A constable from Rapid City, fully armed with his authority, proceeded to the Captain's farm to arrest him. The Captain had a companion of the same "turn of mind" as himself, and this companion advised his host to "pot the constable" if that functionary refused to go without his man. The con-

stable refusing, remained while the preliminaries were being arranged as to his "potting", and at the word "three" the Captain discharged his breech-loading fowling piece at the constable, the shot taking effect in his hat, that part of it, however, in which his head was not. After this the Captain was missing, but on careful search being made by a force of the Mounted Police, he was found in a bar, when he quietly said, "By Jove, gentlemen, the game is up. I surrender"! But where is the gentleman who was "accessory" to the attempt at shooting that worthy constable, whose hat remains the bull's-eye of attraction at the Queen's Hotel, Rapid City?

The Deal for the railroad

Throughout the Armitage family tree, and beginning as early as 1775, the Armitage name had become conspicuously linked with the surname of Dennis. As late as 1823, Joseph's great-aunt Elizabeth Phillips married a Nathan Dennis. Elizabeth's brother, William Phillips, is also recorded as having married a Dennis. In 1879 when J.S. Armitage began his town in the North West Territories, one John Stoughton Dennis was Deputy Minister of the Interior. As an officer in the militia during the Fenian raids of 1866 and 1869, J.S. Dennis had been stationed at Port Colborne during the same period of time as was J.S. Armitage. Land Titles show that Dennis held land as a speculator in Minnedosa and Odanah in the 1880's. In a North West Territories election of 1881 for the electoral district of Minnedosa, one Hugh Dennis was running until J.S. Armitage entered the contest, at which time Dennis withdrew in his favor.

To say the two were definitely related is impossible but the fact remains that later in 1882 at the most critical time for Armitage to make his play for the railroad line that was being built west from Portage, the rival town of Rapid City had been mysteriously dropped from the Department of Interior maps and remained so for a period of more than a year. J.S. Dennis had both the influence as well as holding one of the few positions in the federal government where this "mistake" could have been made to happen. Did this deceit in fact happen?

C.J. Whellams of Rapid City certainly thought so. In Sir John A. Macdonald's correspondence files is a letter he received from Whellams of Rapid City in which Whellams wrote, *"I cannot but think that the opposition to the thriving and growing Town of Rapid City is largely due to the late Deputy Minister (of the Interior) Col. Dennis who with his associates are interested in the proposed town of Odanah and the small village of Minnedosa"*.

By the time people in Rapid City had realized the error of omission on the government maps and complained bitterly and directly to the Prime Minister, it was too late. Macdonald responded by immediately stopping production of the maps and

ordered that Rapid City be marked on them but the damage had been done. Whellams, along with several prominent businessmen in the district, were practically ruined. Shortly thereafter, Whellams abandoned the colonization effort along the Little Saskatchewan and relocated to St. Paul, Minnesota.

Minnedosa had been chosen as the site where the Manitoba & North Western Railroad would cross the Little Saskatchewan River. Coincidentally, about this same time when streets and avenues were being marked out and named in Minnedosa's northwest corner, one street strangely bore the name of "Dennis".

That a plot between Dennis and Armitage had been conceived and successfully concluded to the point where the town of Rapid City suddenly disappeared has never been proven, but as far as Rapid City citizens were concerned, it had happened that way and there is certainly a large amount of circumstantial evidence upon which they could make a solid case. The animosity between the two towns grew to a point where the Manitoba Daily Free Press which was being published out of Winnipeg was reporting on the fact on an almost weekly basis.

As was the common practice of the time, railways did not build through communities unless substantial bonuses were offered. Such negotiations for the railway bonus were begun between railway company officials and Armitage, Kenning, Gillies and Jermyn, who formed Armitage and Company.

Minnedosa attempted to persuade Rapid City to help with the financing of the line to Minnedosa and offered three different bonus schemes, each of which provided for large sums to be used by Rapid City for the bonusing of the railway of its choice. After several meetings, Rapid City representatives felt that they had been *'received with great discourtesy by the people of Minnedosa'* and that the *'feeling there was strongly against working with the southern part of the county on equal terms'*. Consequently, every advance made by the Minnedosa group was rejected and it was decided *'to paddle their own canoe as in the past'*.

This path blocked, Minnedosans considered

the incorporation of their town in order to spearhead the bonusing movement. Advances were made to Odanah residents in an attempt to secure the support needed for incorporation under the terms of the Town Corporations General Clauses Act of 1879. Here again they met with opposition, but enough Odanah people were persuaded by the Minnedosa pleas that with the additional support of the people south and west of Minnedosa, the town was incorporated on March 2, 1883.

Shortly, W. Gibbens, owner of the Rapid City newspaper "The Standard" would sell out, move to Minnedosa and start "The Minnedosa Tribune". Others would follow. The news of Minnedosa's

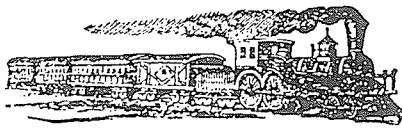
success would devastate Rapid City. In 1876, the Rapid City census showed a population of 450. The census of 1881 showed 1200 people. By 1886, three years after the railway had been built through Minnedosa, the population had dropped to 700 and then bottomed out in 1891 at a staggering low of 543.

At Odanah, the final curtain was being drawn. One resident wrote, "*A certain ambitious village ... has got the fever of incorporation, and is casting covetous glances towards our beautiful town plot, the once-despised Odanah, and seems very anxious to make us a portion of themselves, but the people here 'do not see it' remembering too well the old fable of the spider and the fly.*"

Lots in Odanah had at one time exchanged hands for up to a thousand dollars each. But the always astute PaddyMcDermott saw the handwriting on the wall and threw his backing to Armitage. Buildings began to be moved to The Crossing at a rapid pace. Within five years, only stone basements would attest to the fact that there had even been a community there, with the exception of a few young ladies who put up a tent and hung a sign advertising "Mending Done". It was reported that they were quite happy to remain in Odanah and practise their chosen profession until a group of concerned Minnedosa citizens informed them that they had better "mend" their ways or leave. The fine being paid, they departed and the ignominious end to Odanah was complete.

The news that Minnedosa was being favored as the site of the new railway line prompted local residents to organize a fire brigade and debentures were floated for a new brick schoolhouse. A new doctor located in Minnedosa, and he was followed by a private banker. In 1882, the total value of assessed property stood at \$173,000. One year later, that value had soared to \$613,000.

To the southwest of Minnedosa, landowners W.H. Ditch and James Leslie suddenly offered a portion of their lands to the M & N.W. for a station and rail yard site. Holding out hope for the success of their plan to cut out Armitage's village, Ditch and Leslie had engaged the services of Marcus Smith to begin surveying in that direction and had lots and streets mapped out. The potential for quick riches also enticed Dr. Kenning's group, now located about 2 miles east of Minnedosa, to make



MAN. & NORTH-W STERN
RAILWAY.

TIME CARD.
Taking effect April 6th, 1891.

Regular passenger trains run as follows:

WESTBOUND.
Leave Winnipeg at 11.00, on Tuesday, Thursdays and Saturdays for Portage la Prairie, Rapid City, Yorkton and intermediate stations. A mixed train for Russell makes close connection at Binscarth on Tuesday and Thursday.

EASTBOUND.
Leave Yorkton on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, at 5.05. A mixed train leaves Russell on Wednesdays and Fridays at 7.00 and makes connection at Binscarth with train for Winnipeg. Leave Rapid City on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, at 10.10, Minnedosa at 11.45 and arrive at Winnipeg at 12.20.
Regular eastbound passenger trains make a close connection at Portage la Prairie with Canadian Pacific westbound trains, and at Winnipeg with the eastbound trains of that company.

Pass. Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday	Miles from Winnipeg	STATIONS.	Pass. Monday, Wednesday and Friday
11.00		Winnipeg	17.20
12.50 ar	55	Portage la Prairie	15.50
13.00 ly			15.00
15.50	111	Neepawa	12.25
16.15	135	Minnedosa	11.45
17.45 ar	150	Rapid City	10.10
18.24	171	Shoal Lake	9.57
19.45	194	Birdie	8.55
20.25	211	Binscarth	7.55
21.32	236	Langenburg	6.45
23.15	279	Yorkton	5.05

ARRIVE. LEAVE.

t. Meals.
If any passengers for stations between Winnipeg and Portage la Prairie, train will stop to let off, and when flagged to take on passengers.

W. R. BAKER, Gen. Superintendent. A. McDONALD, Asst. Gen. Pass. Agent.

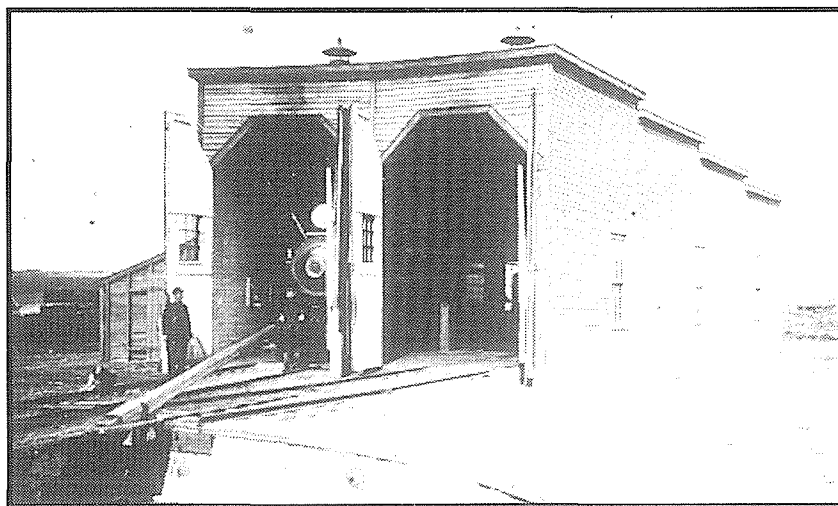
overtures to the railway company. Kenning was quickly brought into line by the Minnedosa group, as was J.D. Gillies' group who had suddenly resurrected Odanah's hopes. In the end, Armitage and his partners were able to rein in the latter two but Ditch and Leslie persisted with their plan. Incensed at these backdoor plans to steal his railroad from the valley, one year later when Minnedosa was incorporated, the 23 quarter sections comprising the town would exclude the Ditch & Leslie properties from being within the town boundaries. The resulting drop in land values for the pair was the price they would pay for their 'treachery' against Armitage and Company.

The announcement in March of 1883 that the Manitoba & Northwestern Railroad would build its line through Minnedosa sent shockwaves through the community and the town again took on a boom like atmosphere. Jermyn, Kenning and McLellan, who had quickly jumped on Armitage's bandwagon, began selling their lots along the newly surveyed streets to the west of Main Street. Meetings were held to consider applying for a town charter and questions of payment to the railroad were being considered. In the end, Minnedosa would become a town with an elected Mayor and Council, all of whom were proudly standing on the station platform

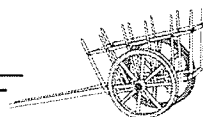
on November 27th of 1883 when the first passenger train arrived from the east. The entire town turned out for the event and a banquet was held in the school house as well as a public meeting, to celebrate the important occasion.

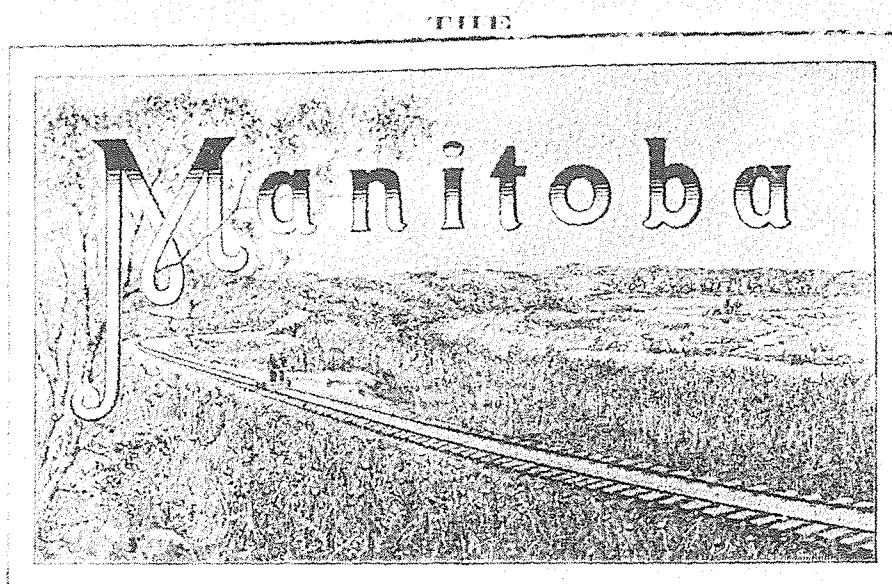
A deal had been struck with the M & N.W. that saw the fledgling town offering payment of 1,000 town lots worth not less than \$75,000, \$30,000 cash and tax exempt status for the railway properties and buildings for 20 years. The Manitoba & Northwestern accepted the terms, but within a decade, that deal would bankrupt the town and a provisional government appointed by the province would take over town finances.

In 1886, Rapid City would finally get its railroad but it would come in the form of a branch line from Minnedosa. On the occasion of the opening of the branch, a free ride was offered from Rapid City to Minnedosa and return, with 600 people taking up the offer. During the trip, the car containing the editor of the Rapid City newspaper broke loose. There the car and the editor sat until the engineer finally discovered what had happened and returned for them.



The Manitoba & Northwestern chose Minnedosa as a divisional point with the railroad quickly becoming an integral part of the community.





AND
NORTH-WESTERN RAILWAY
LAND DEPARTMENT,

OFFICES 622 MAIN STREET, WINNIPEG,

OFFER FOR SALE, WITHOUT CULTIVATION OR SETTLEMENT RESTRICTIONS,

2,750,000 ACRES OF LAND

IN THE WELL KNOWN

Park Lands of the Fertile Belt.

GOOD SOIL. GOOD TIMBER. GOOD WATER.

TERMS OF PAYMENT.—If paid for in full at time of purchase a discount will be allowed; but the purchaser may pay one-sixth in cash and the balance in five annual instalments, with interest at six per cent. per annum.

IMPROVED FARMS along the line to rent or for sale; a list of which can be seen at the Offices of the Company.

TOWN LOTS FOR SALE along the Manitoba & North-Western Railway in the following places: Arden, Neepawa, Minnedosa, Newdale, Strathclair, Shoal Lake, Selkirk, Birtle, Fox Warren, Binscarth, Harrowby, Langenburg.

Maps showing settlement and lists of free Government Land open for entry. Folders (in English and foreign languages). Maps, &c., and any further information can be obtained at the Offices of the Company, or by letter addressed

A. F. EDEN, Land Commissioner M. & N. W. R.,

622 MAIN STREET, WINNIPEG.

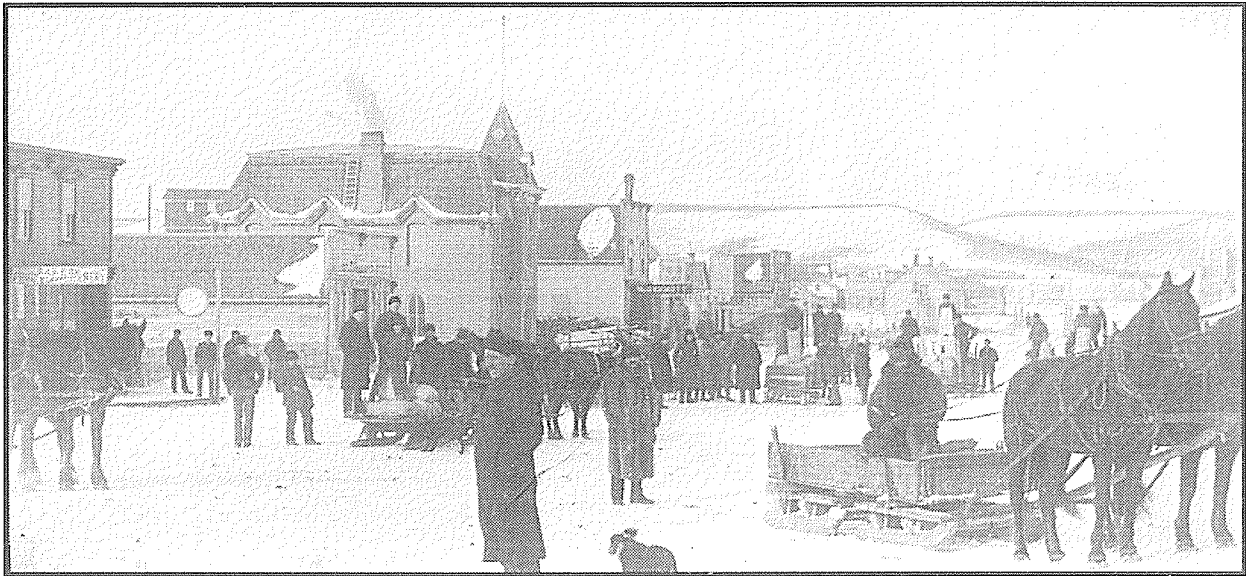
Representatives here Minnedosa, Birtle and other districts along the line can be interviewed at the above address.

The artist's sketch on this particular Manitoba & North-Western Railway advertisement featured a scene of the Little Saskatchewan River Valley with Minnedosa in the background. The sketch was drawn from the Odanah Pass area looking in an eastward direction. This particular advertisement was published in 1887.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MINNEDOSA - 1883 - 1885



Minnedosa Archives

Main Street would soon take on the appearance of a busy metropolis as this Dave Cannon photo attests. The photo was taken looking northward on Main Street and shows the new Town Hall at the left-center with the store immediately north of it being that belonging to Paddy McDermott. The Town Hall, demolished in the early 1950's, was situated on the lot now occupied by the Royal Bank with McDermotts being on the lot now occupied by Lee's Restaurant (1998).

Minnedosa could now officially be called a "town". Armitage had delivered on his promise of a railroad and the town was booming. Lots were taken up along Main Street as quickly as they became available. Hundreds of businessmen, professionals and laborers streamed into the Little Saskatchewan from Ontario through Winnipeg, the trip now taking a few hours instead of days and weeks as it had done just a year before.

By 1885, a two storey brick school had been built on property donated by J.D. Gillies, who also obtained the grant from the provincial government to pay for its construction. A school board had been set up, and once again it contained some very familiar names such as E.O. Dennison and Messrs. Gillies, Carter, Roche and Cowan. In 1885, the school would be central to a new Provincial Protestant School District #232.

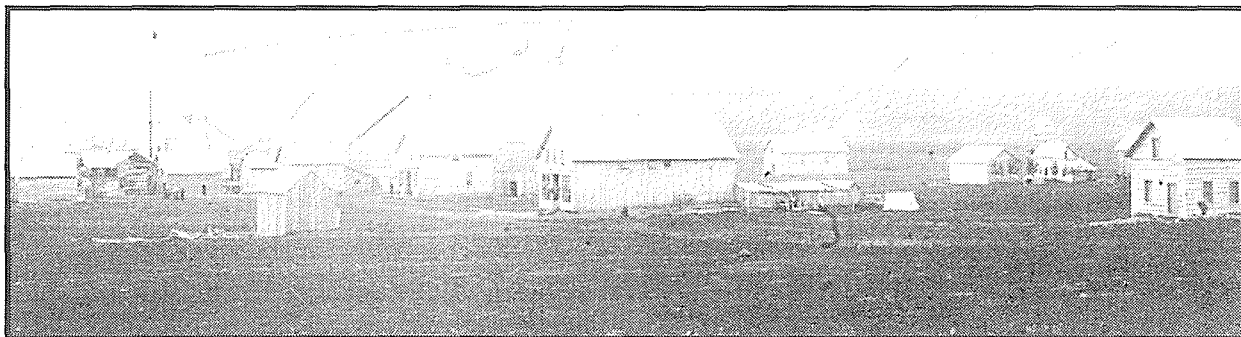
The town and surrounding area now supported no less than four lawyers as well as two doctors and two dentists. In December of 1884, regular passenger train service had begun between Minnedosa and Portage. A number of lodges had

sprung up such as the Prince of Wales, I.O.O.F., L.O.L., A.O.F., and the Temperance and Literary Association and meetings were well attended.

By late May of 1885, a number of general merchants were advertising regularly in The Minnedosa Tribune, and because of the troubles brewing out west, the government was placing advertisements prohibiting the sale of fixed ammunition or ball cartridges to Indians in the Northwest Territories under a penalty of \$200 or six months in prison. Another advertisement relates to the pending arrival by special train of the Nickel Plate Circus, Museum and Menagerie featuring "Mrs. Jessie James, Widow of the Bandit King, and her wonderful rifle shooting" and states that this is "no clap-trap, swindling, empty cage street parade" for it is "under the canvas".

On Main Street, the competition was getting heavy as J.D. Gillies and Co., General Merchants were taking on E.J. Darioch & Co.'s "Cheapside" store. In another article, Mr. K. McLellan was noted as putting on an expansion to his home on the north side.

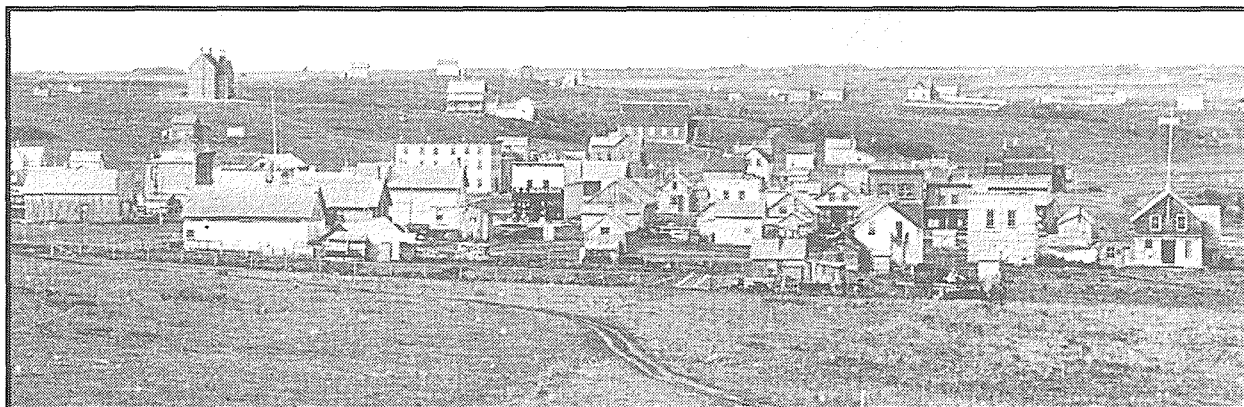
Minnedosa from the north east looking southward in 1881.



Minnedosa Archives

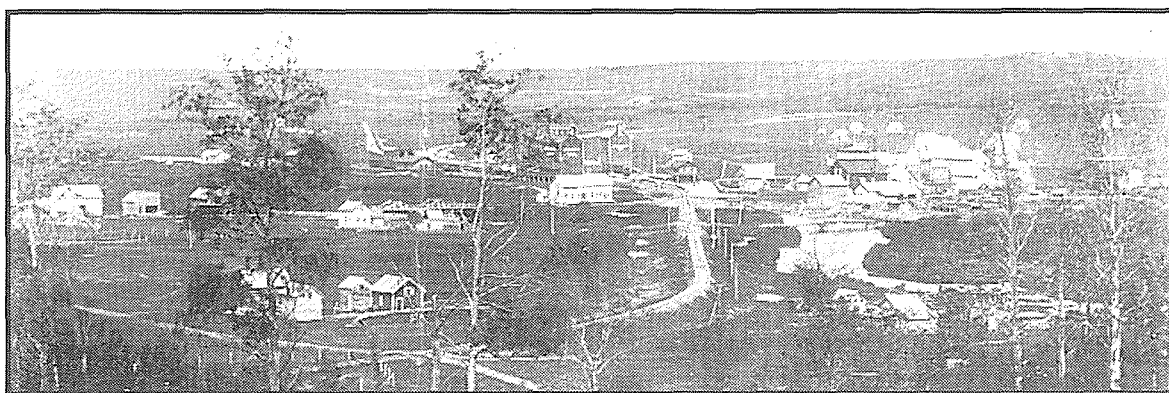
First Street, N.E., Minnedosa's original business district, is shown in this photograph. The most prominent building in the centre is the Dalton & Cockburn General Store. Two buildings to the south of that is the Post Office, and further down the street the premises of the Minnedosa Star, and behind that the Armitage Mills.

Minnedosa from the east hill looking west - about 1885



The old school house can be seen dominating the skyline on the left hand side of the photo. Main Street splits this photo about the middle from left to right with all those buildings on the west side being built on the Jermyn surveyed land and those on the lower half being built on the Armitage (Tanner) side of Main Street.

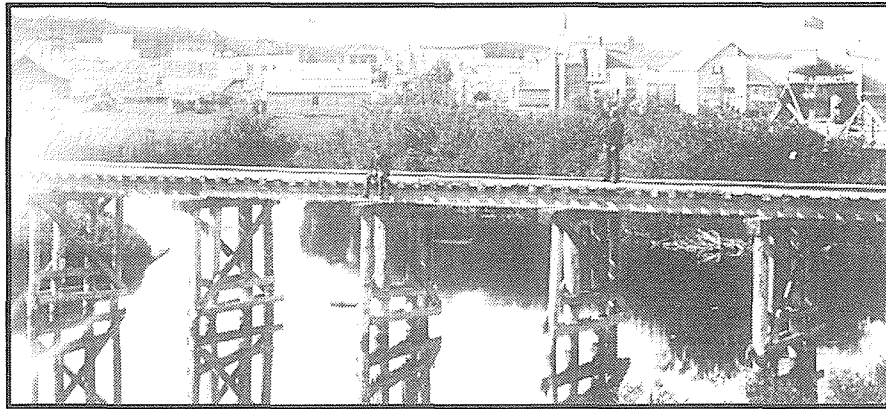
Minnedosa from the east hill looking west - about 1885



The middle and north end area of Main Street about 1885 with the M & N.W. railway line showing. The photo was taken from the east hills looking west and shows Armitage's 1st St. Bridge crossing the river. The street shown dissecting the bottom of the photograph is the present day Beach Road, Hwy. 262.

People still weren't totally familiar with the "trials and tribulations" of hosting a railroad and a busy station. As *The Tribune* reports, "Yesterday morning, Mrs. A.F. Eden was standing on the platform awaiting the departure of the train, a faucet of the locomotive was inadvertently turned on allowing steam and water to escape and drenching the lady's dress before she could get out of the way".

The town was, however, undergoing its growing pains as the following attests. "*Residents in the vicinity of the ravine north of Main Street are complaining that manure, rotten potatoes and other vegetable matter, as well as the putrid carcass of a mule, are dumped in their neighborhood, much to their disgust and annoyance. The proper authorities should look into this matter*".

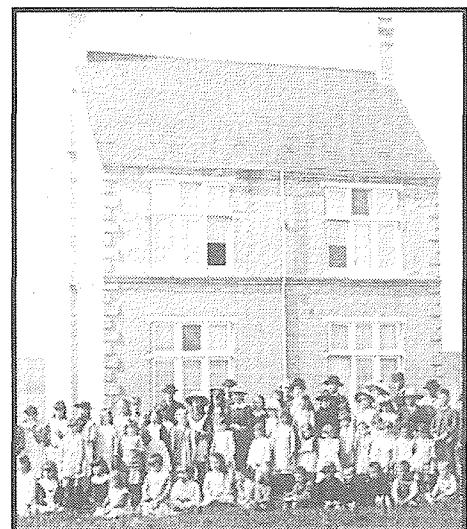


Minnedosa Archives

The Manitoba & North-Western trestle brought the trains up to Main Street. On the right edge of the photograph can be seen the first Main Street bridge which sports a large "Welcome" sign overhead, erected to welcome home the troops from the Riel Rebellion. Wood pilings for this trestle can still be seen under the present-day cement trestle built in 1912.



Minnedosa Archives



The original Minnedosa School was a log cabin constructed in 1882. By 1883, a two storey brick school had been constructed in the south-west corner of town and would serve the local students until it was replaced in 1892.

In 1885, colonization of the immediate area north of Minnedosa began to take place with the arrival of the Scandinavians. To that point, the vast majority of those who had settled in the area were of primarily Celtic descent with the majority of those following the Protestant faith. The population of Minnedosa quickly began to emulate and recreate the standards of British society.

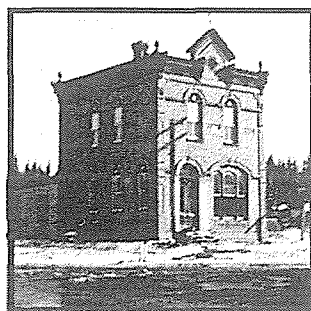
"At about 11 o'clock, the brethren of Loyal Orange Lodge 1505 (Minnedosa East) marshalled by Mr. John Cameron, mounted on a grey horse to represent King William, left their Hall, headed by fife and drum band, and marched along Main Street".

Between 1882 and 1883, the roster listing businesses along Main Street increased from twenty-two to over forty. The growing agricultural sector kept adding more cultivated acreage to the local inventory which quickly resulted in a surge of implement dealers and blacksmith shops. Heavy industry was represented by Armitage's grist and saw mills, but by 1885 two towering grain elevators, built by Ogilvie and Johnson, would soon dominate the valley landscape.

In 1882, Minnedosa witnessed the formation of its first lending institution which was a private firm run by J.W. Wallis and A.W. Ramsay. It lasted for ten years before being replaced by the Commercial Bank of Winnipeg, operated by E.O. Dennison, who would later start his own bank.

As part of a settler delegation in 1878, R.A. Cowan was successful in obtaining the Little Saskatchewan Land District office to locate below his farm on the "Odanah". At first a log office, it was moved in 1883 part way to Minnedosa and then late in 1884, was hauled to 1st St. N.E. and then into a newly built brick building located on the present site of the Rolling River School Division offices at the corner of Main Street and 3rd Ave. S.E.

Land Titles Building



The several syndicates that had previously been set up in order to insure a town would be built somewhere near the crossing had, in the end, achieved their goal - the Armitage syndicate being successful over the initial Kenning group and later, the much stronger Odanah Syndicate. As Odanah slowly disappeared, Minnedosa grew and it wasn't long before local farmers dismantled those buildings that were left at the former Odanah, using the salvage to build granaries and barns.

Armitage had control over all town lots to the east of Main Street, with Jermyn and Gillies controlling the southwest corner, and McLellan controlling the northwest corner. These groups, while prospering together, were still entirely capable of putting one over on each other.



The J.S. Armitage home was located along the hillside in the northeast corner of town and was for years referred to as the "White House".

Built of logs in 1879, the building sported a white-washed paint scheme before later being covered with insulbrick. With tragic irony, the heritage house was burned down in 1970 by the Town of Minnedosa as part of that Council's Manitoba Centennial celebrations.

The town had collectively decided that a new and larger and more permanent school should be built. With the town spread out over such a vast area, a central location somewhere near the railway and river would have made perfect sense. It wasn't to be, however, as J.D. Gillies used his influence to secure a provincial grant to build the school and quickly donated one of his lots for the building site. Suddenly, the town's children found themselves attending classes far up on the hills in the southwest corner of town. Gillies no doubt considered that the school on his land would help

to increase the sale of his building lots.

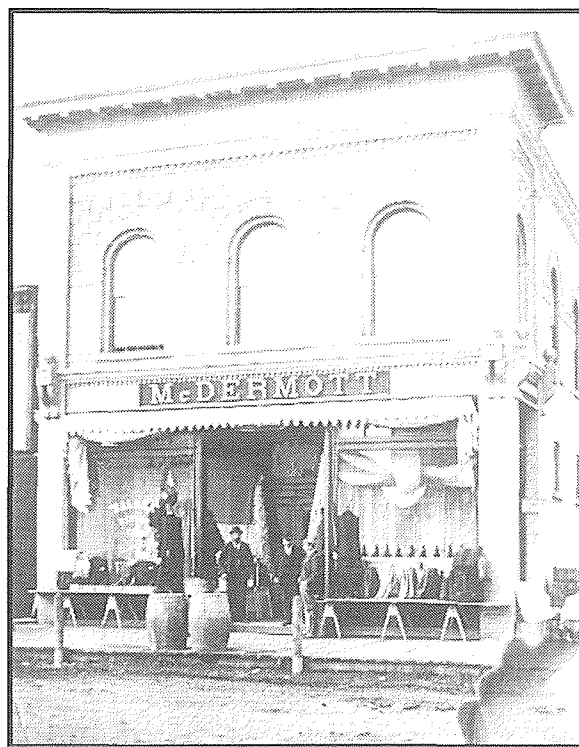
That arrangement lasted until 1892 when it was found that poor construction techniques as well as substandard brick resulted in bulging walls and the unsafe structure was torn down. Subsequently, a new school was constructed, this time located at the much more convenient location at the south end of Main Street.

Armitage's Main Street east area was the most heavily developed initially, but as his lots sold, his influence seemed to diminish.

McLellan to the northwest, never seemed to gain the status achieved by his three competitors and his corner, being that land located north of the tracks along the west side of Main Street, developed at the slowest pace until the building of the North School in 1904.

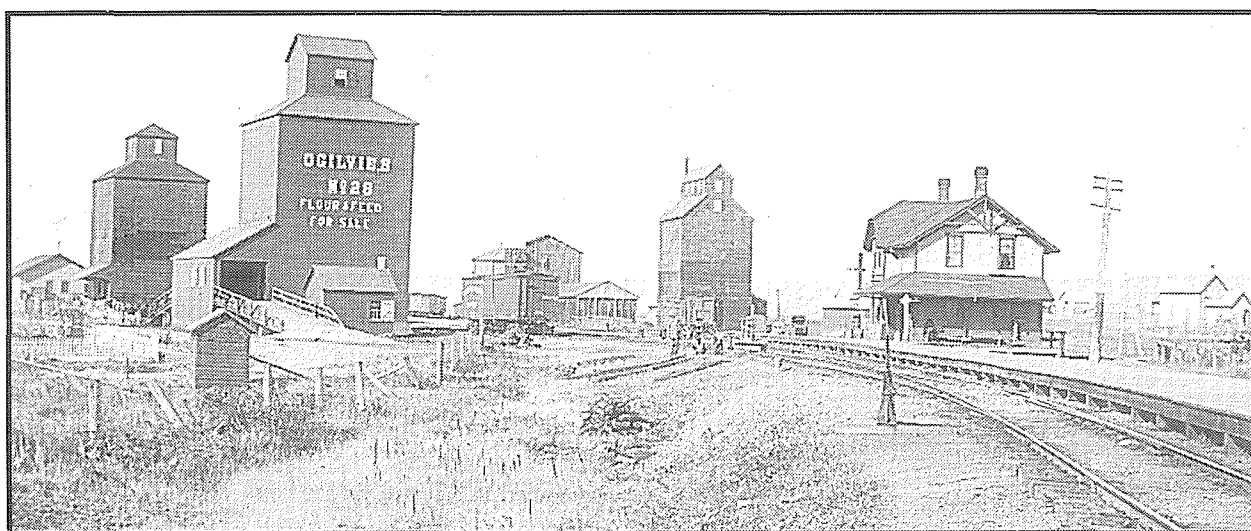
As the influence wielded by Armitage declined, that of Gillies seemed to rise, as is indicated by his appointment as Chairman of the School Board and having been credited with being single-handedly responsible for the construction of the new school. He was elected as Mayor of the new community and then M.L.A.. It would be ill health that would force him from the local scene in 1888, only to be replaced as Mayor by his partner James Jermyn. A similar fate awaited Jermyn, as in 1889, the ill health of his wife forced him to sell his holdings and move away from the crossing where he had made his home for twelve years.

The loss of these two very influential men within one year of each other would once again



With the loss of J.D. Gillies as his main competitor, P.J. McDermott would prosper; construct this large brick building on Main Street and eventually expand his merchandise operation to include stores in three neighboring communities.

leave J.S. Armitage, Paddy McDermott and John Crerar to guide the town's development through its initial stages of pending bankruptcy and into the twentieth century.



By 1886, the M. & N.W. yards at Minnedosa would sport three major grain elevators.

THE RIEL REBELLION

"...to defend our homes ..."

While the area of the Little Saskatchewan River valley was certainly nowhere near any of the hostile actions that took place during the year 1885, the Riel Rebellion did have a severe impact on life in both the immediate rural area as well as within the Town of Minnedosa.

The town now had its railroad and boasted a population of over 500 people. Most of the 'tent town' that had existed just three years earlier, had been replaced with sawn wood structures, the economy was booming and more people were moving in all the time.

Minnedosa and rural areas had only experienced inconvenience with the local Indians, at least since settlement began in the late 1870's, with nothing of note having occurred other than some threatening gestures and petty thievery. Store owners such as Paddy McDermott had regarded the trade with the neighboring Indians so valuable that he took the time to learn two separate dialects to enable easier bartering between them. For the most part, the Indians had stuck close to their reserve located some twelve miles to the north but still, it was a common site to see teepees suddenly appear on the Odanah flats, and occasionally, they would camp in town, using the lot now occupied by the Town Hall.

That all changed with the attack at Duck Lake. Within a day, word had reached Minnedosa of the hostilities by the Metis and Indians against the white settlements in Saskatchewan. The first of several erroneous reports is published on April 3rd which states that, *"Riel has a force of 1900 men and six field guns"*. In the same issue of The Tribune, Tom Gibson's death notice is published. The worry grew into terror when a Winnipeg weekly newspaper published a report that Rolling River Reserve Indians were planning an attack against Minnedosa. The Indians quickly denied the allegation, but a number of their tribe took up a place along the top of the hills near Odanah where they sang, danced and beat their drums through several nights. Concern grew even more when one

night nine naked Indians were caught running down Main Street. It was quickly discovered that they had lost their clothes while gambling and the potentially explosive situation was quickly diffused.

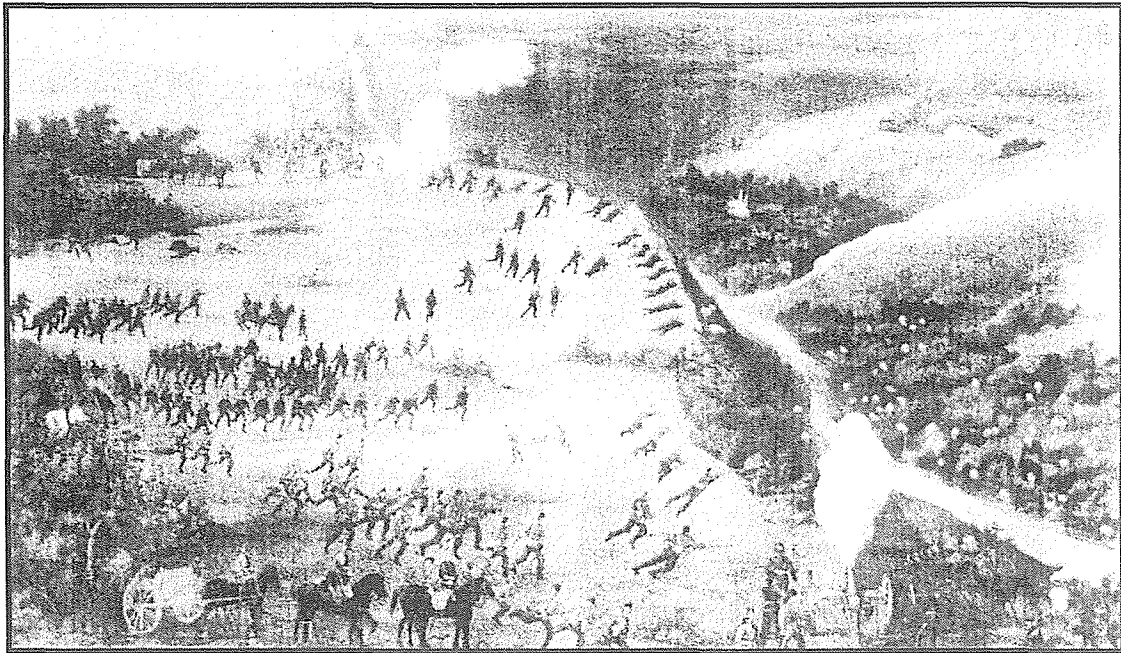
An emergency meeting was called by the Mayor and Council to discuss the deteriorating situation. A decision was made to alter all locks and change all doors on all public buildings so that they swung in an outward direction *"in case there was a rush for the doors"*. Another decision was made to post men at certain strategic points within the town to keep guard. A third decision was made to form a Home Guard to act as a military unit in case of attack. The town was lucky enough to have just the man available to form such a unit. His name was Ephrem Brisebois.

Ephrem Brisebois was the Federal Land Office registrar in Minnedosa at that time and was a retired Mountie inspector as well as being a veteran of the Civil War and having served with the army of Pope Pius IX. He coolly and methodically set about the task of organizing two companies of Home Guard volunteers. Quickly signing up for the Guard were such names as John Tanner, George, J.S. and Bert Armitage as well as E.J. Darroch, John McQuarrie, Dave Cannon, W.A. Ayearst and Robert Cowan.

Brisebois immediately telegraphed the federal government reporting his actions and requesting arms and ammunition be sent forthwith. One company was soon reported drilling at Armitage Hall while the other drilled at Barker Hall with twelve men on constant patrol of Minnedosa's streets after dark. The Home Guard was formed with the stated noble cause to, *"defend our homes, family and property against all enemies of Her Majesty Queen Victoria or her representatives in this Dominion"*.

In the Rural Municipality of Clanwilliam, the home of Sidney and Fred Baker was heavily fortified by area residents to act as a place of refuge for women and children in the event of attack.

Reports reach Minnedosa that the Rolling



Battle of Fish Creek - April 23rd, 1885

It was during the attack at Fish Creek, when the brunt of the fighting fell on the men of the Ninetieth, that the Indians referred to them as "The Little Black Devils."

"The red-coats we know," said prisoners, "but who are those little black devils?"

They were later referred to that in General Middleton's reports and later still, officially recognized as being named such by the enemy in battle.

River Indians have become greatly distressed at the town's move to defend itself and Chief Shawiniknap sends two of his headmen, Wappiness and Aaschenin, to town to assure citizens of the falsity of reports that local Indians are about to join the rebellion. This move goes a long way in diminishing the fear of attack by the townspeople.

Within a few days, Captain McIntosh takes 25 members of the Minnedosa Home Guard to Winnipeg to enlist and they join with Col. Smith's battalion and are immediately dispatched west. Many other area men join up with other units preparing to embark for the field. Several enlist with the Winnipeg Rifles

The April 10th Tribune states, "*The Riel Rebellion, requiring the services of one half of our staff for its suppression, we are unavoidably late this week*". A week earlier, a train full of volunteers passed through from Winnipeg and several

Minnedosa men, including James Crossley, join up and board the train. It is later reported that a Mr. Fox, correspondent for the Globe & Mail, accidentally shoots Lieutenant Morrow of the Grenadiers while explaining the intricacies of the operation of a revolver while on the train just west of Minnedosa.

The Tribune reports that Mr. W. Wright, who was with Mr. H.G. Henderson in his store for awhile, and who is now in Ontario, "has linked fortunes with a fair daughter of that Province. He writes that he will return to Minnedosa when the Indian scare is over and the safety of his scalp is assured".

During the rebellion, many of the young

Minnedosans served at Gleichen, Calgary, Edmonton, Fort Pitt and Swift Current. Those who have left Minnedosa for the rebellion are quickly replaced by more area volunteers, now under the guidance of Dr. Philip Beauchamp. The Tribune reports that several local Indians came to town in the night and held a war dance on Main Street. They took the opportunity to threaten some members of the Home Guard that if Riel won, all settlers in the area would be massacred.

Reports begin to reach Minnedosa about the heroic activities of the town boys serving with the "Little Black Devils", as the Winnipeg Rifles were now being described. On May 1st, The Tribune publishes its first Special Edition in its short two year history when it runs reports on the Battle of Fish Creek.

The "Little Black Devils" are led by Major Alfred McKeand. Each volunteer signing up received a uniform consisting of a regulation rifle-green tunic and trousers, a Snider Enfield rifle with bayonet and a Glengarry cap plus a light frieze great-coat with attached cape. Footwear was left to the individual who must also provide his own underwear and toilet necessities. Hearing this, townspeople work frantically to produce underwear and socks for their boys in the field. Three weeks after the Rebellion had ended, a box of those necessities sent from Minnedosa is returned marked "undelivered".

With troops arriving in Calgary and Edmonton and northward from Regina to the Battlefords and Prince Albert, the rebellion is quickly

put down. The Mayor, Council and over a hundred townspeople journey to Winnipeg to welcome home the Minnedosa boys from the front. At least two are left in Winnipeg to recuperate in the hospital from battlefield injuries. Minnedosa had suffered one casualty, that being young Thomas J. Gibson, a former clerk in the Dalton & Cockburn General Store.

The death of Tom Gibson

Thomas J. Gibson was just an ordinary young man who, in 1876, was found to be wandering westward in search of adventure. As far as can be determined, he happened upon Tanner's Crossing in late 1878 or early '79 simply because it was a stop on the Carlton Trail and he had been offered a job by Dalton & Cockburn, general merchants of Odanah. For the next six years he would perform his duties as clerk and bookkeeper at the store and in 1882, helped his employers make their move from Odanah to Minnedosa. In 1885, his continued quest for adventure further out on the frontier would lure him to his untimely death.

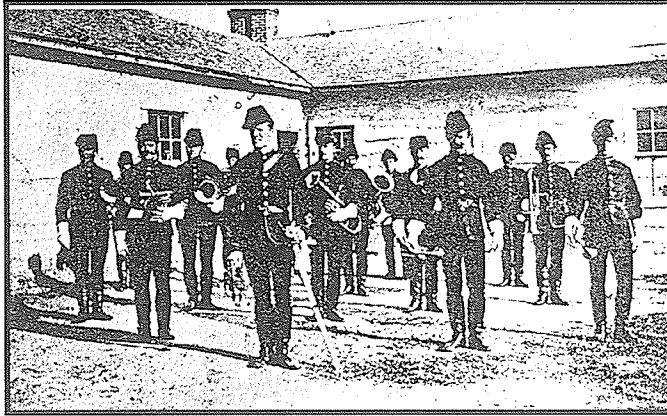
Thomas Gibson was born around 1859 at Caledon, Ontario. He was one of four sons and five daughters born to John and Mary Gibson who were farmers in the Credit Forks Valley in the Caledon area. His father, John, was an immigrant from County Armaugh, Ireland. It is entirely possible that his mother died giving birth to Thomas for all records of her cease around the time of his birth.

In 1877, at the adventurous age of 17, Thomas left Caledon and the security of his family to seek his fortune out west on the frontier. The extent of his early travels are unknown but it is believed he reached Tanner's Crossing in 1878, the year of his father's death. He remained at both Odanah and The Crossing working for Dalton and Cockburn until early 1884.

The Dalton and Cockburn General Store had been moved to Minnedosa with their premises being located on the lot now occupied by the stone house situated on the northwest corner of 3rd Avenue and 1st Street northwest. By 1888, the store had gone



The original Regimental Crest was later changed to include the battles of Batoche and Fish Creek.



"D" Troop Band at Battleford, 1884. Second from right in the second row is Cst. Thomas Gibson.

out of business and the building was later taken over and operated by the Minnedosa Brewery until 1891.

On March 11, 1884, we find Gibson intrigued with the prospects out west, travelling to Winnipeg to enlist in the North West Mounted Police. He lists his former occupations as farmer and clerk-bookkeeper. According to RCMP records in Ottawa, Gibson's regimental number was 1003. At the time of his enlistment, his age is recorded as 24 years old, 5 feet 7 3/4 inches tall and weighing 155 pounds with light brown hair, blue eyes and fair complexion.

At the outbreak of the rebellion, Gibson finds himself stationed at Battleford, the very heart of the coming unrest. All was not serious business, however, as one archival photograph shows Thomas Gibson proudly taking part in the "D" Troop Band as bugler. During one stay at Fort Pitt, his commander was none other than inspector Francis J. Dickens, son of the famous novelist.

At this point in time, most Metis, having been dissatisfied with the outcome of the Red River Rebellion of 1870, have relocated themselves in the areas around the Battlefords and Duck Lake in Saskatchewan. Most of the Saskatchewan Plains Indians were settled on reserves along the Saskatchewan River. Over one thousand Assiniboines had been recently relocated from below the "Medicine Line" (U.S. border) to Battleford, North West Territories. By this time the buffalo had been virtually wiped out and with little interest in farming, the natives' ability to feed and clothe themselves was in decline. Many became angry and tested the authority of the resident police force. Trouble was coming.

By 1885, the strength of the NWMP force

had been raised to 557. Gibson was one of those men unlucky enough to be sitting on top of the powder keg that was shortly to be set off by the return of Louis Riel to Batoche from the U.S..

The first casualty of this festering wound was Duck Lake which was ransacked and the white store owners driven out. In response, on March 26th, Superintendent Crozier led 57 North West Mounted Police officers and men along with some 43 Prince Albert volunteers out of Fort Carlton towards

Duck Lake. Driving the ammunition sleigh for "D" Troop was none other than Tom Gibson of Minnedosa.

Crozier unwittingly led his men right into an ambush. Laying in wait about a mile and a half from Duck Lake was Gabriel Dumont with a rebel force estimated between 200 and 350 men. The fighting was ferocious. Dumont, himself, was wounded early in the battle.

In Superintendent Crozier's report of the battle, he writes, *"I threw a line of skirmishers to the right of the road, under cover of a wood, to prevent the rebels surrounding us, which they were attempting to do. The remainder of my force, excepting the men in charge of the horses, formed under cover of the sleighs extended to the left at right angles to the road. A man advanced bearing a flag of truce. I ran forward to meet him. The enemy, notwithstanding the flag of truce, continued to get rapidly into position. The movement that threatened to be most serious to us was that of a large body moving towards our right flank. I yelled at the man to call those people back. To what I said, he paid not the slightest attention. It was evident that the sending out of the flag of truce was but a piece of treachery and to gain time, in order to outflank us on the right. Had they accomplished their purpose, we must have been annihilated."*

The battle raged on for about 30 minutes. Crozier adds, *"Both the police and volunteers who composed my little escort behaved superbly; their bravery and coolness under a murderous fire was simply astonishing. The enemy were in ambush behind splendid cover; we were exposed, yet not a man shirked or even faltered, until the order was*

given to retire, and then they moved off quietly”.

In the book published in 1984 entitled “Prairie Fire” by Beal & MacLeod, this account of the death of Private Gibson was given by Sgt. Alex Stewart.

“I got back to the troops position and jumped off my horse alongside of the ammunition sleigh and there was a young Canadian fellow named Gibson (20 or 21 years of age) who drove the ammunition sleigh. He was in the act of rising from his seat to get out when he received a ball through the heart. He threw up his hands, gave a sigh, and fell on his shoulder, striking my feet. His legs caught on the side of the box. I lifted him clear of the sleigh and laid him down alongside. Unbuttoning his coat, I saw he was shot through the heart. I picked up his rifle, I having only a revolver with me, and took his cartridges from him and commenced firing over the set of the sleigh.

Joe McKay came to me and asked me to hold his horse while he would have a shot. I got up and took the lines and just then I received a ball

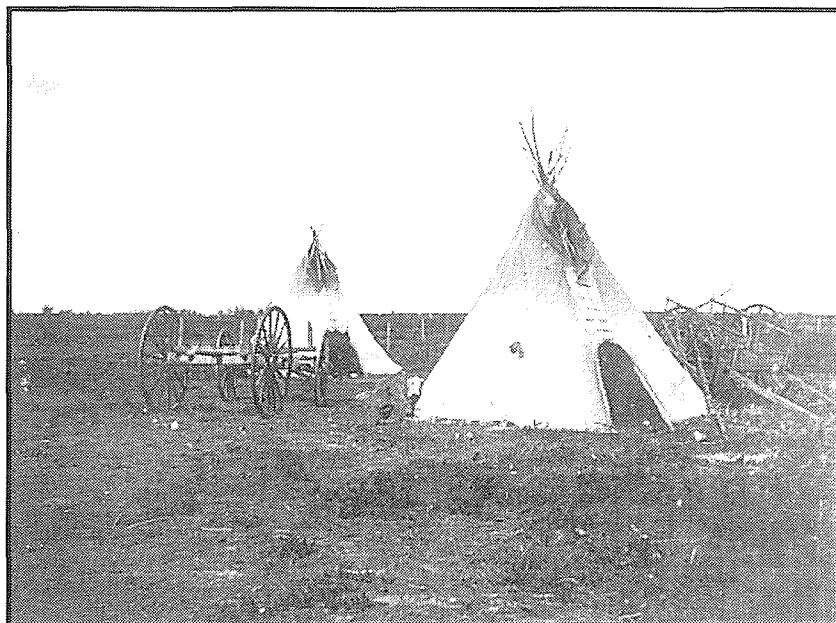
sideways, striking me a little below the neck, on the top of the chest. It knocked me down, keel upwards”.

One other policeman, Const. G.P. Arnold, was shot through the lungs and neck and also died in the battle. Later, another would die from his wounds. Many men were wounded as well as nine volunteers also being killed. Five rebels including Dumont’s brother were killed. No account of the rebels wounded was ever determined.

The bodies of the three North West Mounted Policemen killed during the battle, including that of Gibson’s, were loaded on wagons and transported off the battlefield by the retreating troops. Later that day the three were buried in a common grave just outside the gates of Fort Carlton.

In a report filed by William Parker of the NWMP in 1887, it was stated, *“In the early spring of 1887, I was instructed to proceed to Fort Carlton with three constables to dig up the bodies of the*

three constables who were killed in the Duck Lake fight two years earlier. They were Constables G.P. Arnold, J.M. Garrett and T. Gibson. We found them buried in one deep grave, one on top of the other. The first two were fairly easy to get out, but the third, a very heavy man, was eight feet down and gave us a lot of trouble. We found the bodies in a wonderful state of preservation, especially the last heavy one. On our return, they were buried in the cemetery of St. Mary’s Anglican Church, Prince Albert”.



Minnedosa Archives

Indian Camp on the Odanah

It is there where Constable Gibson’s body rests to this day in plot 179.

For his bravery and sacrifice, Constable Gibson was awarded the North West Canada Medal and Clasp. The medal went unclaimed for many years until a distant relative applied for it.

In his honour, his name is inscribed on the Memorial Tablet at the Regina RCMP barracks. As well, in 1935, the surviving members of the North West Field Force erected a monument in Queen’s Park in Toronto upon which Gibson’s name is inscribed on the Honour Roll.

The Riel Rebellion of 1885 was over, but it would have far reaching effects on the future development of western Canada, and this 24 year old clerk-bookkeeper from Minnedosa had unwittingly become its earliest uniformed casualty.

End of an Era

By 1883 when the Town had been incorporated and the railroad had come through, Minnedosa began to take on the markings of a permanent town with a future. A school had been built, at least four churches had been established, four hotels graced Main Street with two others just off Main Street and a number of other supply businesses had sprung up. Over 1,000 settlers had claimed homesteads in the immediate area, three men's lodges had been established and a building boom was taking place and Minnedosa had its own representative in both the Legislature and the House of Commons.

The town, however, was still on the edge of the wild west as itinerants and immigrants were constantly passing through on their way west and local men were prone to carry firearms on the streets for protection in case of acts of violence. A town policeman had been hired to try to control the illegal activities within the community but still, the psyche associated with living on the edge of the frontier remained evident along Main Street. It wouldn't be long before a Women's Christian Temperance Union would be established to put some controls on the free trade of liquor within the area. Minnedosa was slowly becoming urbanized, but not unlike similar new towns along the line, there were growing pains associated with that process.

The upper class Main Street businessmen began to close ranks and through their influence as elected councillors and legislators, peace and prosperity slowly began to descend along the Little Saskatchewan River valley.

John Tanner would have nothing of it. His longtime friend George Sandison had seen urbanization coming and had left for the northwest in 1883. John Norquay would remain for another year and in 1884 he too, with his family, would liquidate their holdings in the valley and move on. Tanner's sister Maggie and her husband James Sinclair were also uneasy about the encroaching civilization and so, in 1885, John Tanner, the Sinclairs and John's wife Catherine and his mother once again took up the Carlton Trail and moved on. The continuance of Tanner's Crossing was no

longer a viable operation. Armitage had built his own bridge further down the river and the town was now building a third bridge which would span the Little Saskatchewan River on Main Street. Six hotels were now operating at the Crossing which made Tanner's stopping house redundant. So too, he had lost the Post Office which again was under Armitage's control.

There was little commerce left for Tanner to engage in at this place any longer. His life was heading downhill. There is a report by Mrs. Gertrude Fairburn that late one evening, Mrs. Tanner arrived at her home requesting refuge as John was entertaining a drunken brawl at his house and had struck her. It is obvious that Tanner was beginning to feel despondent himself and bitterness was the result. Tanner had seen the valley change from being his solitary home in 1869 to hosting a bustling and growing town just sixteen years later.

On October 4th, 1882, Tanner was reported in the Minnedosa Star as having been thrown from his buggy and suffered a broken shoulder.

By 1884, Tanner was close to broke. On three occasions in that year he was taken to court in property suits, two of them in regard to a "school trustees garnishee", and lost all three actions. On October 11, 1884, he was forced to sell his remaining lots at the crossing to J.H. Adams for \$1,000. In early 1885 he was again involved in a property suit and once again came out on the losing end.

If things could get worse for Tanner, they did. A report in The Tribune indicates that the road past Tanner's was impassible and the Town decided to make arrangements with Mr. Tanner for allowing the public to cross Block 49 until they could improve the street. Several persons accused him of charging a toll. Later, Tanner laid a charge against a white man for selling Indians liquor but J.S. Armitage and A.E. Fisher who were magistrates threw out the case.

Another report has Tanner hitching a pony to his buckboard and starting out to visit relatives at Gambler Reserve. Enroute, the pony balked, refused to move, and an angry John looped a chain around its neck and hitched it to a passing ox team. The

pony choked to death and Tanner was hauled into court, charged with cruelty to animals and fined \$5 and costs.

By the summer of 1885, Tanner's life had apparently reached its lowest point. He was broken physically and bleeding emotionally. It had become obvious that there was no place left at Tanner's Crossing for John Tanner.

Having sold the few remaining lots at his crossing, he packed up his belongings and negotiated his cart and horses under the railroad trestle that now spanned the familiar hills.

He felt forced to turn his back on the legacy of his grandfather, "The Falcon"; his father, "James the Preacher"; and himself, "frontiersman, Indian fighter and co-founder of The Town of Minnedosa", and simply disappear through the old and familiar Odanah Pass.

All that marked his passing from this valley was a few scant cold notations some weeks later in The Minnedosa Tribune.

John Tanner had singularly seen the strategic importance and natural beauty of this location. He had made the most of his holdings, selling the townsite for just over \$4,000 which was a large sum in those days. He had attempted to reinvest

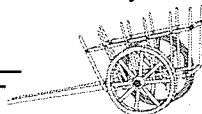
those funds and prosper along with the growing community, but had been pushed aside and become isolated within the town that he had founded. Even in his passing, the use of his name, "John Tanner", would be quickly followed up with the descriptive and cryptic notation, "the one-armed half-breed from the crossing".

With the descriptions left us by many pioneers regarding his acts of kindness in offering them shelter and food as they passed through his crossing; and the many constructive abilities he possessed while suffering from the physical disability of the loss of his right arm, John Tanner must have been a good and capable man who did his duty for his country when called upon, tried his best to assimilate into modern society, but was simply unable to rise out of the English class system transplanted here from Ontario that would always view him as nothing more than a half-breed.

John Tanner never returned to Minnedosa. In 1923, in preparation for a pioneer reunion, it is reported that attempts were made to contact him and an invitation extended, but even though he was living less than two days ride from his former crossing, he refused to return.



*A carpentry shop moves northward up Main Street past
The Minnedosa Pharmacy and the Armitage Block*



BIG JOHN CAMERON

*The
man
who
couldn't
fit in*



Minnedosa Archives

"Big John" Cameron was a no-nonsense man who could jump to the side of violence more often than it seemed necessary. He was involved in a farming operation that bordered the Rolling River Indian Reserve north of Minnedosa in the late 1870's when a dispute arose between himself and some band members over an Indian burial ground. The dispute resulted in a knife fight with the chief's son surviving, but coming out on the losing end. While the incident was horrifying to many, to others it seemed that "Big John" might be just what the town needed to quell the unruliness that dominated the streets of Minnedosa at night.

So, in August of 1884, "Big John" Cameron, son of Duncan Cameron, succeeded Hugh Lewis as police chief of Minnedosa because it was said, "he would be a terror to wrong-doers". A by-law was introduced by Town Council to strictly define his duties as there was some concern about his demeanor.

Included in By-law No. 31 which was passed and dated September 14, 1884, were such provisions as:

"It shall further be the duty of the said Chief of Police to act so long as the council of the said town shall see fit as caretaker of the Council Chamber and Lock-Up, To keep all things therein orderly and clean, and light, heat and properly prepare the council chamber for any meeting whatsoever which may be held therein.

It shall further be the duty of the Chief of

Police to act as Meeting Clerk for the said town until such time as the council may see fit to relieve him of such duty.

It shall also be incumbent on the Chief of Police to at all times cheerfully obey the lawful commands of the Mayor or other head of the Council."

In addition, John Cameron was also placed in charge of the Fire Department, and for these services, would be paid \$600 per year.

In August of 1885, his appointment to the office was extended for an additional one year term, a term which he would not complete.

Big John quickly took up the reins of the position and brought rough justice to the hitherto often lawless Minnedosa, spurring a local but anonymous poet to pen the following lines about him.

"There is an active man,
So mind you don't forget it.
You are a fool if you play pool for drinks
and let him know it.
If you should to the Central go,
He will be sure to see you.
He'll soon get there, take your cigar,
and before the Mayor bring you.
If by the train you wish to go,
Upon the morrow morning,
Don't get too hot! The cooler's near,
So boys you should take warning.
He's studied the by-laws through and through,
He has them in his pocket.
Pray do look out or he'll catch you,
And place you on the docket.
You know he's paid and does intend
to do the best he can;
He'll shoot the dogs, but won't pound hogs, Although
he will a man.
For the town shall smoothly go,
And brawls and troubles cease;
Now boys beware, there is a snare
'The Minnedosa Police'."

Hallowe'en was very quiet that year, "the boys having a wholesome dread for the redoubtable Chief Cameron", stated The Tribune.

Under Big John's hand, arrests were frequent and the general lawlessness abated as whites, Metis and Indians all felt John's heavy hand.

The Tribune reported that many a roving dog vanished in a blaze of gunfire and John's reputation grows as he challenges "*all Manitobans to shot put, hammer throw and the 100 yard dash*". An 1885 Tribune report states, "*The boys held forth in a charivari last Friday night to celebrate a reunion, but the appearance of John Cameron on the scene put a sudden stop to the horrid din, and you ought to have seen the boys finding their hiding places*".

All seems to be fine as the general quietus desired by council has been accomplished. That is until one night in April of 1886 when Big John was seen to be suffering from a severe hangover and gets involved in an altercation with councillor Fairbairn. John punches him, and then realizing what he has done, immediately offers his resignation as police chief.



At left, Councillor Sid Fairbairn

Town Council convenes an emergency meeting to discuss the situation and votes unanimously to reject Cameron's resignation. Having done that, they promptly fire him. A dozen special constables, most of them former

Riel Rebellion Home Guards, are sworn in to arrest and charge Big John with assault. The next day, in a rage, Big John cleans out the courtroom and promptly leaves town. A day later, Big John returns to face the music and is levied a fine of \$10 for assault and \$10 for using profane language and assessed a further \$5 to pay for damages to the courtroom. The fines and costs are taken out of the wages still owing him.

A week later two men are arrested for breaking town hall windows and Big John, now working as a jail guard, releases them, and while the special constables conduct a search for the escapees, Big John gets into a scuffle with Justice of the Peace T.D. Harrison and tears his clothes. Council immediately convenes a second meeting and decide to bring in the provincial police. Constable Foster arrives shortly after from Brandon to arrest Big John, who upon advice from friends, submits quietly and is again charged with assault and then released on bail. Foster, in the meantime, has trailed one escapee to Neepawa and arrests him; the other,

with colleague McGowan's help, hides in a local lumber camp and is later captured.

Within a month, Big John gains his favour back with the townspeople when he stops two rough strangers from beating up Robert McRae at the railway station over an argument about the price of fish. Shortly after, he is re-appointed volunteer Fire Chief.

By August of 1886, the town has reverted back to its old lawlessness and Tribune editor David Cannon admits "*carrying firearms is becoming the habit of the youth of Minnedosa*", as revolvers and knives are kept in many pockets. By next April "*all year seems like Hallowe'en*", and by July "*the town's youth are drunk most nights*". Residents are disgusted with the situation.

With the town bankrupt, no law exists in Minnedosa and rowdiness is directed at two new religious groups trying hard to combat it, the Salvation Army and the Plymouth Brethren. Eight Mounties at the western terminal of the M & NW Railway start dropping in, as does Cst. Foster and other provincial police. Due to the rowdiness, hotel liquor licences, now provincially controlled, are revoked right and left and only re-issued when owners demonstrate responsible behavior.

John's reputation as an effective law enforcement officer is still intact in 1888 and the town still hires his services for special events. In May 1889, Big John is hired to police Indians who have been causing trouble off reserves in Minnedosa and area. The death of one Indian arrested by Big John due to his reported "*shame of returning with long hair shorn in Brandon Jail*" brings resentment within the area once again.

Big John just simply wasn't able to fit in and realizing that he faced dim prospects in his home area, moved further west, first to the gold fields in the Yukon and then to Edmonton. In 1898, the Cameron saga ended when former Minnedosan E.J. Darroch quickly quashed a Tribune report regarding the death of John Cameron. He states, "*The rumor that John Cameron was killed in a dispute over a mining claim; he has no mining claim and never had a dispute over one; he is still alive and the same John Cameron and will not die as long as he sees any other person living*". John eventually did die and is buried near Lake Wabamun, west of Edmonton.

TOWN BUILDERS' EPILOGUE

John Tanner:

In 1885, Tanner along with wife Catherine and mother "Poopie" left Minnedosa to settle at Kirkaldy near present day Prince Albert. Tanner is reported to be running a Post Office there. In 1896, The Tribune mentions that many Minnedosans believe that John Tanner is dead. He, in fact, is not. In 1902, he moves to Kinosota, a Metis settlement on the west shore of Lake Manitoba. It is at this point that he makes application to the U.S. Government for a pension, first stating that he is eligible due to the loss of his right arm during his service during the Civil War. This claim is rejected, and later he applies, this time citing his hernia and is granted a pension of \$100 per month.

May of 1888 finds people complaining loudly of the little bridge between the railway and Tanner's because of a horse having fallen through. In October of 1889, someone dumps the structure used to store coffins into the river near Tanner House. By June, sheep utilize the old Tanner Buildings for shelter and on one day rush out, spooking Dr. Sherrin's horses to cause an accident. By October, one irate resident advocates, "If some person, the owner preferred, would only touch a match to the unsightly pile of logs formerly known as the Tanner House, he would be doing the public a favor".

In April of 1891, Tribune publisher Cannon writes, "The old Tanner house, the first building erected in Minnedosa, has been pulled down by John Menzies who removed it to his farm at Bridge Creek". By the fall of 1894, Canada thistles and French weed are reported to be taking over the old Tanner ruins, and next July one of the last references to Tanner's former stopping house and crossing is written when eleven elk are spotted on the "Tanner Trail".

In September of 1896, his name is mentioned once again when jeweller B.A. St. John is reported to be building a home on the corner of the "Tanner property" on Catherine Street near the railway crossing. In 1901, CPR officials made a special survey of their right-of-way through Minnedosa and it was discovered that Tanner still legally owned a small portion of his former homestead. Later in life while at Kinosota on the shore of Lake Manitoba, he is reported as owning a small home and practising the trade of clock repair.

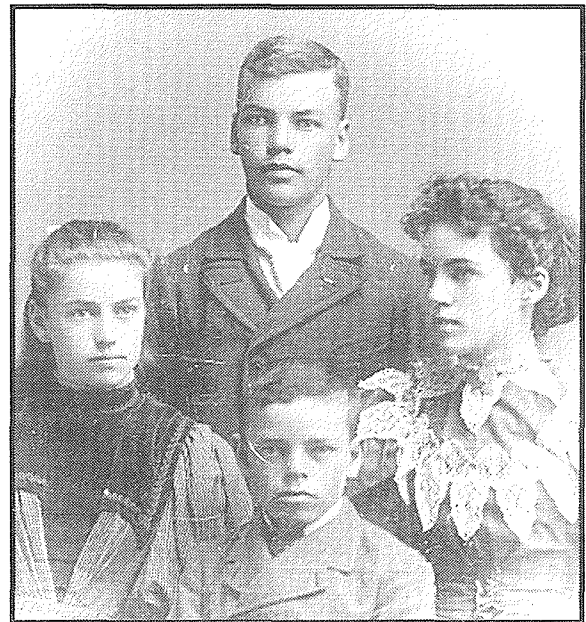
John Tanner died In 1932 at Kinosota and was buried in an unmarked grave in St. Bede's Anglican Church cemetery beside his sister Maggie and wife Catherine.

Today, the Minnedosa elementary school bears the name of Tanner as well as a park on Main Street and an Historic Site and stone cairn on the old "Tanner Trail" (Beach Road) mark the spot of Tanner's Stopping House and Crossing as well as the North West Mounted Police Post.



Joseph Samuel Armitage:

After selling his mills in 1882, Armitage joined in on the building boom and constructed most



*Harvey, Dosa, Mamie (Mary Adelia)
and Bert Armitage*

of the buildings on the east side of Main Street north of the tracks. He also owned the Post Office as well as later building Armitage Block which housed a pharmacist on the bottom floor and apartments on the top. He spent the next twenty years developing his townsite, selling lots and sitting on Town Council as well as being active in a number of organizations including his church. In 1895, he is listed as a grain buyer for the Ogilvie chain. In 1913, J.S. and Mary sold out their remaining holdings in and around Minnedosa and passed on the Postmastership to W.A. Wright of Bethany. It was estimated at the time that they had amassed a reported \$250,000 from their liquidation and retired to Edmonton, Alberta. J.S. died in 1922 and is buried in Mt. Pleasant Cemetery in Edmonton. Daughter Minnedosa (Armitage) Rook, the first recorded pioneer birth at Minnedosa, died at Calgary in 1961 and is buried at Union Cemetery. Mary Minetta Armitage died at Vancouver, British Columbia on October 26, 1933.

P.J. (Paddy) McDermott:



When he arrived at the crossing from Winnipeg in 1879, P.J. (Paddy) McDermott was a young fresh Irish immigrant from Meed's County with commerce on his mind. He purchased a cart in Fort Garry, filled it with goods of all sorts and left for Tanner's Crossing. Upon his arrival, as H.G. Henderson was already operating a store at the crossing, McDermott moved a little further west to establish his operation near the Land Registry office in Odanah. A member of the Odanah Land Syndicate, McDermott wasted no time in relocating

to Minnedosa once the C.P.R. announced it would abandon the northwest line in favour of Grand Valley to the south. McDermott then partnered with Henderson until 1883 and then built his own store on the site of Lee's Cafe on Main Street and then built a two storey brick building a block further south on Main Street. He also built and operated satellite stores in Franklin and Clanwilliam. He was instrumental in forming the Minnedosa Power Company which would build the dam and man-made Minnedosa Lake and power station. He was known as a kindly man who could speak Cree and Saulteaux and traded with the Indians. He served terms as both Councillor and Mayor and was President of The Globe Loan & Savings in 1894. He remained a fixture on Minnedosa's Main Street until his death on September 28, 1938. When he died, he was reported to have accumulated assets nearing \$300,000.

Dr. Richard H. Kenning:

Kenning arrived at Tanner's Crossing in 1877 and he and his wife Grace had a son who was the first son of a pioneer born in Minnedosa and was christened Mindo, full name Minnedosa. An earlier book on Minnedosa history indicated that the doctor rode many miles on horseback to visit his patients. He was a devout Presbyterian and a Mason and owned property in Minnedosa as well as having an interest in a quarter-section two miles east of Minnedosa. He was also employed locally as the poundkeeper for awhile and served as a Town Councillor. In November of 1885 he had divested himself of his Minnedosa holdings and moved back to Winnipeg.

T.D. Harrison:

In 1884, Harrison was listed in The Tribune as being the Justice of the Peace for Minnedosa and would, in that same year, purchase and operate a book store from former owners Charles Russell and W. Farr.

James Jermyn:

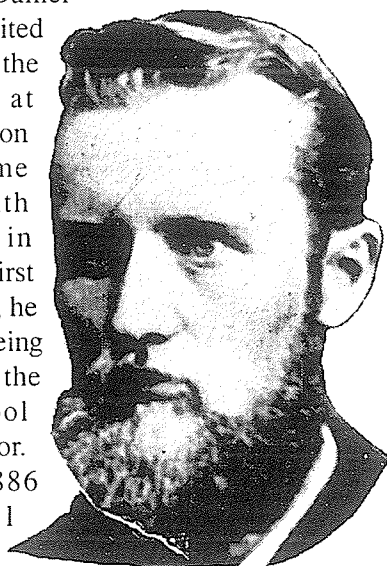
Jermyn arrived at Tanner's Crossing in 1877 and his homestead included the southwest corner of present day Minnedosa. He and partner J.D. Gillies opened and operated Minnedosa's first

store as well as farming his homestead land until subdividing it into town lots. He also served as Mayor of the Town of Minnedosa. In March of 1885 he purchased the former Armitage Mills and in 1887 asked Odanah Municipality for a \$5,000 grant to install rollers and despite strong opposition, received the grant. He also built the Bruinswick Hotel on the lot now occupied by the Court House which was part of his homestead. Later he operated the hotel in partnership with Thompson. In November of 1889 he sold the mill to the Pearsons of Glendale and moved to Barrie, Ontario and then Toronto because his wife, according to the Toronto Star, "was unable to endure the western winter weather". James Jermyn died on August 23, 1917 at the age of 69.

J.D. Gillies:

John Daniel

Gillies is credited with opening the first store at Odanah, but soon would become partners with Jermyn in Minnedosa's first store. In 1883, he was listed as being Chairman on the local school board and Mayor. In the 1886 provincial election,



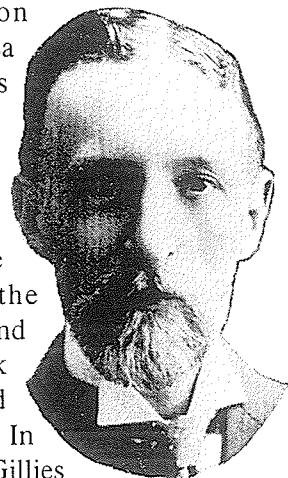
James Gillies defeated John Crerar to win the riding of Minnedosa East. He served in the Legislature until 1888 when he retired due to ill health.

John McLellan:

Profited very greatly with his sale of town lots in the northwest corner and on his own land, built and operated the Grand Central Hotel, which he later sold to Alex Grant.

E.O. Dennison:

After opening a business in Odanah, Dennison relocated to Minnedosa in 1880 and built his home at 218-2nd St. N.E. which still stands today. He went into partnership with E.J. Darroch for a while before managing the Commercial Bank and then a private bank which was later acquired by the Union Bank. In 1883, he served with Gillies on the school board. In 1885,



he was a member of the Northwest District Lacrosse championship team. He and wife Mary (Latimere of Marshville, Ont.) were early officers in the Anglican Church. Mrs. Dennison was also very much involved in the local musical organizations. E.O. Dennison died at Minnedosa in 1915.

A.H. Scouten:

"Ace" Scouten was raised in Ontario and attended Kingston Military College, rooming for awhile with the famous inventor Thomas Edison. In 1871 he participated in an action to repulse a Finian raid from the U.S. and later joined the second Wolseley expedition on its march to the Red River Valley. He participated in the 275 man NWMP force that made the 900 mile trek from Emerson to the Rockies in 1874 and was one of the group which rode back that same summer.

In 1875, the NWMP set up a post at Tanner's Crossing and he served there with his brother Sydney until being transferred to Shoal Lake. In 1877, he left the police force. He operated the Queen's Hotel in Minnedosa until 1884, joining General Middleton at Batoche as a lieutenant in 1885. Following the Riel Rebellion, he operated the Post Office and hotel at Shoal Lake and the homesteaded in what is now part of Riding Mountain National Park, finally settling at Riding Mountain where he served as postmaster there from 1892 until 1911. During this time he took some time out to serve in Africa during the Boer War.

Returning to Riding Mountain he operated a sawmill and then built and operated the C.N.R. Hotel. In 1910, fire destroyed all of his farm buildings and he lost most of the photographs he had taken throughout his life. He died in 1937 and is buried on the eastern slopes of the Riding Mountains.

H.G. Henderson:

A very early store owner at Tanner's Crossing. His store was a rudimentary affair built of logs with a roof of poles, straw and sod with one small window and one door and dug partially into the hills below present day Minnedosa Cemetery. He stuck with Tanner's Crossing, choosing not to move to Odanah when it was popular and in 1883, with Paddy McDermott moving back to Minnedosa, found himself in partnership with the Irishman. Paddy eventually bought out Henderson and in 1886 he moved to Solsgirth and later operated stores in Langenburg, Sterling and Holland and died in January of 1892 of the "grippe".

The Armitage Mill:

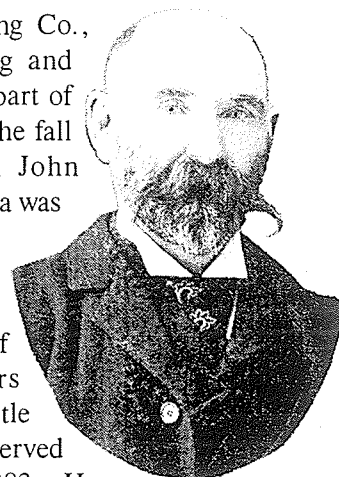
In 1882, J.S. Armitage sold the mill to Ontario barrister John Douglas. A leaky granary which spoiled much grain plus a heavy loan to finance a timber purchase upriver bankrupted the major. John Lamont and McDonald leased the mill in 1884, planning to employ Douglas and ordered new millstones and rollers and began operation. Meanwhile, Odanah miller James Jermyn got J.S. to relinquish his rights and bought the property at a tax sale with possession in March of 1885.

Jermyn bought wheat, ground it and sold the flour, bran, shorts, and charged farmers for grinding their wheat with payment in grist.

By 1886, John McDougall was miller and in 1887, Jermyn received a grant of \$5,000 from the R.M. of Odanah for more equipment. In 1898, a syndicate acquired the mill and rented it to Atkinson & Son who ran it until 1904, selling it to Mr. McIntyre of Virden. In March of 1909, the mill burned to the ground and the McIntyres moved to Edmonton.

John Crerar:

In 1883, he opened Crerar's Brick Manufacturing Co., as well as farming and selling lots on his part of the new town. In the fall of 1881, Liberal John Crerar of Minnedosa was elected to the provincial legislature. A one-time law partner of Robert Myers (builder of the Castle in Minnedosa), he served until January of 1883. He



was a homesteader and had owned a quarter section of land which eventually became part of the southwest corner of Minnedosa, south of the present day Trailer Court. To attend his first session in the Legislature, he travelled to Grand Valley (Brandon) where he and two other MPP's (MLA's) rode a raft down the Assiniboine to Winnipeg. He later left Minnedosa and relocated to Melita.

William Gibbens:

First publisher and founder of The Minnedosa Tribune, Gibbens sold his Tribune interests to employee David Cannon and then returned to the Ottawa Citizen, and in 1888 bought the Cornwall Standard which he published until his death at aged 78 in 1932.

Odanah:

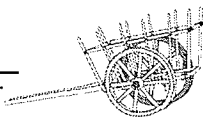
In 1884, R.A. Cowan and others formed a Loyal Orange Lodge branch in Odanah, and in 1887, there was an effort to revive the community and the flats were renamed "Coral Heights", but it was not to be as those remaining few commercial enterprises slowly closed up or moved to Minnedosa. The area is now listed as a "Manitoba Ghost Town".



The story of Minnedosa includes many more chapters than those contained within these pages. This book is merely an attempt to put the major figures together to show the interaction between them that resulted in the eventual location of the town and its assured survival with the coming of the railroad. After that fact, the community itself came together and most of the building took place. It probably would not have made any difference had Odanah been successful rather than Armitage's Minnedosa. However, were it not for the fact that Armitage had built the mills that sustained Minnedosa's economy during the crucial years between the abandonment of this area by the C.P.R. and the subsequent decision three years later by the M & N W to locate here, in all probability neither Minnedosa nor Odanah would have survived at all.

Over the ensuing years since 1885, the town has continually grown and prospered, and in fact seemed almost to pass-by the great depression years without so much as a notice as compared to other adjacent areas. It did, however, suffer greatly with the elimination of the railroad steam engine and resulting loss of over 200 jobs in the late 1950's. It was at that time that economic development came to the fore and through the combined efforts of many people from the business community, two major industries were acquired that are still alive today, providing employment opportunities for the area.

When it comes to major developments that involved maximum risk, the most important in the 115 years of Minnedosa's history was the construction of the dam, spillway and lake. In the beginning, it was purely a business venture which ultimately failed, but the residual lake and dam left from that venture affects the status of this community to this day. Were it not for the lake situated above the town, Minnedosa would not hold the lure and appeal that it has enjoyed since 1912.



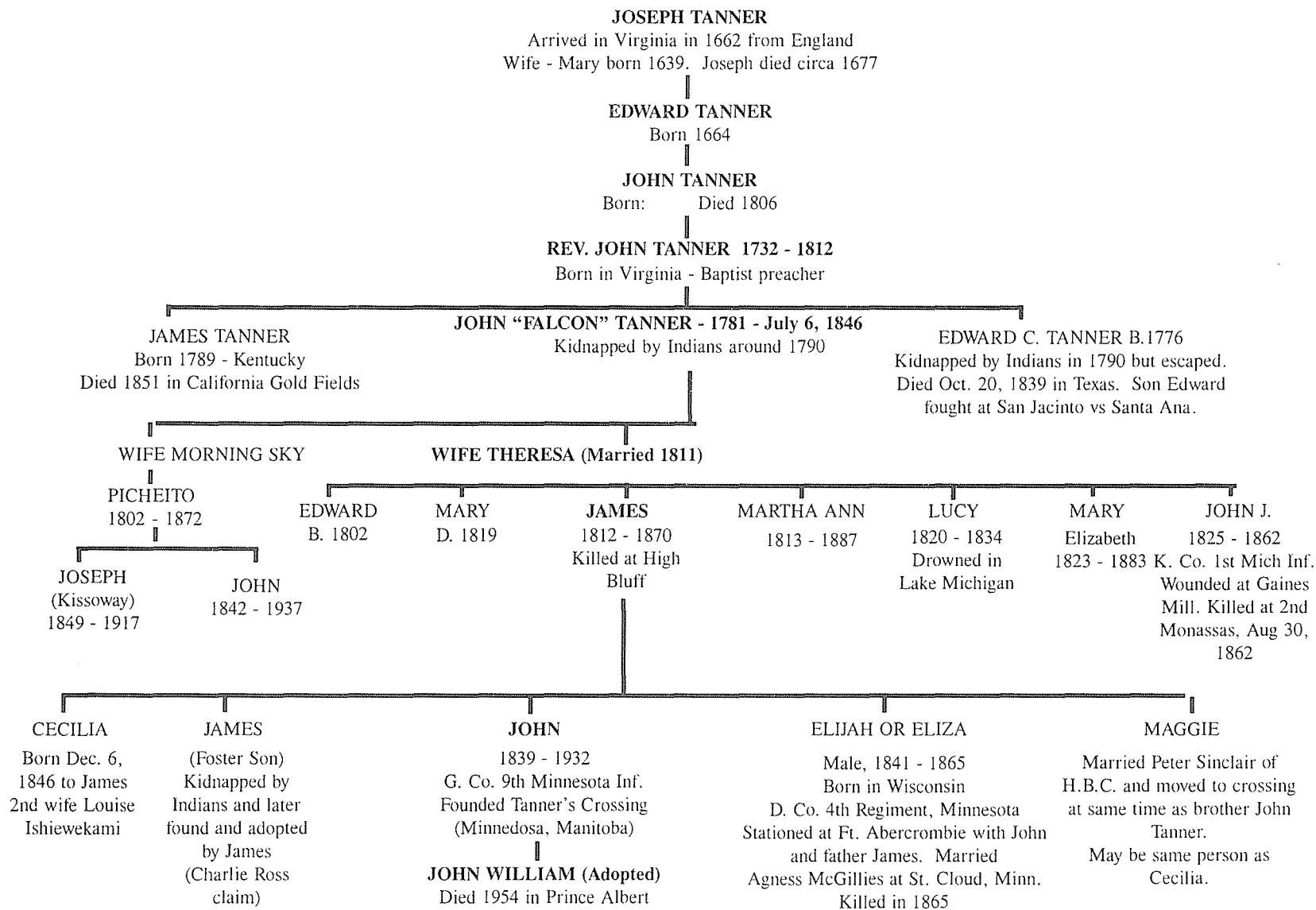
MINNEDOSA TIMELINE

1869 - 1873	Tanner, Sinclair, Norquay & Sandison arrive at the Crossing
1874	Alex Cameron homesteads north of Odanah Pass
1875	North West Mounted Police establish Tanner's Crossing Post
1877 - June 22	J.S. Armitage enters homestead on 21-16-20
1877 - Sept	Angus Grant arrives at Cameron area
1878 - May	Rev. Alex Smith arrives at Cadurcis - Preaches from Tremont lot at Tanner's Crossing
1878 - June 11	Mary Minnetta Armitage enters homestead on 3-17-19
1878	Dr. Kenning arrives and enters homestead on south side of Minnedosa
1878	George Soulsby arrives - Tanner rows him across Little Saskatchewan River in a buffalo skin boat.
1878	John Norquay home used as Methodist Church
1878	Gillies reported operating a store south of Tanner's Crossing
1879 - March 1	Harrison, Jermyn, Soulsby & Gillies meet and choose name of "Prairie City"
1879 - April 9	Henry Rose arrives at Tanner's Crossing
1879 - Spring	Maggie (Young) Moore arrives at crossing - lived in lean-to beside Tanner's house.
1879 - May 1	Land rush is on. Dominion Government. decides the rail line to pass through Little Saskatchewan District - Odanah or Rapid City
1879 - Summer	Third route through Tanners rumoured bringing on Odanah-Tanners Crossing rivalry
1879 - Aug.	H.G. Henderson builds store at Tanner's Crossing
1879 - Sept	New toll-free bridge built at Tanner's Crossing
1879 - fall	P.J. McDermott arrives with wagon full of goods and starts a store at Tanner's Crossing.
1879 - fall	Football team Tanner, Jermyn, Gillis, McDermott, Armitage, McDonald, Griffith
1879 - Sept. 5	CP surveyors arrive - Bridge under construction at Odanah
1879 - Sept.	Armitage from Tanner & Tanner to Kenning
1879 - fall	Jeffrey holds picnic at Odanah
1879 - Nov.	Armitage returns to Tanner's Crossing with family
1879 - Nov. 18	Town lots surveyed - Tanner, Armitage, Kenning - proprietors of town. CP has two routes - Little Saskatchewan (Odanah/Minnedosa and Rapid City) Tanner building new post office building
1879 - Dec. 11	Town name changed from Hallsford to Minnedosa
1880 - Jan	Government announces CPR will go through N.W. route meaning Little Saskatchewan by order-in-council but not precise as to Odanah or Minnedosa
1880 - Jan	Armitage mill machinery arrives
1880 - Mar.	McArees arrive to see tent city - Armitage cutting lumber
1880 - Mar.	Armitage purchases 240 acres & entire townsite from Tanner & Kenning for \$500 Tanner retains 12 lots with river frontage.
1880 - May 4	Tanner sells additional land to Armitage & McCulloch
1880 - June 1	Armitage Saw Mill starts production
1880 - June 3	Armitage advertises Minnedosa lots for sale in Wpg papers
1880 - July 15	Manitoba Daily Free Press announces ODANAH chosen as rail site.
1880 - July	Odanah syndicate formed
1880 - July 28	Odanah Mill opens - CP Hotel moves from Minnedosa - McDermott moves general store from Minnedosa to Odanah - Odanah Bridge under construction.

- 1880 - July 29 Minnedosa booming as well - Saskatchewan Hotel-Town Hall-Stores-Wake building store-McLellan supports Minnedosa and begins to survey west side of North Main St.
- 1880 - Aug. 11 Odanah - Speculation continues as land prices soar - Bridge nearly ready - McDermott opens business in Odanah - McFadden Mill built near new Odanah Bridge.
Leslie Boot & Shoes move from Minnedosa to Odanah
Business lots selling fast in both communities but Odanah has the definite edge.
CP surveyors sighted 4 mi. east of Rapid City causing a stir there.
- 1880 - Aug. 16 McLaren new store opens in Minnedosa - Sims House built - Tanner building tenement -
McLellan property is surveyed.
- 1880 - Aug. 20 Both communities waiting for final CP decision
- 1880 - Sept Harriet (Wake) Proven arrives - One general store on south side - 2 gen & 1 grocery store on north - 28 bldgs in all in Minnedosa.
- 1880 - Sept 18 Town Hall nearly complete, being built by Smith & Smyth where Co-op now stands.
- 1880 - Oct. 20 County elections announced - Lt. Governor visits area.
- 1880 - Nov Armitage Grist Mill starts production
- 1881 - Feb. Railway race ends. CPR abandons NW line altogether - Grand Valley route announced.
Little Saskatchewan district dreams evaporate for both communities.
- 1881 Paddy McDermott moves store back to Minnedosa and goes into partnership with H.G. Henderson before taking over sole operation and constructing new building.
- 1881 - March 21 Province extended to include Minnedosa
- 1881 Provincial District of Minnedosa established with John Crerar first MLA
- 1882 Manitoba & North Western Railway is looking for western route.
Minnedosa Star publishes under A.M. Amour
- 1882 - Feb Whellams writes to John A. Macdonald re: Rapid City left off government maps
- 1882 - Spring Minnedosa is announced as favoured for M & NW line.
- 1882 - July Telegraph reaches Minnedosa
- 1882 - Fall Armitage's 2nd St. Bridge completed.
- 1882 First church built on hill south-west of town.
- 1882 - Nov Armitage sells mills to Major Douglas of Rapid City
- 1883 - March Tribune starts publishing by Gibbens
- 1883 - March Town incorporated - Crerar Mayor, Councillors are Griffith, Hunter, B. M. Armitage, E. Sims, A. Cowan & Paddy McDermott.
- 1883 - Apr. Armitage, Kenning & Judge Ryan meet at Portage with M & NW railway officials and iron out payment for railroad to locate to Minnedosa.
- 1883 - July 4 Town passes by-law granting bonus for railroad
- 1883 - Sept 12 Town passes railroad debentures
- 1883 - Norquays moved away & school moved to a house behind present Taylor Bldg. - Then Brick school built on S.W. hill.
- 1884 - Oct 4 Tanner sells last lots to Adams for \$1000
- 1884 Cannon takes over Tribune
- 1884 - First Methodist Church built - officers were T.D. Harrison, J. S. Armitage, Thos Boyd, Henry Rose
- 1885 - Mar. Riel Rebellion
- 1885 - Oct. Tanner leaves valley
- 1885 - First Anglican Church built on same site as today.

First four mayors John Crerar - J.D. Gillies - J. Jermyn - P.J. McDermott

TANNER FAMILY TREE



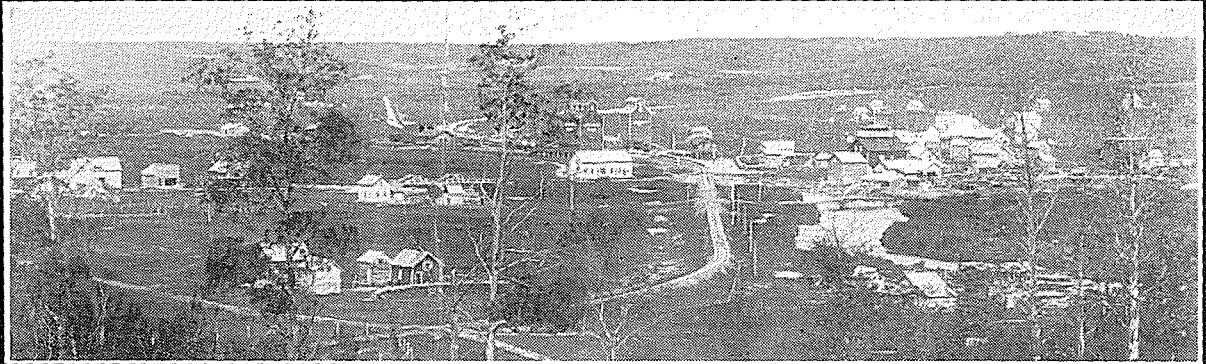
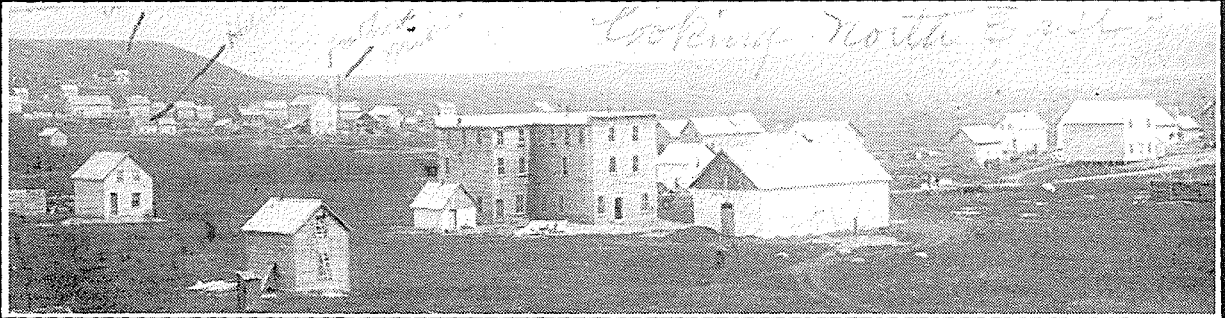
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Note: The Minnedosa Archives are located in part at the offices of The Minnedosa Tribune and in storage at the Heritage Village. A community archives is presently being planned for the Minnedosa Regional Library which is intended to house and offer public access to the entire collection at some future date.



There would be a titanic struggle between a number of syndicates and loosely formed associations of landowners in the valley of the Little Saskatchewan River between the years 1878 and 1883. Eventually that struggle would result in a town that would not only survive, but prosper. One man, however, would be shoved aside and left out of the mix - the man who first saw this crossing on the Carlton Trail in 1848 and in 1869, returned to make his home here because of its strategic location, natural beauty and bountiful resources. His name was John Tanner, first a farmer and then volunteer in the Plains Indian Wars of Minnesota and the U.S. Civil War, who would later become a trader, frontiersman and the first permanent settler of Tanner's Crossing - Minnedosa.

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